

PGR Tips on using online resources in your research

Vitae and the British Library organised the digital researcher event earlier this month. There was a lot of useful information ([the slides are available on the Vitae website](#)) and some experiential group work. There is a huge pool of knowledge out there which can be of use in your research, and web 2.0 means it can be easy to access. Are you using it to your advantage?

Use twitter

[Twitter](#) can be a lot more than a platform for celebrities and friends to tell you what they had for breakfast. Here is one of many [online manuals](#) and an explanation of [how twitter can be useful for researchers](#). You can follow other researchers in your field and find out what they are up to. You can use it to gather researcher-related news as it breaks by following for example timeshighered, appropriate research councils or Vitae (Vitae_news or your local Vitae hub). You can also use twitter to pose research related questions. These will be able to be read by everyone who follows you. In addition, you could introduce a 'hashtag'. This is simply a # followed by a letter combination that other people interested in that issue will recognise. For example the participants of the digital researcher event (and other people interested) used the hashtag #dr10 to share experiences, findings, tips, questions, answers and solutions (some are discussed on the [#dr10 blog](#)). A hashtag can open up a conversation to anyone wanting to join in. In this way you can build up a supportive network online.

Grow useful online networks

What makes a useful network? Being in a large network will allow you to access help and advice from lots of people. Successful networking relies on reciprocity; be prepared to give help as well as ask for it. Diversity is good so people in your network know things that you don't (and you are less likely to be competing for the same opportunities). Online networking may benefit your career as well as your research as people prefer to employ people they have prior knowledge of.

A blog of your own?

Highly specialised blogs exist that may be of use in your research, for example [blogs on frogs](#), [by archeology PGRs](#) and the [British Library has about 20 specialist blogs](#). Blogs can be a useful place to have conversations. You could use your own blog as a research notebook, to establish a writing routine, as a space to store links to articles, blogs and other useful resources and to enhance your networks and reputation. Here is a [top 10 of reasons to blog](#).

Wikis

Wiki is a Hawaiian word meaning 'fast'. It is used for a website created by numerous contributors who collaboratively add content ([Wikipedia](#), the collaborative online encyclopedia, is a well known example). Wikis are a great collaboration tool.

Social bookmarking

There are websites to organise, tag and share your favourite websites, such as [delicious](#) and [diigo](#). This means you can share them with collaborators but also access them from any computer. There are also more specialist ones to share citations, such as [citeulike](#). It is worth seeing which ones people in your network use.

Harnessing all the information

There is a lot of information out there. Establish daily or weekly routines to survey all the new information coming in. Subscribe to RSS feeds from websites that are useful to your research (such as journals) and search and filter RSS feeds to manage all the information in one place.