Transforming the Stage at which Scholars Share Information about their Research

How Early Can You Go?

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SSRN
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Problem

- The scholarly world is under intense pressure to produce research that is open, accessible, collaborative, measurable, useful, and quickly shared.
How can sharing early stage research / preprints be part of the solution?
The scholarly publishing/sharing of research findings has changed a lot...
Where are preprints with respect to the journal publishing cycle?

Manuscript submission

Archive and promote use

Peer review

Publish and disseminate

Edit and prepare

Production

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A preprint is a manuscript that has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

A preprint is
• Acceptable to journals
• Citable DOIs
• Creditable viewed as valid
• Versionable
• Archivable
• Discoverable

VOR
• Published article
• Version of record
Perfection / Convenience
# Preprint Server Growth History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Total Preprints</th>
<th>Main Field</th>
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<tr>
<td>arXiv</td>
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<td>Distributed - FT hosted elsewhere</td>
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<td>Science and Mathematics (alternative to arXiv)</td>
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<td>HighWire (BenchPress and JCore)</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Open Science Framework (OSF) Preprints</td>
<td>mid 2018</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

Total Preprints: 3,011,549
Preprints are increasingly seen as proof of progress and central to scholarly sharing practices

**Sociocultural Shifts in Research**
- Expectation of speed and general cultural comfort with speed and ease over perfection
- Scrutiny of peer review process and reproducibility concerns
- Growing demand for free access to content (“open”)

**Changes in funding policies**
- Shift in funders with positive policies including preprint in grant applications and/or end of grant reports

**NIH** “The NIH encourages investigators to use interim research products, such as preprints, to *speed the dissemination and enhance the rigor of their work.*” 2017

**Wellcome Trust** “As of January 2017, we will permit researchers to cite preprints, or pre-peer reviewed manuscripts, in their grant applications and end-of-grant review reports.” 2017

**Medical Research Council** “The MRC are now also actively encouraging researchers to *share their pre-peer reviewed manuscripts via established preprint servers.* To this end, we are allowing researchers to cite preprints in their grant and fellowship applications.” 2017

**HHMI** “The Institute recognizes deposited, publicly-available preprints as evidence of productivity and will accept them for purposes such as laboratory head reviews.” 2017
Sharing early stage research helps authors

Quickly disseminate their research findings globally

Obtain feedback from other researchers for collaboration opportunities and dialogue

Demonstrate productivity and independence

Showcase their scholarly output and research accomplishments

Establish priority of their discoveries

Share outputs not suitable to journal publishing

Potential concerns around preprints include: Dissemination of poor quality and irreproducible data; mitigated by basic quality control. Scooping; mitigated by shifting community norms. Prevents later intellectual property claims/patent filings.
SSRN- how we approach this
SSRN is taking a broad approach to Early Stage Research

**Idea papers**
- Short
- Research topic idea

**Working papers**
- Grey literature
- Shared to get feedback and input

**Conference proceedings**
- Presented at conferences
- Full papers
- Abstracts

**Accepted Paper**
- Post reviewer
- Pre other publisher enhancements

**PUC**
- Submitted paper under consideration

**Preprint**
- Typically an earlier version of something that will be published

**VOR**
- Published article
- Version of record
- Peer Reviewed

SSRN is taking a broad approach to Early Stage Research.
SSRN – How it works

Authors
• Post documents to SSRN to increase awareness (800k papers have been posted to SSRN as manuscript or abstract)
• 65.9K papers/abstracts submitted a year
• 362,300 authors

Readers
• All documents and links accessible to users without charge
• 120M+ downloads to date, & counting
• 2.3M+ registered users
• 600K+ visits per week

Authors
• Monitor the downloads of their research to assess impact; and are notified if they have a top paper

Readers
• Can keep aware by registering to receive curated individual or site subscriptions alerts right to their email inbox
SSRN Early-Stage Research - Always Growing. Always Something New.

2.2M+ Users
800K+ Papers
360K+ Authors
120M+ Downloads
9.2M+ References
6M+ Citations
9M+ Footnotes

Chemistry Research Network  824
Engineering Research Network  940
Biology Research Network  5,428
Social Insurance Research Network  7,122
Health Economics Network  8,460
Non-English Scholarship Networks  4,093
Women's & Gender Studies Research Network  8,360
Cognitive Science Network  20,502
Organization Series Network  21,764
Information Systems & eBusiness Network  28,531
Accounting Research Network  31,226
Corporate Governance Network  35,964
Entrepreneurship Research & Policy Network  36,954
Anthropology & Archaeology Research Network  54,478
Humanities Network  56,528
Innovation Research & Policy Network  57,418
Sustainability Research & Policy Network  74,149
Management Research Network  80,565
Political Science Network  163,124
Financial Economics Network  168,039
Legal Scholarship Network  254,076
Economics Research Network  441,856

2017 marked SSRN’s entry into the ‘hard’ sciences – we launched Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering

January 2018
How Early Can We Go?

SSRN’s evolving view of early stage research
SSRN’s ideas experiment
SRN- a place of experimentation

SSRN Has: 17 Live Objectives – what we are trying to achieve?
SSRN Has : 17 Current Initiatives – what product work will get us there?

And we have 363 SSRN Product Ideas logged in our system…

BUT: “Elegance is refusal…” - Coco Chanel, so most ideas don’t make it. We have

• Six Ideas in Discovery
• Six Ideas in Experiments Pipeline
• 36 Features in the ITX Parking Lot that are on hold
• 27 Features in ITX Scoping that need technical research
• 15 Features ITX Grooming that need estimation and detailed technical scope
• 12 Features ITX Ready to Play (12)
• 74 Features Committed to Development – actual work in progress!
Experiment Pipeline

IDEA → HYPOTHESIS → METRICS → EXPERIMENT

Two weeks or less
Experiment: Capturing Researchers Current Ideas

**IDEA**
Can we capture what users are currently researching/working on, so that this information can be showcased much earlier in the researcher lifecycle?

**HYPOTHESIS**
By asking authors what they are currently working on, we will harvest valuable information that will provide value to them and users on SSRN.

**METRICS**
We will measure the Quantity & Quality of Current Ideas we can harvest through email.

**EXPERIMENT**
We will be targeting Authors within three different subject disciplines (Biology, Economics/Finance & Law) through an email campaign to capture their current ideas.
How Early Can We Go? SSRN’s “Ideas” Experiment

IDEA
• One sentence

Idea papers
• Short
• Research topic idea

Working papers
• Grey literature
• Shared to get feedback and input

Conference proceedings
• Presented at conferences
• Full papers
• Abstracts

Accepted Paper
• Post reviewer
• Pre other publisher enhancements

PUC
• Submitted paper under consideration

Preprint
• Typically an earlier version of something that will be published

VOR
• Published article
• Version of record
10,000 emails sent out
- Law 4,500; Economics/Finance 4,500; Biology 1,350 (fewer authors to target here)

2.5% Response Rate
- Law 1.8%; Economics/Finance 2.4%; Biology 2.3%

Learnings
- Some variety in response to different email templates
- There is interest in sharing
  - a high quality of responses
  - we are going to be exploring this further.
There are currently 1,654 current ideas on SSRN

Joe Bloggs
University of Miami - School of Business Administration
Associate Professor
5200 University Drive
Coral Gables, FL 33146-6531
United States

SCHOLARLY PAPERS
24

DOWNLOADS
54,955

CITATIONS
1,097

Ideas:
“I’m currently thinking about the arm’s length principle application in the new international tax arena and I could use some help with profit splits and safe harbors”
Conclusion

• The scholarly world is under intense pressure to produce research that is open, accessible, collaborative, measurable, useful, and quickly shared.

• Preprint servers in general and SSRN in particular are helping to address many facets of this pressure.

• At SSRN we are running experiments and exploring ways to bring tomorrow’s research (tomorrow’s published journal article) to today (early stage research).
Q and A

Transforming the Stage at which Scholars Share Information about their Research

How Early Can You Go?