Get Full Text Research (GetFTR): can it be a good tool for researchers?

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Abstract
Technological advances have been an integral part of discussions related to journal publishing in recent years. This article presents Get Full Text Research (GetFTR), a discovery solution launched by five major publishers: the American Chemical Society, Elsevier, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis Group, and Wiley. These founding publishers announced the development of this new solution in 2019, and its pilot service was launched just 4 months later. The GetFTR solutions streamlines access to not only open access resources but also to subscription-based resources. The publishers have assured that this solution will be beneficial for all relevant stakeholders involved in the journal publication process, including publishers, researchers, integrators, and libraries. They highlighted that researchers will have the ability to access published articles with minimal effort or steps, benefitting from existing (single sign-on) access technologies, ideally accessing the article PDF with a single click. While GetFTR is free for integrators and researchers, publishers are required to pay an annual subscription fee. To lower the barrier for participation, GetFTR supports smaller publishers by offering them a discount based on the number of digital object identifiers (DOIs), as recorded in Crossref data. While this project appears promising, some initial concerns were raised, particularly regarding user data control, which the project has responded to by more closely engaging the librarian community and by providing further information on how GetFTR supports user privacy.

Keywords
Get Full Text Research (GetFTR); Seamless Access; Digital object identifier; Library link resolver

Introduction

Background and rationale
Four groups of stakeholders—publishers, researchers, research institutions, and funders—work closely together and are intricately interconnected in the journal publishing process. Their collaboration has evolved alongside technological advancements. From Gutenberg’s typeface to the advent of the internet, technological innovations have transformed the way these four groups of stakeholders operate and interact within the realm of journal communica-
GetFTR: can it be a good tool for researchers?

Objective
This article presents a platform known as “Get Full Text Research (GetFTR).” Readers will gain an understanding of what GetFTR is, how it functions for researchers. It also describes various concerns associated with GetFTR and how the project has responded to those concerns.

Initiation of GetFTR
In December 2019, five major publishers, the American Chemical Society, Elsevier, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis Group, and Wiley, announced their plans to develop a new solution called “Get Full Text Research (GetFTR)” [1]. The pilot program for GetFTR was launched 4 months after this announcement. The publishers asserted that this solution would assist researchers in accessing published journal articles at no cost. The participants in the pilot service are listed below [1].

- Advisory Board: American Society of Civil Engineers, Atypon, Digital Science, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), Mendeley, Silverchair, and Third Iron
- Scholarly platforms and discovery tools: Mendeley, ReadCube Papers, and Dimensions

When GetFTR was initiated in 2019, feedback suggested that the librarian community should have been included in the Advisory Group. In response, three librarians were added to the group in 2020 [2]. Since GetFTR’s inception in 2019, there has been a steady increase in the number of partners. The partners appear to be diverse and actively involved in scholarly communication, as detailed below [2]. Regrettably, no partners from Korea seem to be listed.


What is GetFTR?
GetFTR is a service that provides researchers with direct access to online journal articles, using existing access technologies such as IP-based authentication and federated access, bypassing the need to first log into their institution’s library system [3]. This service is offered free of charge to researchers and integrators, while publishers are required to pay an annual fee [4]. However, it is important to note that researchers typically use GetFTR via an integrated third-party service (such as those listed above) although GetFTR has recently also made available a browser extension that researchers can install themselves [5]. Still, there is a possibility that researchers may not even realize they are using GetFTR, although an integrator’s discovery tool displays the GetFTR indicator. To assist smaller publishers and frequent users, GetFTR offers discounts based on the number of digital object identifiers (DOIs) a journal utilizes [4].

How does GetFTR work for researchers?
GetFTR is very convenient for researchers, as it does not require much from them. A researcher can locate published articles on a discovery tool they typically use, like R Discovery (Researcher.Life), provided that the tool is linked to GetFTR. The GetFTR application programming interface (API) operates behind the scenes [3]. For example, the GetFTR API transmits the researcher’s affiliation and article DOIs to publishers participating in the GetFTR platform [6]. These publishers then verify the researcher’s access, allowing the researcher to directly access full-text articles on the discovery tool, both on and off campus. With a federated authentication process, users can benefit from single-sign on capabilities as provided by e.g., their university library, when they are off campus. Fig. 1 illustrates the streamlined work process of GetFTR [7]. In this process, a discovery tool like R Discovery can assist an author in finding articles of interest [8].

What benefits are expected?
Three types of users are expected to benefit from this service. First, researchers will find it easier access online full-text articles that they are entitled to through e.g., their institutes subscriptions or because they are available open access, published by participating publishers. Second, publishers can enhance the visibility of their published articles and offer an optimally streamlined access experience. By enabling more researchers
to access their journals and articles, they can also boost their brand power as academic journal publishers. The growth in readership will be facilitated by GetFTR, which streamlines the process by which researchers access reading resources [9]. This will reduce the time and effort required by publishers to direct readers to their published articles. Finally, GetFTR will serve as an additional channel for integrators and aggregators to connect researchers with more articles and journal publishers. This free tool will empower integrators and aggregators to enhance their own products [10].

Are there any concerns about how GetFTR works?
At first glance, GetFTR appears flawless, but will it truly be without issues? When GetFTR was launched, librarians have voiced several concerns regarding the operation of GetFTR [11]. The primary concern is the control of user data. questioning if the convenience offered by GetFTR would necessitate some sacrifices on the part of the user [11]. However, GetFTR clarifies that no user information other than DOIs and the user’s organization ID is required for entitlement checks [6]. GetFTR is interoperable with Seamless Access, but the proportion of the library user community utilizing Seamless Access is relatively small [12]. In response to user feedbacks and initial concerns from the library community, GetFTR also supports internet protocol (IP)-based access methods [6]. Another potential hurdle is technical friction, as GetFTR might not be “seamlessly” compatible with a university’s library system, such as the library link resolver [13].

Conclusion
“How will GetFTR evolve?” is an intriguing question. Contemplating the future of GetFTR prompts us to reflect on our work habits and lifestyle changes. For example, remote work has recently become common due to the COVID-19 crisis. Could “remote research” be next? GetFTR could potentially be an effective tool for remote learning, teaching, and research.

We cannot discuss GetFTR without addressing the topic of open access. Open access journals now occupy a larger portion of the journal publication sector than ever before. It is projected that by 2025, 44% of journal articles will be published in an open access format, a significant increase from 31% in 2019 [14]. Even the top five funding publishers produce both open access and subscription-based journals. The debate over which format will prevail, open access journals or subscription-based journals, is contentious. However, if it aids researchers’ work, does it really matter which format researchers use?

Conflict of Interest
No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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