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open journal system (OJS) *http://bit.ly/1sxyw0S*

what is it?

Open Journal Systems (OJS) is an open source journal management and publishing system developed by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) at the University of British Columbia, through its federally funded efforts to expand and improve access to research.

Development is currently overseen by a partnership consisting of the PKP, the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing and the Simon Fraser University Library.

OJS was developed as a scholarly journal publishing system to support every stage of the refereed publishing process, from submissions through to online publication and indexing by way of its online interface.

OJS is the dominant system for open access (OA) journal publishing. As of December 2011, this system is being used to publish over 11,500 titles in ten languages around the world.

how does it work?

OJS can be installed on any computer system (Unix, Windows, Mac, etc.). While the program is open source and thus can be customized, the standard system can be extensively configured without any programming knowledge.

OJS provides a modern online presence for electronic journals and its slick, customizable interface is easy to navigate and use. Created with the non-technical user in mind, OJS allows for rapid development and deployment without the worry of creating databases and programming interfaces. One simply needs to decide on a colour scheme/design, upload some data, and the OJS software automatically displays and indexes articles and issues. OJS can operate as a multilingual system, enabling users to toggle between languages on each page, and enter certain data in several additional languages.

In addition to its easy start-up, OJS software takes full advantage of its online format by allowing journal readers many searching options. Editors can link additional readings to journal articles and even permit users to record comments on articles. Readers can choose to search the full text of journal articles, to narrow their search to titles, authors, or abstracts, or to search all of the above for maximum hits. Readers can also browse journals by author, title, or issue.

The excellent illustrated *Open Journal Systems: A Complete Guide to Online Publishing* provides step-by-step instructions for configuring, managing and operating an OJS journal (see the link in "further reading", p. 2 of this brief).

who's doing it?

In Ontario, five universities have had active individual OJS installations for more than four years (Guelph, Queen's, Toronto, Windsor, and York). In late 2011, the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) decided to support its members by opening an OJS hosting service provided by Scholars Portal and two new libraries (Brock University and the University of Ottawa) now support OJS.

why is it significant?

The goal of OJS is to facilitate open access to scholarly materials via open access (OA) journals. OA journals provide free access to scholarly literature by covering the publications costs through a variety of alternatives to the predominant subscription model—institutional subsidies/grants/memberships, advertising revenue, article fees, combination of free online version with paid print subscriptions, etc. OJS supports variant models of journal sustainability and OJS journals may be hosted by individual institutions or consortia.

With its low start-up costs (a computer with an internet connection and some committed scholars), OJS has allowed scholarly journals to be published in countries around the world, providing exposure to new scholars and new areas of research which might not fit the mandate of established commercial journals. OJS has also allowed scholars to publish journals dealing with modalities of scholarly communication that might not be economically viable to a commercial journal.

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further reading

"Directory of Open Access Journals" DOAJ. Web

"OA journal business models" Open Access Directory Wiki.

"OJS Documentation" PKP. Web

"OJS FAQ" Queen's University

"Open Access Backgrounder." CARL. Web

"Open Journal Systems: A Complete Guide to Online Publishing" PKP 2010. Web

Shapiro, Lorna. "Establishing and Publishing an Online Peer-Reviewed Journal: Action Plan, Resourcing, and Costs" PKP, 2005. Web

"Support forums for the Public Knowledge Project" PKP. Web

January 2013
Sam Kalb
Queen's University Library

what are the challenges?

The primary downside is the cost of the service in terms of staff time: promoting the service, helping to set up new journals, training, answering operational questions and maintaining online resources.

While equipment costs to maintain an OJS installation are modest, a library also needs to set aside sufficient technical expertise to handle software upgrades, troubleshoot problems, and make necessary adjustments to configurations.

where is it going?

In 2012, OCUL joined the Public Knowledge Project as a major development partner in open access scholarly publishing.

As a result of this partnership, OCUL will contribute to software development, testing, support, and hosting of the PKP open source software suite:

- Open Journal Systems (OJS)
- Open Conference Systems (OCS)
- Open Harvester System (OHS)
- Open Monograph Press (OMP)

The suite is due for release this year.

With the recent establishment of the Scholar's Portal OJS hosting service, the Ontario libraries with individual OJS installations will have to assess whether to move to OCUL's hosting site and reduce local costs for equipment and technical support or to maintain local control and the accompanying costs.

OJS software is also continually upgraded in response to user feedback.

what are the implications for libraries?

Open access is a growing global movement offering librarians an opportunity to engage with the academic community through new models of digital scholarly communication. As such, academic libraries can and are playing a more active role in the dissemination of scholarship.

Offering a scholarly journal hosting service can be an important tool for community engagement. That said, libraries in Ontario must decide whether they can afford to go it alone or take advantage of a consortial OJS hosting service.

Libraries must also decide what services, beyond the standard OJS configuration, they are willing to provide and whether to charge for services such as: generating XML style sheets for customized journal interfaces, generating XML code to load back issues, and helping journal export content to preferred indexing services.

All OCULA Information Briefs are available at http://bit.ly/1IKV9Jt.