

Reference Linking

Reference Linking enables researchers to follow a link from the reference list to other full-text documents, helping them to make connections and discover new things.

About Reference Linking

A research article usually includes a reference list of prior works that helped inform it, but could also include supporting aspects of the research, such as the underlying data used and/or reused. With Reference Linking, content becomes more discoverable, and an infinite number of connections can be created.

Reference Linking for journal articles is an obligation for Crossref membership—but it's also strongly encouraged for backfiles and all other content types, such as books, preprints, and conference proceedings—so that all scholarly outputs can be found and used.

Why Reference Linking is important

We made the linking of references obligatory for journal articles, as it offers two really important benefits: reciprocity and persistence.

Reciprocity: To provide a scholarly communications infrastructure that enables the exchange of knowledge and ideas. This means that over 10,500+* members don't have to sign hundreds of individual agreements with each other to be able link to each others platforms and content.

Persistence: Scholarly research uses a long-lasting reference (a persistent identifier, or PID) called a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) which is also always displayed as a link. Anyone can copy and share DOIs, which enables better tracking of where and when people are talking about scholarly outputs. DOI links don't break, they will always lead to the content being looked for, including yours—so, when everyone links their references, research travels further, and everyone benefits.

Getting started - how to link references

Crossref members can look up the DOIs for their references, and add the links to their articles' reference lists. Our website provides a simple text tool for manual, low volume querying, and a form for uploading a small number of reference lists as .txt files to find their DOIs (if available). However, the preferred method for most members is via XML API for individual or batch query requests.

Best practice

Members should start to link current journal article references as soon as they join Crossref and should also plan to do the same for journal backfiles and other content types, such as books and conference proceedings. References should conform to the correct DOI display guidelines which can be found at crossref.org/display-guidelines. Remember, references are just one of the many relationship types that can be asserted through metadata (see the Content Registration factsheet for more information, or go to crossref.org/services/content-registration).

Best practice DOI display example:

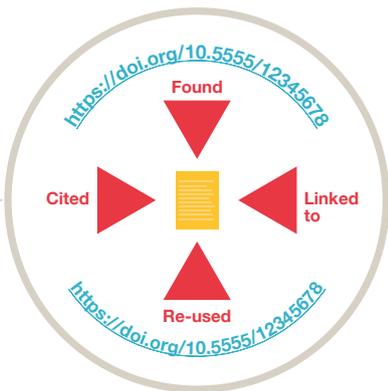
<https://doi.org/10.5468/ogs.2016.59.1.1>



Reference Linking: how it works



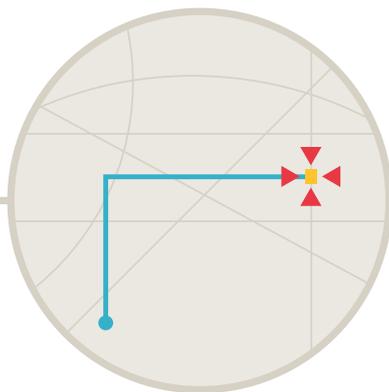
A research article will usually include a list of prior works that helped inform it. This is known as a reference list or bibliography.



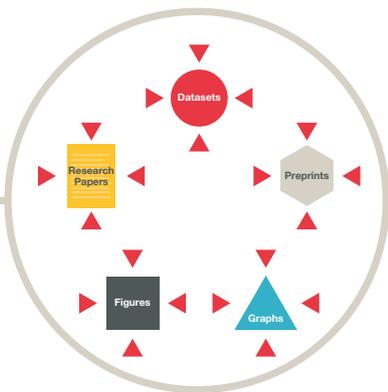
Crossref members link their references using the Digital Object Identifier (DOI), which points to the current location of the work.



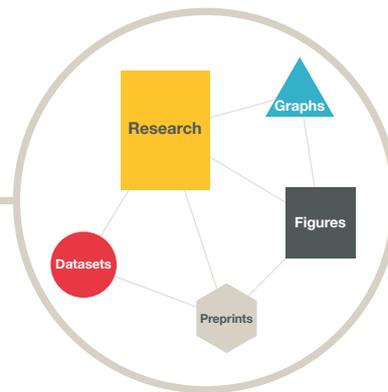
This means when you click on a DOI reference link you will get to the content you expect.



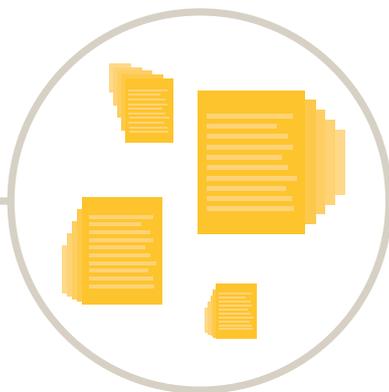
If the content moves to a new website, members update the metadata.



It's not just articles that can be linked persistently. The more objects that are linked, the richer the scholarly discourse.



Our members do this work to help connect all aspects of research.



This ensures that your research can be: found, cited, linked to, and reused so that others can build upon it for the future.