Highlighting Faculty Research: The Researcher Profile Audit Service from the Himmelfarb Library at The George Washington University

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Background:

Researcher profile systems are web-based tools which attempt to capture the scholarly output of a researcher. Some tools such as Google Scholar profiles and ORCiDs are opt-in systems that researchers must actively create and cultivate. Others such as the Scopus author profile are algorithmically generated and must be claimed by an author and checked for accuracy.

These profiles continue to grow in importance as a way for fellow researchers, potential employers, and possible collaborators to learn about a researcher's scholarship. Therefore, it's important for researchers to maintain these profiles and to ensure that they are accurate and complete.

In order to support researchers in the departments served by the Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library, we developed an audit service to assess profiles in a variety of systems and to provide recommendations for improvement.

Service Pilot Overview:

In the Fall of 2020, we developed the Researcher Profile Audit Service (RPAS) to assess the quality of researcher profiles for faculty at our institution. We took the following steps in regards to service design, promotion, and researcher feedback.
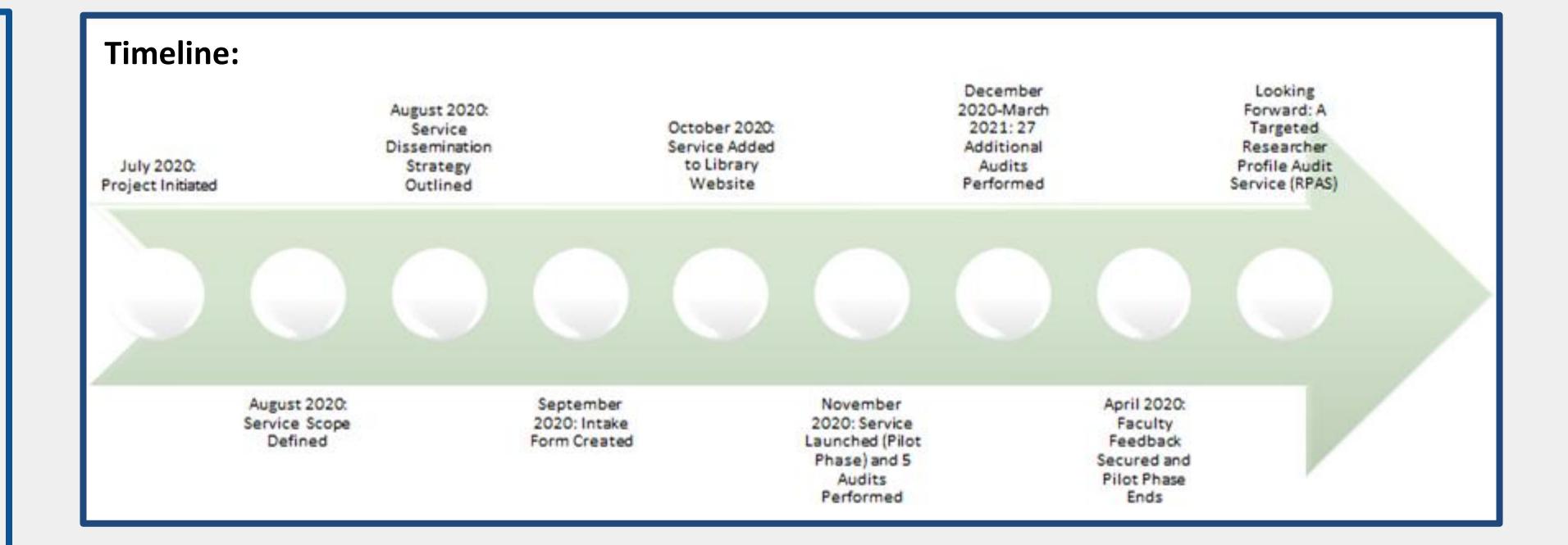
Service Design:
- Initially focused on ORCiD, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Mendeley, and ResearchGate
- Created a Google Docs intake form
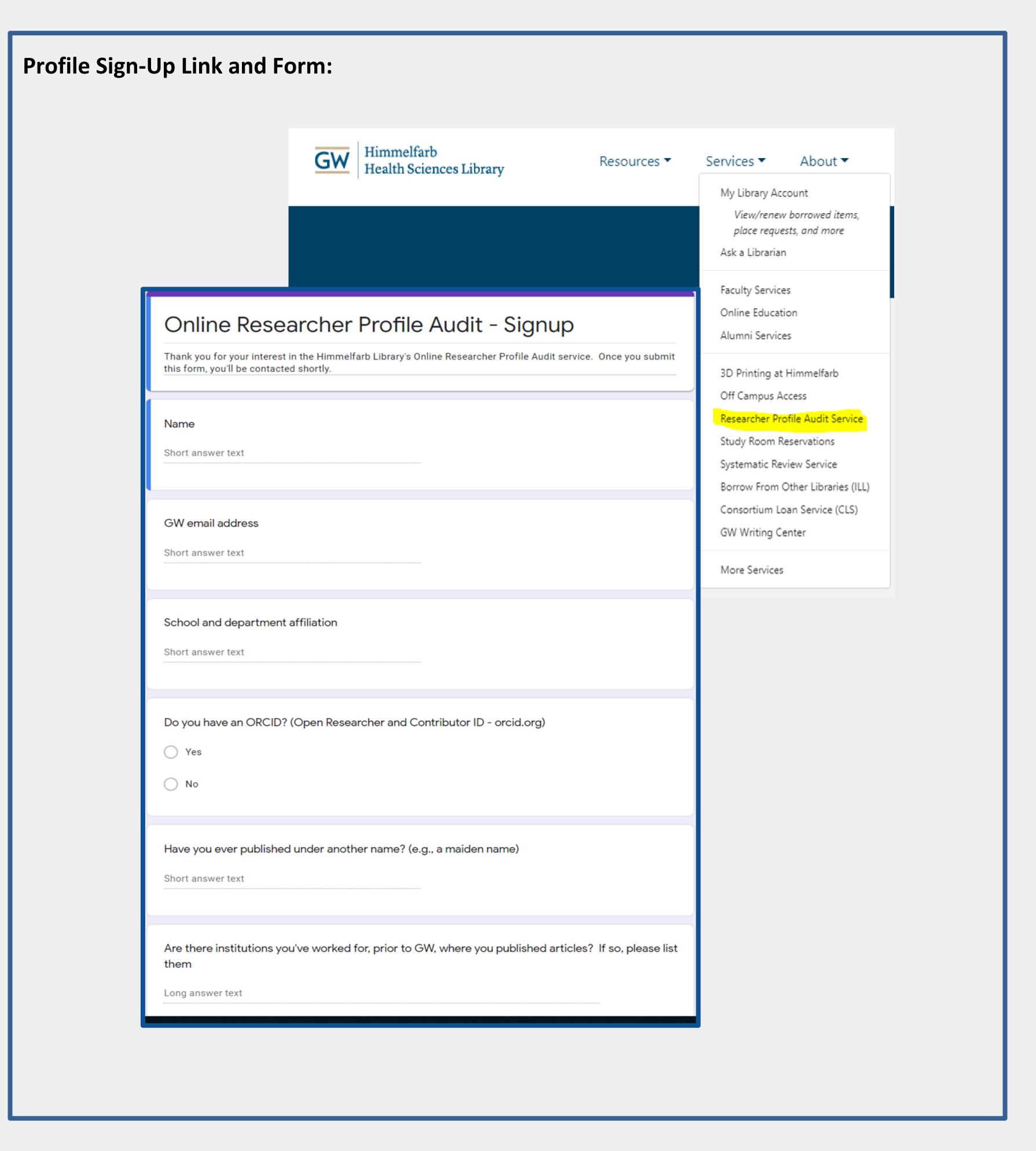- Created a template response form to provide feedback

Service Promotion:
- Liaison letter sent to all faculty
- Wrote blog posts for Himmelfarb Library News
- Created a brief video tutorial
- Reached out to department contacts for promotional help
- Listed the service on the Himmelfarb Library webpage
- Created a corresponding LibGuide

The Service:
- Performed an audit by searching for profiles in specified systems
- Assembled our findings in a shared Google doc
- Used the template response form to make recommendations for profile improvement
- When possible, offered to mediate the improvements ourselves
- Offered follow-up assistance for researchers

Timeline:

July 2020: Project Initiated
August 2020: Service Scope Defined
August 2020: Service Dissemination Strategy Outlined
September 2020: Intake Form Created
October 2020: Service Added to Library Website
November 2020: Service Launched (Pilot Phase) and 5 Audits Performed
December 2020-March 2021: 27 Additional Audits Performed
April 2020: Faculty Feedback Secured and Pilot Phase Ends
Looking Forward: A Targeted Researcher Profile Audit Service (RPAS)

Profile Sign-Up Link and Form:

What we learned:

During the pilot phase of RPAS we completed 32 audits and discovered the following:

- Almost all researchers had issues with their profiles which needed to be addressed in order to optimize their online presence

- Two of the most common issues were:
  - Having multiple profiles within a system. This was especially common for the algorithmically generated profiles such as Scopus and often seemed to result from a change in institutional affiliation. Profiles under variant forms of a researcher's name were also found.
  - Having incomplete profiles which provide little if any information about the researcher. This was common with tools like ORCiD, where we found that researchers frequently created profiles without adding or updating relevant scholarship information.

- User feedback indicated that the number of profiles included in the service could be reduced to optimize researcher participation. Providing information about too many systems could discourage researchers from making any updates.

- Researchers provided positive feedback about the service.

Next Steps:

As a result of our pilot project we have decided on several steps to take in the future:

- Given the rate of response, we are convinced that this service has value to our patrons and we will continue RPAS with improvements.

- Based on user feedback we plan to cut down on the 'action items' sent to researchers as part of our template response.

- What related services can we provide to our patrons based on this model? We are currently considering creating a service to help researchers identify appropriate journals for their manuscripts.

- Overall, we feel this pilot has shown that there is a role for libraries to play in actively supporting scholarly output among library patrons.