How to Start an Open Access Journal

A Starter’s Guide to Familiarize Yourself with the Key Issues in Starting an Open Access Journal

Mission + Vision
What are your overall mission and goals for your journal? Choose a journal title that fits with your journal’s scope and try to find a niche that is not currently saturated by other journals.

Content Strategy
What is your overall topic for the journal? Will it be narrow or broad in topic and reach? What types of content will you publish, i.e. articles, book reviews, interviews, editorials, conference proceedings?

File Formats
What kinds of files and formats will you produce and how will they be accessed? Will you produce a print edition?

Periodicity

Editorial Board
Recruit for quality and reputation from the beginning. Form an editorial board consisting of your most notorious colleagues and develop a rigorous peer review process.

Organization + Operations
How will you be organized? As a collective or a for-profit publisher? Or independent? Think about roles to be filled (salaried vs. volunteer-based) to sustain your journal operations.

Workflows
Make sure that everybody knows what to do and when and how by setting up protocols such as author style guides, metadata standards, templates, as well as schedules, etc.

Journal Management Systems (JMS)
A JMS can increase your workflow efficiency. One reputable option is Open Journal Systems (OJS), that provides a technical infrastructure not only for presenting your articles online, but for the entire editorial management workflow, including submission, multiple rounds of peer-review, and indexing. However, new tools, plugins, and modules are allowing for flexibility and customization with or without a JMS.

I. Customized Tool Set
New, easy to use tools and plugins are evolving everyday from platforms like Wordpress and Blogger to open peer review (LUBRE) platforms, and project management tools (Asana, Basecamp). Customize your toolset to your needs.

TECHNICAL SKILL LEVEL

YEARY COST
LOW - MED
£0 - £500

II. OJS Tool Set
OJS offers a comprehensive set of tools and services to operate and manage your OA journal. University libraries can typically help with setup and maintenance.

TECHNICAL SKILL LEVEL

YEARY COST
LOW
£0 - £500
+ one time set up fee £2,000 - £5,000

III. OJS Hybrid Tool Set
Setup OJS on your own server, use it for the project management services, and combine it with other tools and plugins that meet your journal’s needs.

TECHNICAL SKILL LEVEL

YEARY COST
MED - HIGH
£100 - £1,000
+ £2,000 to run own server

I. Customized Tool Set
II. OJS Tool Set
III. OJS Hybrid Tool Set

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Centre for Digital Cultures
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**RESPONSIVE DESIGN**

Design within a print and digital setting offers an entire new spectrum of design issues and opportunities ranging from how your content is experienced online, on mobile devices, tablets, as well as downloadable pdfs or e-books.

**I. CUSTOMIZED TOOL SET**

You can either develop a website or customize a blog using Wordpress or service providers. Customizable themes are offered at a fair price.

**TECHNICAL SKILL LEVEL**

MEDIUM

**YEARLY COST**

LOW-MEDIUM

£50-£500

**II. QIS TOOL SET**

QIS in cooperation with University Libraries can offer off-the-shelf designs with various plug-in options, along with full service and installation packages.

**TECHNICAL SKILL LEVEL**

LOW

**YEARLY COST**

LOW-MEDIUM

£500-2000

**III. QIS HYBRID TOOL SET**

A third option is to use QIS for journal management and customize your website design via QIS REST API.

**TECHNICAL SKILL LEVEL**

MEDIUM

**YEARLY COST**

LOW-MEDIUM

£500-1500

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**DISTRIBUTION + MARKETING CHANNELS**

Identify where your journal will end up, i.e. university libraries, repositories, directories, Ibooks, Amazon, book-trade. Register your journal with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and develop a multi-channel distribution strategy.

**DIRECT E-MARKETING**

How will you announce new publications throughout your academic community? Consider direct email, RSS feeds, Listservs, announcement lists.

**METRICS + ANALYTICS**

Journal rankings, downloads and altmetrics do matter. H-index, Impact factor, Eigenfactor are being adopted in some countries, though this unfortunately excludes small independent journals.

**INDEXING**

You will need a journal ISSN (free of cost). Consider Digital Object Identifiers (DOI) for each issue/article to increase findability (issued via DataCite, CrossRef, and MEDRA).

**REPOSITIES + ARCHIVING**

Seek the help of a librarian to get your journal listed on the appropriate indexes, content aggregators, and repositories. Preserve your scholarly works using LOCKSS to ensure long-term availability on the web.

**RETAIL TRADE**

Get ISBNs to get access to the bookelling trade. Ask your insistution (or its library) for supply. Otherwise you will have to buy them yourselves!

**PRINT ON DEMAND (POD)**

Collaborate with a POD service to organize printing and global distribution, e.g. Lightning Source, Books-on-Demand, or CreateSpace.

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**SUSTAINABILITY**

Apart from having a dedicated network of volunteers and cost-effective workflows, there are many ways to create revenue and funding streams. Mix, match, and experiment with what works for you best.

**OPEN CONTENT LICENCES**

Draw from Creative Commons (CC) licenses which are the most widespread. The notions of ‘open’ and ‘open access’ are still widely debated. Spend some time getting acquainted with each license and their ramifications from both the author and publisher perspective.

The following three are the most open:

- **CC BY**:

  The most liberal of the Creative Commons licenses apart from CC 0. This license allows others to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon your work - even commercially, provided they credit you for the original creation and clearly indicate that changes were made to your work.

- **CC BY SA**:

  Similar to CC BY, however, others must licence new creations under identical terms. Therefore, all new works based on your work will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also allow commercial use.

- **CC BY NC**:

  This attribution shows universal commitment to the public domain by waiving all rights to the work. Others can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, all without asking permission.

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**KEY TERMS**

- DOI: The Directory of Open Access Journals
- ONAL: Online Access to Scholarly Journals
- QIS: QUICK INNOVATION SERVICES
- MEDRA: MEDAR
- LOCKSS: LINKED OPEN CONSERVATION SYSTEM SERVICES
- CC: Creative Commons
- POD: PRINT ON DEMAND
- CC BY: CREATIVE COMMONS
- CC BY SA: CREATIVE COMMONS
- CC BY NC: CREATIVE COMMONS
- REF: REFERENCE
- CC BY NC: CREATIVE COMMONS
- ORG: ORGANIZATION
- URL: UNIVERSAL RESOURCE LOCATOR
- ORCID: OPEN ACCESS IDENTITY RESOURCES
- CC BY: CREATIVE COMMONS
- CC BY NC: CREATIVE COMMONS
- ORG: ORGANIZATION