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CHECKLIST OF GOOD PRACTICES IN USING OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS SOFTWARE (OJS) FOR JOURNAL EDITING AND PUBLISHING

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☑ INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of the EIFL Open Access Programme (EIFL-OA) is to ensure the growth and sustainability of digital repositories and journal publishing platforms. Following publication of our popular guide to using DSpace repository software, 'How to make your Open Access repository work really well', we produced a similar resource on software for journals - Open Journal Systems (OJS).

This checklist provides good practice recommendations for using OJS software for journal editing and publishing. OJS is created by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), which is a multi-university initiative developing free and open source software to improve the quality and reach of scholarly publishing.

The checklist includes an overview of OJS 3 and tips on software plugins, journal procedures and policies, system security and content, usage statistics, and suggestions for improving content visibility and discoverability. It also includes a section about indexing your journals in DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) and recommendations for further reading.

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If you have any comments and suggestions, please email them to iryna.kuchma@eifl.net.

☑ ARE YOU USING THE LATEST VERSION OF THE SOFTWARE - OJS 3?

The current production release (August 30, 2021) is OJS 3.3.0-8 and it can be [downloaded as .tar.gz](#) (49 MB). OJS is a comprehensive tool for managing the entire submission and editorial workflow and for publishing journal articles and issues online. It offers [the following features](#):

- A responsive reader front-end with a selection of free themes or designs
- A flexible and configurable editorial workflow
- Online submission and management of all content
- It is integrated with scholarly publishing services such as Crossref, ORCID, and DOAJ
- It is recommended by Google Scholar for ease of indexing and discoverability
- It is locally installed and controlled
- It is community-led and supported
- It is multilingual and [translated into over 30 languages](#)
- It comes with extensive user guides and training videos

Check out the slides and recording of this LIBSENSE webinar, [Open access publishing with OJS 3](#) (in English and French), that covers guidelines for establishing a scholarly journal and journal management; the benefits of using OJS; and tips on OJS 3 configuration, navigation interface/dashboard, journal, website and workflow settings, including configuration of the editorial section and distribution settings, visibility of the journal, how OJS 3 is different from the previous OJS versions, how to set it up, and a live demo of using OJS.

Consider upgrading to the latest version, if possible. Upgrade instructions can be found here: https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/UPGRADE. The [Upgrading from OJS 2 to OJS 3](#) guide describes some of the changes between OJS 2 and OJS 3 and suggests steps for planning and completing your migration. This guide will be useful for multi-journal installations, a single journal, various kinds of institutions, and publishers.

Would you like to see the OJS 3 Demo? PKP hosts a demonstration of [OJS 3.x (current)](#) in different languages. To explore the inner workings of OJS, you can take OJS for a test drive using a live demo install: [OJS 3.x (current)](#). The login for the administrator account is "admin" and the password is "testdrive".

For more information, check out:

- [Open Journal Systems 3 user guides, developer documentation and publishing tips](#)
- [Learning OJS 3.3: A Visual Guide to Open Journal Systems](#) (also available [in French for OJS 3.2](#) and [in Arabic for OJS 3.1)](#)
- [PKP Administrator Guide](#)
- [Setting up a Journal in OJS 3.3](#)

- [Editorial Workflow in OJS 3.3](#)
- PKP video tutorials: [Editorial workflow videos](#), [Journal setup videos](#), [What's New in OJS 3.3](#)

☑ HAVE YOU SECURED YOUR SYSTEM?

You will find the basic steps and recommendations for secure deployment of software and secure file management, as well as steps for configuring your software to combat spam and other forms of malicious registration activity on your site, in [Securing your system FAQ](#).

In addition, having a strong anti-virus software on your server to protect your OJS platform against viruses and other malicious code that may be present in uploaded files will be an advantage.

☑ HAVE YOU ACTIVATED PLUGINS?

Facilitating citations and social media sharing

Activate available plugins such as [Citation Style Language](#), so that your articles can be easily cited, and [AddThis](#) Social Media Sharing to make it easier for the articles to be shared and hence increase visibility.

Plugin to enable download of article metadata (BibTeX, MARC XML, RDF, RIS) in OJS

[This plugin](#) provides an export of article metadata in the following formats: BibTeX, MARC XML, RDF and RIS. In contrast to the already existing citation plugin of OJS (as part of the 'reading tools'), the metadata are not only displayed, but also offered for download.

Article level metrics

[Paperbuzz Plugin](#) for OJS versions 3.1.2 and above, built in cooperation with the [Paperbuzz](#) team at [OurResearch](#), brings free altmetrics (an alternative to traditional citation-based metrics) based on open data to thousands of OJS journals.

Author identification

The ORCID Profile Plugin for OJS enables the collection and display of authenticated ORCIDs (Open Researcher and Contributor IDs) of contributors to journals published with OJS. [ORCID](#) is a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes individual researchers and supports automated links between researchers and their professional activities. Check out the [ORCID Plugin Guide](#) for more details and watch [video tutorials](#).

Organizational identifiers

To improve support for organizational identifiers, TIB developed an OJS plugin for managing ROR (Research Organization Registry) metadata in OJS 3.2 and 3.3 that allows adding organizations from the ROR registry and autocompletion of multilingual names, provided that they are maintained in the ROR registry. This plugin is integrated into the OJS plugin gallery.

- Info: https://github.com/withanage/ror#research-organization-registryror-plugin
- Code: https://github.com/withanage/ror
- Demo: https://github.com/withanage/ror/blob/master/docu/ror.gif

Depositing journal articles in repositories

OJS allows journal managers and authors to deposit articles in repositories (for example, institutional repositories) via the SWORD protocol (Simple Web-service Offering Repository Deposit). The publisher has a comprehensive metadata set and a full text and the repository offers dissemination and archiving services.

The journal manager defines a list of repositories in which an article could be uploaded; during the article submission stage, the author ticks the box (so that when the article is published it is automatically uploaded to the selected repository), and OJS does the rest.

☑ DO YOU TRACK AND ANALYSE STATISTICS?

Do you have questions about statistics? Check out this handbook that explains how to configure, use, and troubleshoot PKP's Usage Statistics Framework. It also contains some information on other statistics-gathering methods that are supported by OJS.

☑ HOW VISIBLE AND DISCOVERABLE IS YOUR JOURNAL?

As most readers discover online content through internet searches, greater visibility and discoverability make it possible to reach out to a greater audience.

Enable OAI-PMH protocol and register with OA content aggregators

OJS exposes article metadata through OAI-PMH, which is a metadata harvesting protocol. Thanks to the OAI-PMH protocol, aggregators may automatically harvest article-level metadata from OJS-powered journals at regular intervals, through direct machine-to-machine communication.

To enable the protocol, you should configure the OAI module in OJS: https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/doxygen/master/html/group___oai.html.
Having this done, check whether the module is properly configured by using one of the following validators:

http://oval.base-search.net/.
https://www.openarchives.org/Register/ValidateSite

If the journal website passes validation, you can register your journal(s) for indexing by various aggregators of OA content, such as:
- BASE (to suggest a source for harvesting fill in the form: https://www.base-search.net/about/en/suggest.php)
- CORE (https://core.ac.uk/faq/) or
- WorldCat (register for a WorldCat DigitL Collection Gateway: https://www.worldcat.org/DigitalCollectionGateway/register.jsp; once your account is created, you can register your journal(s) and set up harvesting).

Some aggregators have specific requirements that should be met in order to have content harvested – e.g. OpenAIRE.

You may also register your journal website as a data provider with Open Archives Initiative.

Index your journal with search engines

One of the principal ways in which websites are found and indexed by internet search engines is through metatags. Meta tags are bits of HTML that are on your webpage that aren't visible to users but are visible to search engines and the bots they employ to crawl the web for content. OJS allows you to fill in relevant metadata for your journal to help you best describe your content for better findability.
If you are a Journal Manager you can go to:
Journal Manager > Setup > 1. Details
You can fill out description and keywords information that provides your site with important metadata that is crawled by the search engines. Be as thorough as you can. There is also a Custom Tags field that can be used for special use terms that might be unique to your journal.

- From Getting Your Journal Indexed PKP Wiki.

- Tips for using Google Search Console

  Setting up a Google Search Console account will allow you to register your site for indexing and submit its XML sitemap. OJS has an inbuilt sitemap. This is the usual path to the sitemap: http(s)://journal domain/index.php/journal/sitemap.

  This is an optional step, but it does speed up the indexing process, especially in Google Scholar. Google will automatically detect 'scholarly' article content once you have published it, and will add that to Google Scholar, so no other manual steps are required of you.

  Please Note: Setting up Google Search Console will require a Google account. Additionally, if you use Google Analytics for collecting the OJS usage statistics, the two services can be used together.

- Tips for indexing with Google Scholar

There is no need to register your site for it to be indexed. The Google Scholar crawler will automatically find the site. The standard OJS URL structure has worked well for a long time. Avoid customizing URLs, which makes it more difficult to identify a journal site, and as a result takes longer to index.

For indexing, Google Scholar needs URLs for all articles and bibliographic information in the form of machine-readable metadata tags ("metatags"). You can find more information about metatags in the Google Scholar inclusion guidelines:
https://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/inclusion.html#indexing

In OJS you can view metatags in the source code from the article landing page by right clicking or keyboard command to 'View Page Source', depending on your browser, and search HTML source for "citation_' to view metatags. Metatags should match the published PDF: for example, title, author, and publication dates match and bibliographic metatags written in (only) language/script of the published full text article. Don't duplicate metatag information in multiple languages and scripts.

Common mistakes include inconsistent "first name last name" or "last name, first name" format, incomplete author names, and errors in spelling and capitalization. List complete author names in citation_author tags as they are written in the published PDF, in the same order as the author order of the published PDF. Use either "last name, first name" or "first name last name" format in metatags.

If metatags are no longer included after OJS upgrade, which was a known issue for journals upgrading from OJS 2.x to OJS 3.0.1, 3.0.2, 3.1.0, and 3.1.1., when the Google Scholar plugin was not automatically enabled, then -

Test: view the source code for a few articles in each journal that upgraded. If there is no citation_title tag, your site is affected.

Fix: re-enable "Google Scholar Indexing Plugin" manually for individual journals via admin dashboard for OJS instances with a small number of journals. And upgrade to OJS 3.1.2. Use an SQL command for large OJS instances with many journals:
https://github.com/pkp/ojs/blob/stable-3_1_2/dbscripts/xml/upgrade/3.1.2_update.xml#L41..L42

Read more in the Google Scholar Guide and check out slides and recording of the joint EIFL and Google Scholar webinar on how the Google Scholar indexing system works and how to fix common OJS indexing problems, best practices for OJS journal indexing, Google Scholar indexing guidelines and resources for OJS.

Create Keywords for Article

OJS provides some tools which enable authors and journals managers to create keywords for the items being published. This feature needs to be enabled so that the submission form may include the keyword description during metadata description.

Embed Dublin Core metadata in PDFs

Most users who retrieve journal content using internet search engines will land directly on PDFs. They will probably download a PDF and save it for later use. If a PDF is not supplied with embedded metadata that can be automatically ingested into reference management tools, users may not be willing to return to the journal's website to check e.g. the licensing information or the version of the paper. That is why it is useful to supply PDFs with embedded metadata in accordance with the [XMP (Extensible Metadata Platform) standard](#). This can easily be done with the help of the reference management software JabRef: http://help.jabref.org/en/XMP.

Export DOI and associated metadata export

PKP is continually working with Crossref to improve the level of overall DOI export support provided within OJS and to help publishers and journals using OJS take better advantage of Crossref services. As of 2014, PKP has become a Sponsoring Organization of Crossref and, as such, provides much improved Crossref integration and overall support for the service. Additionally, PKP can now act as a sponsor representative for OJS journals wishing to apply for Crossref membership, and is in some cases able to waive fees. Check out [this manual](#) and learn more about [DOIs, how to set up the Crossref Plugin, reference linking and deposit,](#) how to enable the [funding information plugin](#), and do a [similarity check](#).

Register with DOAJ

[DOAJ](#) is a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals. It includes over 17,214 journals covering all areas of science, technology, medicine, social science and humanities. The content of the journals indexed in DOAJ is automatically indexed by other content aggregators (for example, [Dimensions.ai](#), [EBSCO Discovery Service](#), [OpenAIRE](#)).

The DOAJ Journal Application Form is available here: https://doaj.org/application/new and you will need to log in or register to fill out the form. You will be able to save your progress and review all your answers before you submit them. A PDF version of the application form is available for reference only. Before you start, read DOAJ [Guide to applying](#), also available in [French (Canadian)](#). [DOAJ Application Guide for OJS Journals](#) from PKP is another useful resource for you to consult.

And when registered, use a [DOAJ Plugin](#) in OJS.

More about improving visibility and discoverability of your journal

Consult the revised edition of [Getting Found, Staying Found, Increasing Impact: Enhancing Readership and Preserving Content for OJS Journals guide](#), that highlights many aspects of the publishing process that are important for increasing your journal's "findability" and building a wider audience. Moreover, it will also show you how to ensure reliable and ongoing access to your valuable content. Much of the information in this resource is intended to be generic and could be applied to any journal, using any software platform. However, the authors have opted to include additional information pertaining to the OJS software to provide further illustrations of how to apply this information in a real-world setting.

☑ ARE YOUR JOURNAL PROCEDURES AND POLICIES AVAILABLE ONLINE?

One way of demonstrating your journal's high ethical and professional standards is to publish your policies and procedures online. In line with publishing best practices, document and publish procedures and policies, such as review process, access policy, quality control, Article Processing Charges (if you charge any), author guidelines, copyright and licensing policy (e.g. Creative Commons licences). OASPA (Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association) strongly encourages the use of the CC-BY license, rather than one of the more restrictive licenses or a custom license that is functionally equivalent to CC-BY, read more in [Best practices in licensing and attribution: What you need to know](#).

Below are some templates developed within the '[Revisiting open access journal policies and practices in Serbia' project](#):
- [Editorial policy template](#) that covers editorial responsibilities, authors' responsibilities, reviewers' responsibilities, peer review process, procedures for dealing with unethical behaviour and retraction policy, open access policy, copyright issues, etc.
- Different options for copyright management - templates for licensing agreements:
  - [authors retain copyright and publishing rights without restriction (a recommended option for journals)](#);
  - [author statement](#) and
  - [copyright transfer agreement (not recommended option)](#).

Consult [Journal Publishing Guide: Copyright and licensing](#) by the University of Toronto Libraries Journal Production Services for more information. And check out the [Journal Policies and Workflows Guide](#) by PKP.

☑ DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE PKP PROJECT PRESERVATION NETWORK?

The [Public Knowledge Project Preservation Network (PKP PN)](#) offers free-of-charge, low-barrier preservation through the global LOCKSS Network for OJS journals.

The PKP PN deposits content using the LOCKSS Program, which offers decentralized and distributed preservation. This is a free preservation option for journals using OJS 3.1.2 and newer, which are not part of any other digital preservation service (such as CLOCKSS or Portico).
The PKP PN functions as a "dark" archive, meaning that end-users will not have access to the preserved content until after a "trigger event", such as cessation of publication. After a trigger event, PKP staff will import the preserved content into one or more OJS instances hosted by PKP member institutions. Once loaded into these host OJS instances, the content will be publicly accessible.
Using the PKP PN only requires installing the PKP PN plugin in your OJS journal and agreeing to the terms of service. For information about the PKP PN, visit the PKP Preservation Network Documentation.
(From Getting Found, Staying Found guide)

☑ HOW ACCESIBLE IS YOUR JOURNAL CONTENT?

Check out The Creating Accessible Content guide that covers the general principles of creating universally accessible content published on the web. It highlights techniques to address specific limitations for the use of assistive technologies, such as screen readers for people with visual impairment or sign language for those with auditory limitations. Finally, it gives specific tips on creating different galley formats in an accessible way. This guide will be useful for authors in preparation of their manuscripts and for editors in formatting materials for publication and adding content to journal websites.

Also consult Designing Your Journal guide that gives advice and information on how to make your OJS journal attractive, accessible, and unique.

☑ FURTHER READING

- Ten Core Practices – 10 best practice guidelines for editors and journal publishers, covering issues like how to deal with allegations of misconduct; authorship and contributorship; conflicts of interest, post publication corrections, etc.
- Journal Publishing Guide: Publishing Best Practices Checklist by the University of Toronto Libraries Journal Production Services
- Basic Steps for Starting a New Journal by PKP
- PKP School - an online, open, self-paced collection of courses:
    - Becoming an Editor
    - Becoming a Reviewer
    - Writing for Publication

- Library Publishing courses: [Getting Started in Library Publishing](); [Attracting, Selecting, and Disseminating Content for your Library Publishing Program](); [Building and Measuring Impact for your Library Publishing Program]().

- PKP resources will help you learn more about using OJS software or about starting and managing your own journal: https://pkp.sfu.ca/education-and-training/
- Medical journals might also be interested in [OJS PubMed Export Plugin]()
- If you publish a student journal, check out the [Student Journal Toolkit]() by PKP
- [Handbook for Journal Editors]() by INASP
- [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): How to use PKP software and common troubleshooting issues]()
- [Better Practices in Journal Metadata]() by PKP