

Use of online research (UOR) materials in education

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[The use of online research \(UOR\) project](#) looks at the uptake of web-based research on educational organizations' websites. While websites are often used as a primary vehicle for research dissemination, there has been very little research looking into whether or not people actually use these online research products, and even less work has explored how they use them. Our objective is to address this oversight by studying how people utilize research materials posted on websites of educational organizations.

We are currently working with ten partner organizations from Canada, the UK and New Zealand. We use two data sources, Google Analytics and a survey to understand how educational organizations' websites are used and if the visitors to these websites download research materials and use them to influence their practice.

Our preliminary findings focus on:

1. Informal sharing of online research is more frequent than formal sharing strategies.
 - In our survey we asked if visitors share what they find online in formal versus informal ways in and outside of their workplaces. More visitors reported a preference for sharing results informally (i.e. casual discussions) with less respondents willing to share research they found online through formal sharing mechanisms (i.e. presentations).
2. There is very little traffic to research pages as compared to the homepage or non-research based pages. Additionally, visitors spent less time on research pages compared with other pages.
 - Identified research pages get less than 4% of total visitors and visitors spend less than 1 minute on identified research pages, compared to other pages.
3. The homepage of a website is rarely the point of entry; therefore, we need to rethink how websites are organized to maximize navigation and the use of research found online. This includes differences in the number of times homepages are visited and viewed.
 - We have found that only 8% of visitors enter a site through the homepage with most visitors entering through specific pages.

Our data analysis points to the modest use of research-related pages compared to non-research pages and overall site traffic. We conclude that:

1. The effort put into sharing products online is not matched by broad uptake
2. Organizations spend a lot of effort on passive dissemination strategies rather than active strategies