FIGSHARE

Figshare is a for-profit company offering an online repository where researchers can preserve and share the output of their research, including figures, data sets, images, and videos. Founded in 2011 in the UK.

figshare.com

Revenue model: platform providing paid services to creators

Interview date: January 28, 2016
Interviewee: Mark Hahnel, founder

Profile written by Paul Stacey

Figshare's mission is to change the face of academic publishing through improved dissemination, discoverability, and reusability of scholarly research. Figshare is a repository where users can make all the output of their research available—from posters and presentations to data sets and code—in a way that's easy to discover, cite, and share. Users can upload any file format, which can then be previewed in a Web browser. Research output is disseminated in a way that the current scholarly-publishing model does not allow.

Figshare founder Mark Hahnel often gets asked: How do you make money? How do we know you'll be here in five years? Can you, as a for-profit venture, be trusted? Answers have evolved over time.

Mark traces the origins of Figshare back to when he was a graduate student getting his PhD in stem cell biology. His research involved working with videos of stem cells in motion. However, when he went to publish his re-

search, there was no way for him to also publish the videos, figures, graphs, and data sets. This was frustrating. Mark believed publishing his complete research would lead to more citations and be better for his career.

Mark does not consider himself an advanced software programmer. Fortunately, things like cloud-based computing and wikis had become mainstream, and he believed it ought to be possible to put all his research online and share it with anyone. So he began working on a solution.

There were two key needs: licenses to make the data citable, and persistent identifiers—URL links that always point back to the original object ensuring the research is citable for the long term.

Mark chose Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) to meet the need for a persistent identifier. In the DOI system, an object's metadata is stored as a series of numbers in the DOI name. Referring to an object by its DOI is more stable than referring to it by its URL, because the location of an object (the web page or URL) can often