



ORCID identifiers galore!

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Egon has reminded us that adoption of ORCID (Open researcher and collaborator ID) is gaining apace. It is a mechanism to disambiguate (a Wikipedia term!) contributions in the researcher community and to also remove much of the anonymity (where that is undesirable) that often lurks in social media sites.

This blog is now ORCID-enabled (my ORCID should appear at the top of this post for example, where you should be able to find it as [0000-0002-8635-8390](#), although the signature thumbnail  is obscured by my gravatar, an older system for providing information about someone[‡]). We also add ORCID to all data depositions^[1].

You will not yet find them in many journal articles, which was the whole original point of their introduction. They can however already be used to log into e.g. manuscript submission sites, for example the [Journal of Chemoinformatics](#) and I gather many other journal submission systems will probably start using it in 2015. From there it is short step to incorporating them into journal articles routinely.

To counter the slightly awkward association with “being reduced to a mere number”,[‡] we need to start seeing genuine benefits from its pervasive use. From my point of view, there will be one immediate application. At my university we run a system called Symplectic, which in effect tracks all aspects of one’s research activities, including sourcing online publications. Each time Symplectic thinks it has found e.g. one of my articles, it sends me an email asking me to verify its discovery. I then have to spend 5 minutes or so acknowledging it was written by me, and then adding further links to e.g. instrumental resources used for that research. One of those resources is the high performance computing unit here. But since that resource already incorporates ORCID via e.g. ^[1], there is no reason why Symplectic need ever bother me with such questions in the future; it could automatically harvest all the information defined by my ORCID.

As with many steps forward, there are often steps back, following the law of unforeseen consequences. Perhaps “identity theft” is one; how easy could it be to use someone else’s ORCID for example? I think however that ORCID is here to stay, and we should explore both the good and the potentially bad aspects of its increasing deployment.

[‡]Gravatar offer a list of *verified services* similar in concept to ORCID. But ORCID itself is not on that list; <http://en.gravatar.com/profiles/edit/#verified-services>

[†]In the dystopian novel *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin, there is no way of referring to people save by their given numbers. Wikipedia [tells us](#) *We* is considered as having influenced the later novel *1984* by George Orwell.

REFERENCES

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