



## Twentieth Thing: Melbourne Figshare

*In this Thing, Sally Tape takes us through how to use Melbourne Figshare to share and/or publish data, creative research outputs, and other supplementary research materials. Additionally, an interview with Associate Professor Kate Coleman gives us an idea of how University of Melbourne researchers are using Melbourne Figshare to not only make their research more accessible, but think about it in new ways.*

### What is data publishing?

Data publishing makes the outputs underpinning research discoverable and optionally available for reuse. The spectrum on which data can be published ranges from open and accessible to closed and private. Restricted access may need to be applied to some datasets because of private or sensitive information as well as ethical or cultural considerations.

Publishing data so it is open, accessible, and reusable benefits individuals, research institutions and society. Underlying research data can include supplementary materials such as code, software, reports, educational resources, recorded notes and more. Making these types of assets open and available means other researchers may not have to spend time and money collecting data that has already been collected. It also allows for verification of research processes which is important for transparency and data integrity.

Greater visibility of research through data publishing can lead to increased citation rates and collaboration opportunities beyond immediate networks. To maximise the benefits of data publishing practices, consideration should be given to how information is shared, how much information is shared and where it is stored. One platform recognised as a suitable data repository by funders and institutions around the world is Figshare.

## Data publishing with Melbourne Figshare

The University has an institutional instance of Figshare. [Melbourne Figshare](#) is a repository where staff and graduate researchers can share, publish, and manage, their research data, other supplementary materials, and non-traditional research outputs. Melbourne Figshare allows researchers at the University to publish their data, so it is open, discoverable, and reusable.

## Supporting integration

Figshare is a well-known and recognised data repository, which integrates with other platforms, creating many efficiencies. One such integration helps researchers who work with code. By linking a GitHub or GitLab account to the Melbourne Figshare repository, openly published code can be easily cited in publications and shared. And if the auto-sync function is enabled, the Figshare record will automatically update for every new version released. The Figshare landing page will display the latest published version of the code, while previous versions remain easily accessible.

Melbourne Figshare now also integrates into the University's research output ecosystem. Researchers need only enter their data once into Figshare and the information can be both collected and distributed by other University research platforms. Data harvested from Melbourne Figshare by Elements, the University's internal research output collection management system, can create a scholarly works entry on the University's public-facing researcher profiling website, Find an Expert. The automatic harvesting of research outputs saves time by reducing the need to enter information across multiple platforms.

## Increasing visibility

While streamlined workflows save time, increased visibility of research outputs is important for an accurate attribution of output to a researcher. Figshare will mint a citable Digital Object Identifier (DOI) for published items. A DOI creates an important and accessible link between researchers and their published content. This is especially important for creative and practice-based works where access to published digital content is not always easily accessible. DOIs also help to increase the visibility of published research through reuse. Sharing a DOI and its associated output in a citation, a tweet, or a blog post, increases the on-line discoverability and distribution of published content via a persistent and clickable link.

Adding clear and descriptive metadata to a Figshare record is important for discovery and website indexing. Researchers working with sensitive information may choose to publish a metadata-only record, allowing their research to be discoverable but not accessible. Metadata lets people know the circumstances under which the data can be accessed and reused and can provide information to understand the data into the future.

## Creating impact

Metrics are important, in helping researchers to understand the level of impact their work has. Discoverable research can increase impact, and Figshare enables researchers to track the impact of their work through usage metrics. Published items will record the number of views, downloads, citations, and [Altmetrics](#) on a record. And, as a side note, viewing a webpage or blog post that contains an embedded Figshare item will add to the overall count for usage metrics.

A wide and open dissemination of research data impacts society through the development of social, legal, and environmental policy. Importantly for researchers, utilising open research practices, helps grow and develop a strong research career.

## How do you access the University's data repository?

Staff and graduate researchers can access the University's data repository Melbourne Figshare at [figshare.unimelb.edu.au](https://figshare.unimelb.edu.au). For more information on Melbourne Figshare see the [Digital Stewardship website](#).

## Learn more

The [Open Scholarship website](#) is a comprehensive guide helping researchers apply open techniques to their own research practices. Read about the benefits of open access and data publishing as well as grant and ethical compliance for retention and publication of research outputs.  
**About the author**

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## Interview with Kate Coleman

### 1. What is your role and what is your research about?

I am an [Associate Professor in visual art and design education](#). I work in the teacher education academic group, in the Faculty of Education, or what was previously known as the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

My research is focused on contributing methodologically to arts-based research or what we might refer to as research-creation. I work with young people, I work with teachers (pre- and in-service) on a range of complex ideas that range from art and digital activism, race, land and Country, climate, education futures and ways of designing intercultural curriculums for rethinking learning and teaching futures and what they might be.

I'm very interested in speculative inquiry, particularly how artists and designers, researchers and teachers contribute to the ongoing anti-colonial and anti-racist work that needs to be done within the academy and the broader education ecology.

### 2. How has using Figshare helped you better manage your research?

Figshare for me has been an important part of working particularly in digital research methods to think about ways that I share my work in a broader scholarly community and think differently about what it means to publish.

I'm really interested in creative methods and how these methods enable a mobilisation of knowledge within and for community in different ways than more traditional research publications might. I think that Figshare both records and archives the work in a way that makes it accessible to people beyond certain situations, but it also in traditional research outputs enables me to think about my visualisations.

One example: Figshare enables me to use the digital infrastructure and social media loops to share the work. For instance, when I present at a conference that has several people in the room or if I'm giving a keynote, how do I mobilise that knowledge in a different way beyond the spoken work and images on slides? For me, I need to be able to share these original ways of presenting the work to audiences, that always changes because the context of how I'm speaking about the work changes, and the way that I'm using the scholarship and my citational practices shifts.

Secondly, for artworks that I produce and develop in my research. So, it's helped me be smarter with data and to manage a research environment in a way that prefaces the work and gives it an appropriate platform in the digital science community.

### 3. How has Figshare helped you work smarter and not harder when managing your research?

I think that particularly the relationship between Figshare, and Minerva, and ORCID have all been really important for me and then its relationship to my University Find An Expert page, I think what it does is it does the seamlessness or interoperability that we're supposed to see in digital worlds and it means that I can share and publish and cite and can distribute my research in a broader context in the digital space. But I can also think carefully about where things go because of these pathways. I've published Figshare works for other colleagues that I've worked with, so things that I've facilitated, for instance, can be cited.

I think that's a really easy way of thinking about what it means to present work. My broader research context I didn't talk about before is in portfolios, and I've been working in digital portfolios and the scholarship of teaching and learning in that environment for a long time. It's what brought me into higher education out of teaching in design education. So, it brought me into that, and I was really interested in how portfolios enable us to tell these visual digital stories of ourselves over time. And Figshare for me is scholarly portfolio – so I think about it in the education ecology as a portfolio of artefacts.

I'm very interested in helping other researchers develop portfolios in Figshare so that they can also see their work in collections. To be able to curate different ways of seeing what it is that they do as researchers in the academy is an important gaze on your work.

### 4. Number four, my number one top tip on publishing and Figshare.

If I think about other communities of scholarly practice, like [FEAS](#) and [Cite a Blackfella](#), they have generative citational practices, and I've learned from these communities, we need to activate and ensure our research is living and connective. So, my top tip is to give Figshare the same energy that you give your writing. This is scholarly publication. Figshare teaches us a citational practice that is important for academics to learn for their teaching and research.

To do this justice, you need to block time and upload work, and get the metadata right. You need to think about your work in a broader context – who it's for and who gets to read it and possibly use it beyond the day you upload. Figshare allows you to think more broadly about the impact of your work, not the metric impact but how we mobilise knowledge and give back to the people that we are working with and for.

*Featured image credit: Photo by ["My Life Through a Lens" on Unsplash](#).*