



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**  
Faculty of Education

5<sup>th</sup> October 2022

To whom it may concern

**Re: Nikolaenko Georgii Alexandrovich, dissertation ‘Academic social networks in the process of digital transformation of scientific communication’**

Thank-you for the invitation to review this dissertation. This is an interesting research focus, and addresses a gap in the literature around the global uptake of academic social networking sites. The dissertation is well written and presented, with only very minor typographical errors.

There are two aspects of the dissertation which are particularly strong. First, the study is very well grounded in the literature, and Chapter 1 very clearly and comprehensively sets out the history of the field, and theoretical frameworks in which the study is located. Second, the method used to find and web scrape data about the overall population of the ResearchGate platform – reported in Section 2.2 - is highly commendable. To my knowledge, this is not something which has been previously achieved and represents a novel and unique contribution to the field.

In terms of ways in which the dissertation could have been strengthened, I have three recommendations. First, when discussing the context, it would have been useful to include some critical discussion and reflection on the role of ResearchGate as a commercial enterprise. While the platform is not transparent about its business model and profitability, there are some sources available about investments and its history, for example. Second, in Section 2.3 the studies whose data are included are some years old now; it may have been helpful to more clearly synthesise the tools and run a new survey. Third, something which is absent from the dissertation is an explicit discussion of research ethics, and whether any ethical approval processes or guidelines were followed. While it would not be feasible to gain consent from the whole network, it would have been good to have seen some discussion of the ethics around web scraping, which can be a controversial issue. Discussion of ethical considerations would need to be included if the findings were being prepared for publication in the future as a journal article.

In the conclusions, the ResearchGate score is discussed as a potential focal point for further research. Since the dissertation was written, ResearchGate have since discontinued the score (July 2022). The ‘research interest’ score is also identified here, and could usefully form a focus for continued research, as it is under-studied at present. Overall, the dissertation makes a new contribution to knowledge in this field, and is a firm grounding for future research.

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katy Jordan'.

Dr Katy Jordan

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