



## **Open Publish 2006 Open Access Journals Bobby Graham**

### **Abstract**

Academic and scholarly journals are in trouble: small print runs, part-time editors, and dwindling funds are conspiring to crush them. But help is at hand: new trends in open access publishing support free, digital and open access to research literature, bringing writing and discourse to new and wider audiences.

The National Library of Australia is trialling the Open Journal Systems (OJS) digital publishing software to advance their understanding of managing an online open access journal publishing service.

This paper highlights the process of working with Association for the Study of Australian Literature to migrate their peer-reviewed journal, JASAL, to an online format, using OJS to assist with every stage of the refereed publishing process, from submissions through to online publishing and indexing.

The JASAL trial is available at <http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/index>

### **Keywords**

Journals, open access publishing

## Introduction

The National Library of Australia together with the Association for the Study of Australian Literature is trialling an online open access journal publishing service. Our intention is to better understand what it means to host such a service.

It is interesting to note that Open Publish 2006 'recognises that the next wave of innovation will be driven through creative management and disciplined implementation rather than technology alone'. In this paper I focus on the management and implementation of an online journal. We have kept the technology well away from the users, who in this case are scholarly readers and editors.

This paper highlights the process of working with the association to migrate their scholarly journal, JASAL, to an online format. The open source system we are using for this trial is called Open Journal Systems.

## Scholarly journals

What are scholarly journals? The National Library holds a vast collection of books, journals, newspapers and other objects. Thousands of users access information both online and in print format. In the Reading Room, there is a range of books on the display shelves. Amongst these is a selection of journals. The titles give you a sense of the subject areas:

- Australian Historical Studies
- Sporting Traditions – Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History
- Australian Journal of Social Issues
- Australian Art Education
- Australian Journalism Review

What distinguishes scholarly journals from other books? Journals are produced by a scholarly association or society. The articles are reviewed by their own peer group. The focus of the content is specialised. The readership is small. Journals are the lifeblood of the academic community, both in terms of their intellectual output and their importance to academic advancement. They can be published annually or on some other regular basis. They are produced in very small numbers and for that reason can be uneconomical to maintain.

## New publishing models

These issues create an opportunity for a new model for scholarly publishing. A new model should address the growth of scholarly output. Academic output needs to be both accessible and sustainable in the future. We need to manage global access to the intellectual property within the content. There should be opportunity for users to review and comment on the writing.

Open access publishing offers an alternative model. Open access publishing has flexible and scaleable characteristics. Essentially, an open access publication is in digital format. It is available online. It is accessed free of charge. It is generally free of copyright and licensing restrictions

## Open access publishing and the Library

Why is the Library interested in open access publishing? The Library's objective is to establish 'new ways of collecting, sharing, recording, disseminating and preserving knowledge'. We want 'to ensure our relevance in a rapidly changing world, [by participating] in new online communities'. For these reasons, the Library decided to engage in an open access journal publishing trial, coincidentally also called Open Publish.

Open Publish is a pilot project to help the Library understand how to host an open access journal publishing service. For the purposes of the trial, we are using software called Open Journal Systems (OJS).

## Using OJS

The OJS system was first released in 2002 as a research and development initiative of the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The development is currently overseen by a partnership consisting of the PKP, the Canadian Center for Studies in Publishing and the Simon Fraser University Library. Many associations and societies are already using this software to publish their journals.

So what precisely is OJS and what does it do? OJS is a journal management and publishing system. It assists with every stage of the refereed publishing process, from submissions through to online publication. Its features are significant: it is locally installed and locally controlled; editors (not IT staff) configure the requirements, the sections, and the review process. The submission and management of all content is online. For those choosing to use it, there is a subscription module with delayed open access options. There is comprehensive indexing of content as part of a global system; OJS includes Reading Tools for content, based on the subject field and editors' choice. Users communicate via email notification, which includes a commenting ability for readers. There is context-sensitive online Help support.

## Working with ASAL

Our process started in October 2005 with a serendipitous meeting between the Library and the Association for the Study of Australian Literature. This academic association promotes Australian writing. They aim to increase awareness in the wider community by holding regular conferences and publishing a journal called JASAL. This journal consists of essays, based on the conference papers, and book reviews. The association publishes the journal annually, and prints a very small quantity of books.

At the time of the meeting with the Library, the association recognised that their publishing model is not sustainable. They were keen to try out new methods of production and dissemination. The Library was keen to participate as they saw this as an opportunity to collect content at the time of creation. The Library also felt it has a role in hosting scholarly Australian online journals that may not have a natural home elsewhere.

## The goals

The parties agreed to run a trial using the OJS software. Our project team was Susan Lever, Journal Editor, my colleague Steven McPhillips, the System Administrator and myself as the Journal Manager. Initially the three of us met twice to set up the process. In addition, Susan and I spent a few days working together. For the rest, we managed at a distance using email and the telephone to communicate.

We set ourselves some modest goals.

We decided to upload one previously published JASAL volume to test the OJS workflow and processes.

We invited members of the association to take part in the process. They collaborated by taking on editorial roles such as Author, Reviewer, Copy Editor and Proofreader. All the participants worked at a distance from as far away as Ballarat, Perth, Hobart, Wagga Wagga, Sydney or Canberra.

We decided to 'skin' both Open Publish and JASAL. We commissioned a designer to deliver a basic banner design. We specified something simple and sustainable to cater for any future journals.

We worked towards enabling the current editors to manage the process. Our plan was to have one volume online by February 2006, in time for the ASAL Executive Meeting and Conference. As it happened, we managed to upload all four back issues by that deadline. At the meeting we demonstrated the site and ran a workshop for the current editors, Barbara Milech and Philip Mead. After the meeting, they took over from the project team. Their goal was to publish a new journal using OJS to manage the process. We set ourselves a target to have that published in time for the association's July 2006 conference.

## The milestones

We had three milestones along the way. The first was to install the OJS software on a Library server. The second was to establish a production service. The third was to develop a sustainable model for working with the JASAL editorial team. We comfortably reached all three milestones and even took on two further journals as part of the trial process.

## The process

So what did we achieve? At this point we should look at the online journal.

JASAL is one journal within the Open Publish trial. As mentioned earlier, we decided to re-'skin' the site by applying a simple banner colour. We did this in order to maintain the style and integrity of the site for future journals.

A user has quite a bit of information available from the Home page. The 'About' section provides detail on the people, policies, submissions and other aspects of the journal. This would be of interest to a user submitting an article or a review. All the content within these sections is customisable and is uploaded and managed by the journal editorial team.

A user can log in, or alternately register for the first time.

The 'Search' facility offers a free text search across all articles within this particular journal. There is an advanced search function, either by various categories, or by date or by index term.

The 'Current' tab takes the user to the current table of contents. Each journal article is available in pdf format.

The 'Archives' section is a list of all previously published volumes of this journal.

The user has more functions available via the navigation bar. One can search across the complete journal by three means: by issue, by author and by title. Open access publishing enables deeper and wider access than would be the case if one were working with a print document only.

Access to the working side of JASAL is password restricted to the editorial team, but we should have a look at that zone in order to examine the workflow.

The Journal Manager has most privileges in the system. He or she is responsible for the initial 'Setup' via the 'Management Pages'.

The setup pages are divided into five sections: 1. Details; 2. Policies; 3. Submission; 4. Management; and 5. The Look. The Journal Manager can upload information to these sections at any stage, but some categories or areas need to be completed at the start of a journal's life.

The Journal Manager can create new 'Users', choosing from a list of ten 'Roles'.

Once the journal is set up, the Editor can manage the workflow and processes. He or she would do that via two sections: 'Submissions' for the editorial process; and 'Issues' to publish the articles. Within Submissions, the Editor has control of each article through four management sections: Summary, Review, Editing, and History. When it comes to publishing the journal, the Editor can create an issue. He or she can schedule submissions to that issue, notify users of the issue and toggle between future and back issues as required.

The management systems within the OJS software are rigorous and disciplined. Each article has version control. All correspondence and records are archived. Articles cannot be

published unless they've gone through all stages of publication. Every step and stage has been carefully considered. Consequently the system can be overwhelming initially, but the developers have provided an excellent manual, *OJS in an Hour*.

### User experiences

I was very pleased with the way all the collaborators engaged with the system. Even though for many of them this kind of workflow and process was new and strange, they all rose to the challenge. Once we published JASAL online, we received positive feedback from various users:

'I am writing to thank . . . the National Library profusely for your commitment to bringing . . . JASAL online through the Library's website. This is a major achievement for us, one that will take the study of Australian writing to an even greater audience.' Peter Kirkpatrick, President of ASAL

'This looks terrific – and such an earnest and scholarly vision.' David Gilbey, Senior Lecturer in English, Charles Sturt University

"I'm just writing to let you know how much I have appreciated the online version of JASAL. I taught Gail Jones's *Black Mirror* in a course last semester on Contemporary Australian Writing, and put up links on the course website to Paul Genoni's and Tanya Dalziell's articles in JASAL. Several students used the material in interesting ways in their essays.

'Please pass on my thanks to everyone involved in putting JASAL online – it's a really valuable resource and something we all hope to see more of in academic publishing.'" Dr Russell Smith, Lecturer in English, The Australian National University

### Conclusion

By the time of writing, JASAL has more than 100 registered users. The editors have successfully published seven reviews in a new edition. They are about to publish an additional 10 articles. There is talk of a second volume of JASAL this year. New members have signed up to the association. The Library has taken on a further two journals as part of the trial process. We plan to move to a service environment.

So in conclusion, we kept the technology away from the users. We assisted them at all stages. We worked collaboratively to learn the system. We exceeded our goals and met all our milestones. Our combined creative management style, together with a disciplined implementation process, has made us a winning team.