

Finding yourself

Ensuring that your research accomplishments and interests are accessible online broadens the reach of your scientific work.

Scientific publishing has become synonymous with scientific research, providing a mechanism to share discoveries and hypotheses as well as to inspire future endeavors. However, the ever-increasing size of the scientific literature limits the 'findability' of new results. Additionally, collaborative projects can obscure which ideas, technical expertise and motivations individual scientists bring to specific publications, particularly for journals that do not publish author contribution statements. Some efforts, such as contributions to databases or software code, can also be difficult to encapsulate in formal publications. Yet as the unique capabilities and accomplishments of each particular scientist become more difficult to parse out, their importance in determining future opportunities is only increasing. As a result, scientists need to be proactive in making themselves known online.

In the past, scientists typically introduced themselves to their community by attending conferences and giving talks, but these efforts only reached a comparatively small number of people. As printed departmental brochures became obsolete, laboratory websites were created to provide basic information about faculty research activities. Although some scientists have embraced websites, networking tools and other technology, too many scientists are hidden—by choice or by accident—behind outdated websites or confusing directories or through a simple absence of information. As a result, these scientists are missing opportunities to gain a potentially larger audience through a relatively small amount of effort.

Why take to the web? Students may want to know more about a prospective advisor, whereas faculty who are seeking new collaborators or departments searching for senior hires want to learn about your expertise and research aims. Reporters may seek experts to offer opinions or want to communicate your research to the general public, but they may lack contact information or context for your latest paper. As journal editors, we look online for potential referees and authors of commissioned pieces as well as for people and topics to highlight in the journal's pages. Thus, your ability to conduct your research and share your ideas is directly affected by your online presence.

Creating a new website or updating an existing site is an obvious first step in this process. A good basic website will include:

- Your name, affiliation and contact information, including your e-mail address. Update your affiliation if it changes, making sure to leave a connected trail of past locations.
- An up-to-date description of your research interests. Don't feel you need to describe every data point you've collected or give away your most timely and sensitive information. Instead, synthesize your research interests and highlight major discoveries.
- A list of primary techniques used in the lab. This information helps to clarify contributions to the literature and can draw in journals or potential collaborators seeking scientists with particular expertise.
- A list of your publications, especially if you have a common name or if your name has changed during your research career. Alternatively, include a link to a saved PubMed search or an appropriate external profile.
- An account of other research outputs, such as links to databases or resources that the lab has built or actively contributes to, information about journals or societies that you are responsible for or perhaps a record of service or teaching responsibilities.

Keep in mind that online tools have made it straightforward to translate web pages, even those containing technical jargon, so a website can be constructed in your native language with the critical caveat that the site itself needs to be findable in multiple languages. Unsure if you're inadvertently in hiding? Ask external colleagues to search for you online and report back. In our experience, searching for a specific, sometimes very common name can be difficult across languages; adding an institutional affiliation or e-mail address can provide confidence that the correct site has been reached. Similarly, some university systems or research organizations are extremely difficult to navigate for external users. If your institution has many acronyms, nested departments or other layers of complexity, consider creating a stand-alone website that links to your organizational website. Finally, corporate websites rarely feature scientific researchers, and the unclear internal hierarchies at companies

may make it difficult to determine whether the corresponding author of a paper has the expertise sought. As a result, industrial researchers who want to stay engaged with the larger scientific community should also consider how they can become more findable.

Beyond your personal website, there are many ways to take ownership of your electronic self. Consider creating a profile on existing networking platforms, such as ResearchGate (<http://www.researchgate.net/>), LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/>) or BiomedExperts (<http://www.biomedexperts.com/>). The Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID; <http://orcid.org/>) organization similarly allows scientists to create an online profile but also assigns each person a unique identifying number (disclosure: Nature Publishing Group is a member of this organization and has a seat on ORCID's board of directors). This kind of identifier can both improve findability by linking publications and other output in the short term and support the development of new mechanisms to assign credit for scientific work in the longer term. Some scientific groups, such as CAZypedia (<http://www.cazypedia.org/>) or OpenWetWare (<http://openwetware.org/>), also allow participants to create user pages where they can describe their interests and activity with the group. Asking colleagues what venues they find valuable can also help you explore new ways to connect online.

Research is time intensive, and scientists have a variety of nontrivial reasons to put off what may seem like a nonessential task. However, most of the information described above is already collated on your CV, whereas extensions such as animated videos that augment your research summary or photos of the lab's last hiking trip that might give interested students a better idea of lab life can be introduced as time allows. Similarly, updates can be relatively infrequent: at a minimum, add recent publications and review your research summary a few times each year. Finally, future technologies, presumably still Internet-based, will most likely build on current information and platforms, so time spent now will better prepare you to use new frameworks. For now, however, we hope you find that these simple suggestions for maintaining your online presence will allow you to share and advance your research in our increasingly connected world. ■