

Facilitating student-led Diamond open access publishing in Edinburgh University Library

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Abstract

Edinburgh Diamond is a book and journal hosting service, based in the University of Edinburgh's library. A free service for our staff and students, Edinburgh Diamond seeks to embolden and support those who wish to be involved with diamond open access publishing. Almost half of the journals we host are student-led publications. This article demonstrates why student-led open access publishing is important for student engagement, experiential learning, and academic literacy, and how the library helps facilitate that.

Key words: *academic publishing; open access; diamond open access; student-led publishing; experiential learning; academic literacy.*

Introduction

Edinburgh Diamond is a book and journal hosting service, based in the University of Edinburgh's library. A free service for our staff and students, Edinburgh Diamond seeks to embolden and support those who wish to be involved with diamond open access publishing, whether through publishing their own work or facilitating the publishing of other's. The journal aspect of the service (the focus of this article), includes: use of Open Journal System (OJS) to facilitate workflow management, including handling submissions, organising peer review, uploading the copyedited and typeset files, and publishing the content; workflow and system training; tech support, including upgrades; ISSN and DOI registration; publishing best practice guidance, including advice on policies and publication ethics; indexing management; and annual reporting on article downloads, citation and reach. The service currently does not offer copyediting and typesetting services, and we expect journal managers to coordinate their own workflow in whatever way suits them, although guidance is provided. Uigín *et al.* (1) note that "Student-led journals have become increasingly popular ventures in tertiary education in recent years". Although we have hosted student-led journals for a while, it is only in recent years that we have actively sought to increase our involvement in the area. Of the nineteen live journals we cur-

rently host, seven are student-led and three of those were launched within the last eighteen months. We plan to further increase the amount of student-led journals in the coming years, and this article outlines our key reasons for doing so, and why we think student-led open access publishing is an important aspect of tertiary education and of student engagement, experiential learning, and academic literacy.

Student engagement

Uigín *et al.* (1) note that academics "are constantly looking for new ways to enhance students' engagement with the Academy". This aim extends to librarians and professional services staff, who often work in collaboration with academics and students in library publishing schemes. By engaging students with open access library publishing, we are providing them with knowledge of the academic publishing process, including submission management, peer-review facilitation, copyediting processes and typesetting. There are many reasons why someone might set up a student-led journal, ranging from supporting research coming out of specific courses, to attracting prospective students to said courses, from generally promoting student work, to making said research citable and discoverable. Below are some examples from our student-led journal portfolio.

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Contemporary Challenges: The Global Crime, Justice and Security Journal (CCJ)

CCJ is a journal founded in 2020 by students from the MSc in Global Crime, Justice and Security programme at Edinburgh Law School. The journal invites students from any institutions to submit, and the editorial board is made up of postgraduate students from a variety of disciplines including law, criminology and international relations. The content published is relevant to the disciplines taught on the course itself, broadly including the intersections of crime, justice and security, and more specifically including civil and transnational conflict, global security and justice, criminological theories and critiques, discrimination and human rights, policing and prisons. However, the journal also aims to be global in its outlook. The founding students wrote that: “*Contemporary Challenges* was established with the aspiration to advance a multi-disciplinary approach to issues of global crime, justice and security that have traditionally been dealt with in compartmentalised academic fields. We believe that this has contributed to the formation of functional academic silos that are counterproductive when discerning responses to contemporary challenges. Our vision is for CCJ to serve as a platform for interdisciplinary debate that is of relevance to academics, policy makers and law enforcement officials alike. We hope that the journal will be a starting point for further discussion, research and collaboration across disciplines and professions” (2).

This demonstrates that some student-led journals are not only set up to highlight the work of students but are also spaces for students to engage in and contribute to their academic field in a concrete and professional way. Edinburgh Diamond helps facilitate this professionalism by providing guidance that helps cement the journal as industry standard – including using guidelines set by the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) – by engaging in indexing activities to increase the article’s discoverability, and by measuring the journals performance so that the students can make plans for the journal’s sustainable growth in the areas of submissions and reach.

Leviathan

Leviathan, founded in 2010, is a journal for any student of the University of Edinburgh, regardless of their topic of study, to “elevate political discourse through rigorous research and open-minded discussion” (3).

MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA

MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA is a journal set up in 2021 that invites submissions from any students, researchers or affiliates of the University of Edinburgh and aims to showcase “interdisciplinary music research, reviews and criticism, as well as raising awareness of the field of musicology throughout the University of Edinburgh and beyond” (4).

Re:think: a journal of creative ethnology

Re:think provides a platform particularly for undergraduate students of the University of Edinburgh to publish work “which seeks to better understand the everyday life of ourselves and others through ethnographic research” (5).

FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & The Arts

FORUM was founded in 2005 by a group of postgraduate students in the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LLC). The aim was “to create a postgraduate journal with the desire for learning and developing new or existing academic skills as well as for developing and fostering a sense of community and exchange primarily within the Edinburgh LLC postgraduate community but also further afield” (6). As with most of the student-led journals we host, the editors encourage student involvement through roles varying from peer-reviewing to article-editing, from issue-editing to social media management. The editors stated that “*FORUM* was conceptualised as space in which to help postgrads develop and gain confidence in their academic skills within a congenial and supportive atmosphere” (6).

The breadth of journals we host show the many reasons that students may wish to set up or engage with journals, demonstrating there isn’t one mould for student-led publishing. *FORUM*’s aims in particular highlight how student-led publishing can tie in with experiential learning and of preparing students with skills that would benefit their coursework as well as future publications within an academic career.

Experiential learning

David Kolb (7) in his work on developing experiential learning stated that, “Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner”. The importance of learning through practical

experience is evident in student-led publishing, as students are engaging in both sides of academic publishing: the writing processes as well as the publication processes. When working through submissions, they are tasked with thinking critically about journal scope, assessing article quality and suitability, and reviewing whether an article is well-researched and is bringing a new perspective to the field: all of which requires a well-rounded knowledge of the field in question, as well as the ability to critically assess what constitutes quality and suitability. As Giac *et al.* (8) note, “Experiential learning is the ultimate way to match learning with the practical application, consisting of gaining knowledge and development of skills at the same time.” In order for student-led publishing to be a sustainable tool in this development of skills and their practical application, a service must be well supported, with the service provider giving ongoing support through all stages of the process.

Kolb explored multiple models of learning, and the Lewinian experiential learning model looks particularly useful in its application to student-led publishing. This model consists of four elements:

1. concrete experience;
2. observations and reflections;
3. formation of abstract concepts and generalisations;
4. testing implications of concepts in new situations.

As students graduate, they of course must hand management of the journal to new sets of students. We therefore encourage students to reflect upon their time as a journal manager and to provide handover notes and training to the next editor(s) – which is in addition to the training the library gives – so that their observations and reflections can be taken on board and built upon for the next volume of issues. Combined with their experience, made more concrete by the library’s staff’s expertise, student-led publishing can be a sustainable model for experiential learning and academic development.

Academic literacy

Linked to experiential learning is the idea of academic literacy: the importance of students’ ability to understand and engage with their course, research and writing requirements. Ursula Wingate (9) discusses mismatches between needs and provisions when it comes to academic literacy: “Mismatches typically exist

between students’ levels of academic literacy knowledge and institutional requirements and expectations. There appears to be a widespread lack of awareness of what novice students know and what they need to learn, and as a result, literacy instruction is often inadequate”. Student-led journal publishing can contribute towards bridging the gap between academic literacy knowledge and institutional requirements by using experiential learning as a method of skill development, for use during the course itself and in a future academic career. Providing students with the tools needed to understand publishing workflows, as well as in what is suitable for publication, better equips them to apply skills to their own work, increasing their chances of academic excellence.

Conclusions

Overall, through the publication of student-led journals, the students are able to further engage in academic research, writing, peer-review and the publishing processes that underpin academic publishing.

Kolb (7) said that “Knowledge is the result of the transaction between social knowledge and personal knowledge” which when applied to student-led publishing highlights the important of the students not only learning about academic publishing from Edinburgh Diamond and their peers, but in bringing their own experiences and views to tweak the journal’s processes and to make their own contribution. This in turn strengthens knowledge, engagement and sense of academic identity and purpose.

To conclude, under the models of experiential learning and academic literacy, our student-led publishing programme provides an opportunity to develop student engagement within their education and in preparing them for academic life through developing their academic identity, rigour and knowledge about academic publishing.

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