Product review of Springer for R&D

Springer for R&D, from Springer Nature, is an online platform that provides access to high-quality scientific, technical and medical (STM) research for corporate researchers. Our review finds it “provides great value for R&D users in a wide variety of industries and disciplines”.

“Springer for R&D delivers trusted, targeted information through the latest research, competitive intelligence and reference materials to industry and globally-based research scientists and information managers.”

- Key advantages; introduction; contact details
- Sources - content & coverage
- Technology - search & user interface; outputs & alerts; administration
- Value - help & training; competitors; development; pricing

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Key advantages; introduction; contact details

Quick take on key advantages

- **Easily accessible content**: Content can be accessed from any location using any device
- **Flexible business access models**: Dependent on corporation size
- **Partnership sourcing**: Partnerships can be researched and generated with renowned scholarly and professional societies through competitive intelligence
- **Online training**: Free training for corporation staff
- **Usage tools**: Usage reports are available to determine ROI and ensure the platform is being used by as many employees as possible
- **Advertising materials**: Supporting marketing material is available to ensure full use of the platform.

Introduction: company

Springer Nature is dedicated to providing researchers in academia, scientific institutions and corporate R&D departments with quality content through its innovative information products and services. It is a leading global research, educational and professional publisher and home to an array of respected and trusted brands, providing quality content.

The company was formed in 2015 through the merger of Nature Publishing Group, Palgrave Macmillan, Macmillan Education and Springer Science+Business Media. With almost 13,000 staff in over 50 countries, Springer Nature is one of the world’s largest academic book publishers, publisher of the world’s most influential journals and a pioneer in the field of open research.

Introduction: product

Springer for R&D is the corporate version of the SpringerLink online platform. The SpringerLink platform provides fast and accurate access to over 10 million scientific documents in the world’s most complete online collection of Science, Technology and Medicine (STM) books, journals, reference works and protocols, covering a vast range of disciplines.

Springer for R&D delivers trusted, targeted information through the latest research, competitive intelligence and reference materials to industry and globally-based research scientists and information managers. The platform provides flexible business models enabling access to the content required whilst maximising usage for employees and providing a return on investment.

Within the global marketplace, the key competitor to SpringerLink and Springer for R&D is Elsevier’s ScienceDirect platform.

Figure 1: Springer for R&D homepage
Key features of Springer for R&D

- Find and choose the appropriate online resources for your corporation
- Implement and manage the online resources
- Use training sessions to gain familiarity with the platform
- Use marketing resources to increase corporate awareness
- Measure the impact and ROI of the online platform and resources to your corporation.

Value

The platform is designed to increase efficiencies in day-to-day research for corporate users. The easy-to-use interface allows researchers and information managers access to journals, books and protocols they need quickly, thereby reducing costs through time efficiency.

Springer for R&D provides rapid access to specific articles, relevant chapters and reference works, with an easy to manage administration site, allowing information managers to track searches and sections of the platform most frequently used. This information provides companies with a reason to continue using the platform and can, through the use of tracking and references, lead to collaboration with similar research groups, organisations or sales opportunities.

Contact details

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Sources - content & coverage

Jinfo’s view: sources

Springer for R&D provides an easy-to-use platform for accessing new, peer-reviewed and archived content to accelerate the research of R&D departments. The platform is user intuitive with publications clearly displayed and colour-coded depending on the access limitations of each user.

- Intuitive homepage, with available data sources clearly displayed
- Intuitive content search with Google autocomplete
- Easy to create reports from researched documents, ebooks and protocols
- Useful help and tutorial services.

The available content in Springer for R&D will be different depending on each corporation’s budget and the type of research conducted.

Different versions available

Springer for R&D is available as an individual or corporate version. Figure 2 shows the homepage.

Figure 2: Springer for R&D homepage

There is also an academic version of SpringerLink. The content is organised differently for each organisation, with two colours indicating whether a user is logged into a corporate account with access to certain information (purple), or an anonymous user with no account (orange). For the latter, users will see a paywall for each article they wish to view and download.
Springer for R&D delivers fast, accurate access to over 10 million scientific documents in what is quoted as the world’s most complete online collection of Science, Technology and Medicine (STM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) books, journals, reference works and protocols, covering a vast range of research and development disciplines.

Sources and updates

New books and journals are added daily to the 10 million plus available documents. To date there are:

- Over 215,000 ebooks (since 1842)
- Over 3,300 journals (since 1997)
- A journals archive (pre-1997)
- Over 45,000 protocols
- Over 600 reference works
- Over 5,500 book series (since 1842).

The content is regularly updated and approximately 10,000 new ebooks, 3,000 new protocols and over 27,000 journal articles are added every year. The content is semantically linked to create a vast but navigable network of information resources accessible through the Springer for R&D platform.

The content is available 24/7 with a responsive design of headers and menus that allow for optimal browsing on all types of devices and computers. The no digital rights management (DRM) status of the resources available means registered corporations and their users can access the content whenever and however they choose, free from licensing restrictions.

Languages and geographic coverage

The content is available in English or German, however, the spread of visitors, from both academia using SpringerLink, and corporate organisations using Springer for R&D, come from across the globe (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: SpringerLink and Springer for R&D content and visitors
Key features

Springer for R&D provides results up to three times faster than the previous Springer platform. Users are able to review a document that they haven’t seen before by using the Look Inside feature. This enables users to gauge the value and relevance of the work before they make a purchase and is available for ebooks and other content types.

New content can be found by setting up publication alerts based on author, subject, keyword and publication, or users can subscribe to Springer’s RSS feeds to get new titles delivered directly to their desktop. Users can also access peer-reviewed articles before they are published, enabling the circulation of critical discoveries and possibly accelerating collaboration between parties.

Once logged in, content can be viewed by industry sector or by discipline from the homepage (as seen in Figures 4 and 5). The content available in these sections will be dependent upon the licence purchased by a corporation. The price of the platform and content available overall is dependent upon the size of the organisation, the number of users and the specific research requirements.

Once search results have been returned, they can simply be downloaded into Excel to review. However, these downloads are capped based on your subscription.

Compared to similar products, such as ScienceDirect, this platform is very user-friendly and intuitive, with easy-to-use reporting.

Figure 4: Springer for R&D homepage - industry sectors

Figure 5: Springer for R&D homepage - disciplines
Jinfo’s view: technology

In Jinfo’s opinion, Springer for R&D provides an intuitive user interface and searching capabilities for R&D users in a large variety of industries and disciplines. Searches are flexible and the results are easy to review and export. Features of the publications are extensive, providing in-depth citation information to researchers, publishers and information managers.

- Easy to create reports from results
- Extensive citation information
  - altmetric scores, Book Metrix, social media shares
- Option to set up publication alerts
- Extensive ROI reporting and admin dashboard options

Search and user interactions

The homepage is divided into content available by type, the search bar (which is visible on every page), and featured journals and books.

To use the platform, a user must log-in to their corporate homepage. Once signed in they will see what types of content is available to them to search and browse. The corporation logo can be added to the homepage through the admin dashboard. The webpages are optimised for all types of mobile devices.

Starting with the search bar (see Figure 6), users can simply type into the search bar which Google autocompletes predicting the types of content being searched. Searches can be conducted with all types of language and stemming, phrase matching using quotation marks (""") and operators OR, NOT, AND, and NEAR. Wildcards can also be searched using an asterix (*) for several letters or a question mark (?) for a single letter.

Advanced search is available by clicking on the settings icon to the right of the search bar. It enables users to search using several parameters, including specific words, phrases, titles, authors and publication dates.

Figure 6: Springer for R&D search bar

Users can browse by industry sector, for example, pharma, from the left-hand panel. On clicking through they are presented with a new homepage for that industry sector (see Figure 7). The left-hand panel now details the fields of the pharmaceutical industry and the number of publications available in each of those fields.
Figure 7: Searching by industry sector - pharma

The user can then delve deeper into these fields and discover the content types available to them. Searches can be further refined using the content type, discipline, sub-discipline and language options available in the left navigation bar.

There is an option to include preview only content (see Figure 8), so that abstracts and previews are available to all users regardless of their subscription entitlement. This gives the user the option to purchase content that is relevant to them. If the user prefers to see only the content accessible by their corporation, this box can be left unchecked.
The results can be exported to Excel at this point by using the down arrow in the right-hand corner of the page. The RSS feed for the search can also be saved by clicking on the orange logo in the right-hand corner. The results can be sorted by relevance, newest first, oldest first or specific years.

Finally, users can search by content type by clicking on the specific type (see Figure 9), such as articles, chapters, reference work entries and protocols in the left-hand navigation on the homepage. Or users can browse the featured journals and books from the homepage feature, and see recent activity within their organisation.

Figure 9: Browsing by content type
A colour scheme indicates whether the user is from a recognised organisation (see Figure 10). Orange indicates an anonymous user, purple indicates a recognised user.

The search results are very well structured (see Figure 8), providing details such as the type of content, content title, subtitle, if applicable, author list and whether the publication is available to download as a PDF or if it has to be viewed online.

By choosing one of the publications, the user arrives at the product page. On top of every product page there is a blue bar which is always visible, even if the user scrolls down the page (see Figure 11). If the publication is a book and is not included in the corporation’s content, the user has the option, with most of the books, to Look Inside and view the first two pages of the book. This feature lets the user decide if the book is worth purchasing.

When searching within specific journals, books, and articles, the user will see an orange Open Access feature next to some journal articles, which lets them see publications that are free to view and download (see Figure 12).
The information and functionality available on the product page is impressive (see Figure 13). The PDF can be downloaded, saved, printed, marked, or viewed as HTML. The user can see the publication abstract, journal cover, with Look Inside functionality. Other actions include export of the citation, supplementary materials, references and shares on social media.

The options for export of the citations are extensive and relatively straightforward. The user simply clicks on the export citation option on the right-hand navigation pane under Other Actions. The export citation page pops up, with selectable download options including, ProCite (RIS), Reference Manager (RIS), RefWorks (RIS), BookEnds (RIS), EndNote (RIS), PubMed (TXT), Text only (TXT) and BibTeX (BIB).

If there are altmetric scores (tracking of attention a publication receives online) available for the articles or book metrics for ebooks, these numbers are visible on the right-hand side above Other Actions. The functionality for ebooks and protocols are slightly different to the articles, as can be seen in Figure 14 for ebooks and Figure 15 for protocols. The table of contents can be viewed, along with other useful information, such as details of the printed version of the book and options to purchase it.
If a journal or book has a yellow locked key, the user can gain access to the article by clicking on the Get Access button. This brings up a paywall with the cost of each article.

**Figure 14: Product page functionality for ebooks**

**Figure 15: Product page functionality for Protocols**
Outputs

The Springer for R&D platform not only lets you view the publications of interest, but the full results of each search can be exported using the download arrow on the top right-hand side of the results page. This gives you the option to save the results in CSV format onto your device or computer. See Figure 8 for a view of a results page, with the option to download the RSS feed.

Once a query has been generated through the search bar or via browsing from the homepage, the results can be filtered a number of different ways. The left-hand navigation pane indicates the number of publications by content type, discipline, sub-discipline and publication language. Each of these filters can be turned off or on by clicking them. A filter that is switched on turns orange in the navigation pane. To remove the filter simply click on the small x in the filter box and all the results will then reappear in the list. The refine search navigation pane can be seen in Figure 16.

In Figure 16 the top of the results page shows the additional ways the results can be filtered, by sorting publications by newest/oldest, or choosing date published, and typing in a specific date period.

Upon choosing a specific publication to view the user is taken through to the publication page as seen above in Figures 13, 14 and 15. Outputs from these pages are dependent upon the publication type. For example, the options for export of a journal citation are extensive and relatively straightforward. The user simply clicks on the export citation option on the right-hand navigation pane under Other Actions. The export citation page pops up, with the selectable download options, ProCite (RIS), Reference Manager (RIS), RefWorks (RIS), BookEnds (RIS), EndNote (RIS), PubMed (TXT), Text only (TXT) and BibTeX (BIB).

On the journal pages, under the heading Stay up to Date, there are options to export all of the abstracts through RSS feeds, and to register for journal updates via email. By choosing the register for journal updates the user is taken to a page with details of the journal metrics, with options for submission of articles to the journal as well as options to get alerts for the journal.

Books, chapters and protocols have book metrics that can be analysed through the Book Metrics software. In Figure 17, the Book Metrics for Re-Irradiation: New Frontiers, show the number of mentions, citations, readers, downloads and reviews. The number of mentions indicates the number of independent mentions of the book on social media.
Figure 17: Book Metrics give the user, or the publisher, specific numbers on downloads and shares.

On all of the product pages there are buttons to share the publications via social media.

Administration - for information managers

The Springer for R&D platform is managed by each individual corporation via the admin dashboard. Upon activation of an administrator account, the user will receive an email from onlineservice@springer.com. Once the password and account is set up and the user is logged in, the admin dashboard can be accessed by choosing admin dashboard from the drop-down options or by choosing admin dashboard from the option underneath the search bar.

Clicking on those buttons takes the user to a welcome page (see Figure 18). Here the administrator or user can access all the corporation entitlements, usage and manage all the options for the Springer platform.

Figure 18: The landing page of the admin dashboard.
From the landing page, information managers or administrators can manage the needs of the corporation through the features, My Organisation, Usage (COUNTER Statistic Reports), Entitlements and Settings. If available, users and information managers can switch between Springer platforms, get latest updates through Twitter feeds and gain access to the help desk and contact details.

**My organisation tab**

Under this tab, the following corporation details can be found:

- Company number
- Name and location number (click on the arrow to choose another location)
- IP ranges associated with this company - these can be updated via onlineservice@springer.com
- Company logo, so users can see that content is made available for them via a specific organisation
- Member organisations for this consortium and the associated users and admins and the ability to add new users or disassociate them.

Springer advises information managers to review their associated users every so often to make sure all are still valid.

![Figure 19: My organisation tab with company information](image)

**Usage tab**

Under the usage tab, information managers can track the counts of usage by the associated members. By using the drop-down menus, admin can analyse counts from each company location, platform, report type, choose reporting formats (Excel, etc), and date ranges.

The different reporting levels and the type of reporting they include can be seen in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Admin dashboard - available usage reports</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Journal Report 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Journal Report 1 GOA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Journal Report 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Journal Report 5</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Book Report 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Book Report 3</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Also under the usage tab is the deposit contract balances (see Figure 20). Here the admin of a deposit account can see the deposit contract balance in a section underneath the usage download section. The page also provides an up-to-date status of the balance in the deposit including the initial amount and the remaining balance.

Figure 20: Deposit contract balances page

**Entitlements and settings tab**

Entitlements provide details of the journal and book titles that a corporation is entitled to download through the contract they have with Springer. Additional titles can be purchased through the deposit account.

The settings tab provides admin with options to toggle on and off login, IP and notification settings for corporation users.
Jinfo’s view: value

In Jinfo’s opinion, Springer for R&D provides great value for R&D users in a wide variety of industries and disciplines. Although downloads and views are restricted by a corporation contract, access is possible for restricted publications if funds are available. It is difficult to assess if other publication outlets are required in addition to Springer for R&D, for those publications are not included in the platform.

- Flexible and intuitive searching through keywords, advanced search and browsing
- The industries and volume of publications are increasing
- The platform provides easy access to other Springer Nature products
- Online help and video tutoring is available although not easily accessible from the platform.

Help & training

The online help and available training are very much lacking for the Springer for R&D platform. There are no direct links to a helpdesk or training pages from the platform. To find these pages, as a user, would be difficult. In this case, a search was performed on the Springer Nature pages for any help information. The only help available directly from the platform itself is in the search bar settings, providing help for the user in their search options.

The help pages are found here. Once on these pages, there is a wealth of information on the SpringerLink platform, but not the Springer for R&D platform directly. Eventually after many clicks and getting lost I found my way to the Springer online service knowledge base.

Here the user and information manager can find answers to many of their questions and find solutions to errors and administration issues. Users can also send a support ticket for help and check the status of any tickets already sent in. For other more direct queries about the platform, there is a contact us page with various email addresses and a contact number.

Access to the platform from this page, and from other pages on Springer Nature could be improved. It was difficult navigating around the whole site in general. Some pages seem out of date with publication numbers and links not working. The site has the potential to improve on its positive points, such as the easy navigation of the platform itself and simple administration options. The options for download and viewing of the results could be improved, maybe through a third party provider.

Competitor landscape

Competitors in the marketplace are, in Jinfo’s opinion, lagging behind this simple yet innovative platform. The usage statistics of the R&D platform, however, tell a story that corporations are using other platforms for their content searching.

Elsevier’s ScienceDirect is the obvious competitor in this marketplace. ScienceDirect lacks the simple interface of Springer for R&D, but what it lacks from this aspect it makes up for in its reporting capabilities. Jinfo wrote a mini review of the “ScienceDirect reference module in materials science” in 2016 plus a full review of the Reference Modules platform in 2014.

Springer actually competes with itself in many ways, with direct purchasing of journals and books available from its Springer Nature site.

Other competitors for publication searching and downloads are Wiley, with the capability of online searching, subscriptions and chapter by chapter viewing.
Development

Stephen Cornelius, the senior product manager responsible for the management and development of SpringerLink and Springer for R&D, advises that "Last year our main priority was a thorough revision and uplift of the user experience around journal articles, with a view to making them easier to read and easier to navigate. Over the last couple of quarters we've completed some work to give greater visibility to the conference proceedings we publish. Our priority for the next part of this year is to extend some of that thinking to the bulk of the books on the site."

Pricing

For further information on the Springer for R&D platform, purchasers and information managers are best directed to this Springer Nature page. This provides a brief outline of the platform and contact details for further information, trial requests and links for each industry giving prospective purchasers a view of the types of content and availability in their industry.

Companies manage their platform through the admin dashboard. Usage, downloads and deposit balances can all be tracked through these administration pages to assess the value of the product to a business at any given time.

Pricing options range from single-site licences to global agreements with multiple locations. Springer also offer a number of tailored licence options, based on research intensity and number of users. The pricing models seem to provide plenty of flexibility for all types of businesses and the management of their often complex library administration:

- Ebook packages (archives) by subject area
- Reference works by subject area or per book
- Protocols (archives) by subject or by series
- Journals (archives). Pick & Choose or by subject area
- Industry collection package. Journals and ebooks, specifically created for corporate markets. Driven by usage from the industry. Also includes back years and archive content
- Tailored collection. Relevant curated query of keywords, topics and/or titles, specifically created for corporate markets. This option can be updated at any time to keep it optimal and flexible for business requirements.

Content on demand

Prepaid pay-per-view offer: Admin tools, alerts and usage reports help with monitoring usage and account balance. Purchased credits remain valid for two years. Pay-per-view content can also be bundled with Springer Nature content for flexible pricing and access options.
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