

Services/support required in open access online journal publications

This is a brief report developed with the contribution and feedback of the following colleagues, who are involved in open access publications of AESOP:

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Given the AESOP CoRep decision to proceed with an Open Access publishing system the AESOP Transactions Editorial Team looked into the available e-publishing platforms. Research by Cyzyk & Choudhury¹ (2008) identified 7 platforms, of which they evaluate 4 in more detail: DPubS, GNU Eprints, Hyperjournal and Open Journal System. Insofar as journal publication is concerned, their analysis highlights the superiority of OJS, which offers a combination of ease of use/workflow organisation, transferability, scalability, extensibility, user interface customisation, institutional support and development prospects, documentation, training needs, hardware/software and maintenance requirements, security, OAI harvesting, internationalisation, support/indexing.

There are several commercial and non-commercial platforms hosting OJS-based journals, offering a range of services and the technology is supported and constantly developed by a wide community of scholars and technicians. Key support is offered from the Public Knowledge Project (PKP, <https://pkp.sfu.ca/>), a multi university initiative which has recently launched OJS 3.0. The Directory of Open Access Journals currently lists 9400 journals (<https://doaj.org/>) whereas according to Wikipedia 8000 open access journals are currently based on OJS.

Below is a list of services/tasks that need to be carried out in open access online journal publications:

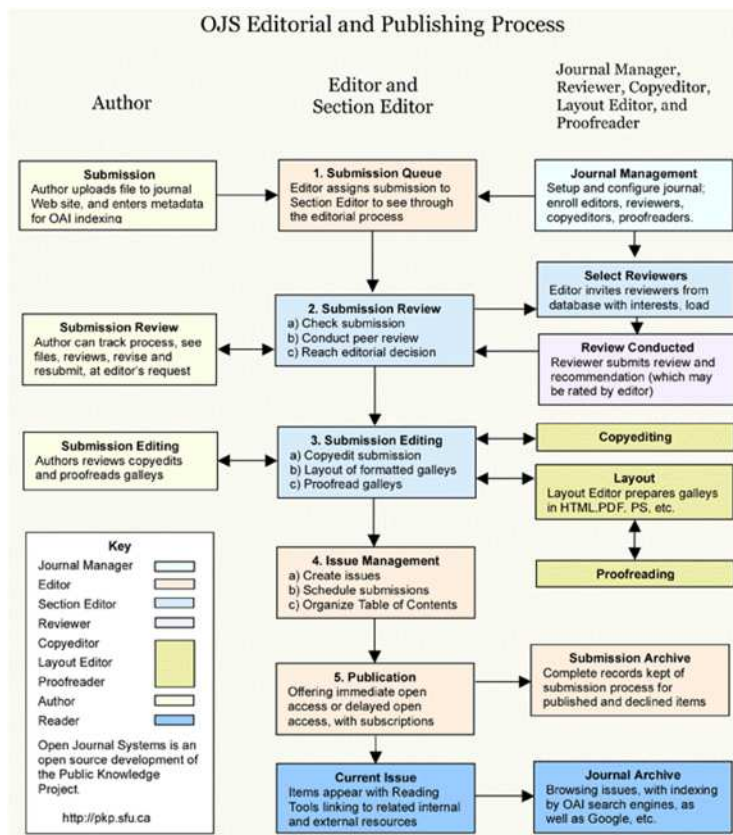
1. Initial design (of journal): concept development, design, logo, etc. (One-time start-up task/expense)
2. Initial setup of the publication: Open Journal System installation (separately or as part of existing platform) and customisation for the specific journal
3. Journal management: submissions; reviews (not deciding on reviewers, which is an editorial board task; but the management of the online system and the follow-up process, e-mailing, user (reviewer, editor etc.) enrolments and similar administrative back-office tasks). The submission and reviewers portals/systems are a part of the OJS and these come with the initial installation; so this task refers to an administrative role that could be covered by an assistant.
4. Layout design and editing: layout of journal issue before publication. Templates could be designed at the initial set up of the OJS, and then each article edited into that template. XML

¹ <https://wiki.library.jhu.edu/display/epubs>

publishing is an add-on service that automates the layout editing and often comes with the OJS installation – nevertheless a layout editor could improve the image and quality of the publication.

5. Table of contents, indexing (of authors, keywords, bibliographic) and citation and user info: also comes with the OJS system
6. Digital Object Identifier (DOI) registration, CrossRef registration and management: this is independent of OJS platforms as it can be done for any e-journal but some platforms offer this as an extra option for a fee or for free, some do not offer it at all, others offer support to the journal editors for a fee in order to get DOIs and register with CrossRef. Recently, AESOP applied for CrossRef membership in order to be able to assign DOI numbers to the articles of the two Journals, Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning and the PlaNext Journal by the Young Academics. Since this is now managed in-house, some help from an administrative assistant and training would be required.
7. Journal copyediting: copyediting of the issue before publication (by a native speaker)
8. Hosting: server space - requiring an annual fee for maintenance and technical support

The figure below demonstrates the journal editorial and publishing workflow in OJS.



Source: <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/index/help/view/intro/topic/000000>

The extent to which these tasks are to be contracted out will have an impact on the cost and financial viability and sustainability of the publication, and the type of “open-access” of the publication, which can eventually start a debate on whether AESOP can finance the publication or whether an “author-pays” model is to be considered.

The “author-pays” model is clearly not favoured based on discussions that took place in CoRep meetings in 2015 and 2016 with regards to the new journal, Transactions of AESOP. There has been an agreement that this initiative should be formulated as a service provided by AESOP to its members and/or those who attend AESOP activities. As a result, there is support to follow a genuine open access publishing model, where it is free of charge to submit a paper and to publish, and where accepted papers are accessible online, to everyone, for free.

Some of these services could be **internally provided so as to minimise costs:**

- Items 2, 3 and 5 can be performed by an Editorial team (responsible for any publication in question) through a platform using Open Journal System software (OJS): this provides an automated system that can deal with all those functions (this may or may not come at a cost depending on the OJS platform provider). In handling the day-to-day management of the OJS, an administrative assistant would be helpful. Installing OJS on a separate server (i.e not choosing an existing provider) requires technical support both to install and to run/maintain the software and the journal page.

Amongst the remaining items,

- For item #1 the design of the Journal cover/logo could be contracted out to a design company (this has already been done for ‘Transactions’, the AESOP logo and design guidelines should be taken into consideration.)
- For item #4 the design of a template can again be contracted out to a design company since the use of professional skills and appropriate software can impact on the visual quality of the product. However, the template should be made available for in-house use; and once the template is made, the application of the template to the papers as well as typesetting can be made in-house. Nevertheless, the services of a layout editor could be considered for better design quality and ‘Transactions’ has opted for this by contracting a layout designer/typesetter. A merger of the role of layout editor and administrative assistant is also possible if the person with the right skillset is found (or trained).
- Item #6 could be carried out by the editorial team although at an additional cost to AESOP for registration with CrossRef and DOI allocation per paper. This has already been done with AESOP becoming a member of CrossRef. The annual fee for CrossRef membership is 229.17 USD. This is the lowest fee, which applies to institutions that make no revenues from their publication. This fee will cover all AESOP publications (journals) that will need DOI numbers for articles. The assignment of DOI numbers and then registering the articles to databases using the DOI numbers is an administrative task that requires an element of labour input and training.

- For item #7 a native speaking copyeditor's services (from a shortlist of available people to facilitate quick delivery) can be separately paid for at the publication stage of each issue. Average prices are around 15-euro per 1000 words which means each issue will cost around 900 euro in copyediting (considering an issue to have around 60,000 words).
- For item #8 host/server, this service is free in national repositories, whereas it is a key cost for commercial services. Needs backups in different locations and LOCCKS compliance (ie backup in many servers) as well as enhanced security. Space (storage) is important as is bandwidth (speed of download/upload).

A final note: both the editorial board of PlaNext and the working group for Transactions of AESOP believe that these two open access publications should use same/similar platforms or methods of publication, which could facilitate economies of scale, via using similar programmes, servers, as well as the services of the same person for administrative assistance or layout design, etc. Such an integrated effort would create consistency in the design and delivery of the final products too.