

ISSUES BRIEF

Supporting Student Journals

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Overview

Student journals provide undergraduate and graduate students with the opportunity to publish and establish an academic footprint, while also learning about and participating in peer-review processes and the production of online publications. Librarians and library staff are supporting student journals in a variety of ways. These can include:

- Hosting journal software, setting up journals, instruction in software use, and providing technical support.
- Maintaining directories of student journals.
- Using journals as part of curriculum, e.g., students establishing a journal for the class and posting products there.
- Helping students incorporate journal outputs as part of career e-portfolios.
- Convening campus communities of practice.
- Holding student journal forums, workshops or fairs.
- Partnering with student societies and associations to advance these programs.
- Promoting knowledge of copyright, IP, and students' rights as creators.
- Fostering undergraduate students' roles in research and dissemination of their work.
- Maintaining toolkits, editorial checklists, and 'publishing how to' LibGuides.
- Promoting publishing services and contacts on the Library's website.

The following brief details current activities of libraries in Western Canada and more broadly supporting such efforts, while suggesting recommendations and considerations for those looking to start or build upon existing initiatives in this area.

What's Happening Locally

Many COPPUL member libraries are actively supporting student journals. Some interesting projects underway include the following:

- A number of libraries support institution-wide student journals including [MUSe](#) at MacEwan University, [Spectrum](#) at the University of Alberta, and [USURJ](#) at the University of Saskatchewan.

- Simon Fraser University Library is supporting the creation of [Course Journals](#), which are published as part of a for-credit academic class.
- UBC Library has created a comprehensive guide on [Operating a Student Academic Journal](#) that includes sections on the editorial process, peer-review, and publishing.
- The University of Alberta Library held a series of student-led events to establish a peer mentoring community of student journal editors, including a student journal show and tell, and a [peer review workshop](#). The UofA will also work with other libraries to provide [journal publishing services](#) to eligible Canadian open access journals at no cost, including student journals.
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University promotes student journal or project support as part of a robust [Open Publishing Suite](#).

What's Happening Elsewhere

Some illustrative models from across Canada and the US include:

- The University of Toronto's [Student Journal Publishing Guide](#) and [Student Journal Forum](#).
- McGill University's [Scholarly Journal Publishing](#) guide, which includes resources used in "Journal Publishing 101" workshops on student journals specifically.
- The University of Western Ontario publishes about 15 active student journals, including Canada's oldest undergraduate student journal, [The Mirror](#). Western also hosts an annual student journal day.
- Columbia University has an [editorial workbook](#) to support nascent journal publishers.
- The Public Knowledge Project (PKP) provides a [Student Journal Toolkit](#) and an [Instructor Guide for Course Journals](#).
- The Library Publishing Coalition at its annual [Library Publishing Forum](#) regularly features this topic and is an excellent networking venue.

Commonly Used Hosting Platforms

Libraries are using a variety of hosting platforms to support student journals. These include:

- [Digital Commons - bepress](#): Hosted version with complete publication workflow built into it for libraries unable to provide technical support for open source options.
- [Open Journal Systems](#): Most widely used open-source software option used by universities in Canada. Includes publication workflow for facilitating peer-review.
- [Scholastica](#): Hosted open access publishing software. Not as widely used as others.

Other platforms in use but not usually supported by libraries and that lack functions for peer-review, personal and object identifiers (e.g., ORCID, DOI), and digital preservation include:

- [Issuu](#): A commercial product with advanced design and social marketing capacities.

- [WordPress](#): Blogging software occasionally used to host standalone student journals.

Recommendations & Considerations

Student journals can meet a variety of learning outcomes and provide opportunities for students to establish a scholarly record. The motivation behind the initiative can help determine which approach to take in forming a student journal. Some are short-lived opportunities to teach students about the academic publishing process and showcase coursework, while others are sustained long-term with support from student societies, research offices, and other units on campus to disseminate the scholarly output of upper-year undergraduate and graduate students.

Considerations for libraries introducing or developing student journal programs include:

- Select a journal publishing platform, and determine whether to use a hosted service, or to install and maintain the software locally. This decision may be determined by the technical staff and infrastructure available balanced against long-term budgetary considerations for a paid service.
- Student journals can be time consuming, and require specialized expertise. Ensure that staff supporting the journal are confident in their publishing and scholarly communications competencies, and have sufficient time to commit to effectively mentor editorial teams through publishing workflows and best practices.
- With the frequent turnover of student editors these efforts can be difficult to sustain. Ensuring journals have established practices, assigning a faculty or librarian advisor as part of the model, creating memorandums of understanding specifying roles and responsibilities, and following annual editorial renewal checklists, can minimize discontinuity.
- There are many other groups on campus that can be valuable partners in supporting student journals: consider collaborating with student research initiatives, faculties of graduate studies, and student societies and associations.

Learn More

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