



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

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Iryna Kuchma, Open Access Programme Manager, EIFL

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## 1. 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 on 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, which is the newest version of OJS, 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](mailto:iryna.kuchma@eifl.net).



## 2. ARE YOU USING THE LATEST VERSION OF THE SOFTWARE - OJS 3?

OJS 3 is significantly different from its predecessor, OJS 2. OJS 3 includes enhancements and new features developed as a result of community feedback, extensive usability testing, and incorporates new software design capabilities:

- **Few feature: Editorial Discussions:** To help track the communications that are a critical part of a submission's workflow, OJS 3 has a new internal discussion feature for each editorial stage (Submission, Review, Copyediting, Production). Discussions work much like an online forum - to initiate a discussion, a user creates a topic, invites others to participate, and sends a message (including attachments).
- **Flexible Workflow:** OJS 3 consists of four editorial stages: **Submission**, the initial processing phase where new submissions are dealt with (rejected, assigned to section editors, etc.); **Review**, where peer review and author revisions take place; **Copyediting**, where the reviewed and revised files are sent for copyediting, and **Production**, where the final, copyedited version is converted into publishable formats (PDF, HTML, etc.), proofread, and scheduled for publication. With OJS 3, editors and other people involved in processing journal articles can move a submission from one stage to another, before completing tasks on a previous stage. This makes the editing workflow more flexible.
- **Flexible Roles assigned to the workflow:** In addition to making the workflow more flexible, you can now easily change the names of existing roles. For example, if you have Production Managers rather than Journal Managers, you can simply rename the role. If you want to create a new role, you can do that too. OJS 3 allows you to create any role/s you wish, and associate these with any (or all) stages of the workflow.
- **Flexible Task Access:** In OJS 3, if you are logged in as a user with permission to access both the submissions and the journal settings, you can simply switch your roles in the left sidebar.
- **Unlimited Number of Submission Files:** In OJS 3, the author can now upload an unlimited number of main files (article manuscript, images, tables, data sets, etc.), using the Add Another File option.
- **Customizable Interface:** In addition to making the workflow more customizable, PKP has also made the user interface more flexible.
- **Enhanced Theming:** OJS 3 allows you to quickly select alternative font combinations and header colour choices.
- **Responsive Design to Various Devices:** Lack of responsiveness (the ability of the journal's web page to adjust to the reader's screen size — from a phone, to tablet, to desktop computer) was a major issue for OJS 2. The OJS 3 reader interface is fully responsive.

- **Simpler Registration for New Users:** To ease registration for new users, PKP has prioritized a small set of required fields on a single screen (e.g. name, affiliation, email, etc.), and allows the registration to proceed once those few are completed.

(The above list of enhancements and new features are extracted from the PKP website, [OJS 3: New Features Overview](#), where you can read more details and see screenshots).

## 2.1 Download the software

You can download the current production release of OJS 3 here - [OJS 3.1.2-1 \(.tar.gz\)](#).

## 2.2 Upgrade to the latest version

Consider upgrading to the latest version, if possible. Upgrade instructions can be found here: <https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/UPGRADE>. A list of languages available for OJS 3 software application is [here](#).

## 2.3 See the Demo and find out more about OJS 3

Would you like to see the OJS 3 Demo? PKP hosts a demonstration of [OJS 3.x \(current\)](#) in English and French. 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 3.1: A Visual Guide to Open Journal Systems](#)
- [PKP Administrator Guide](#)
- [Setting up a Journal in OJS 3](#)
- [Editorial Workflow 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.



## 4. HAVE YOU ACTIVATED PLUGINS?

### 4.1 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.

### 4.2 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.

### 4.3 Article level metrics

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

### 4.4 Author identification

The ORCID Profile Plugin for OJS enables the collection and display of authenticated ORCID (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.

### 4.5 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.

## 4.6 Open Typesetting Stack

PKP has created a standalone service for converting Microsoft Word and PDF documents to structured National Library of Medicine JATS XML (used by PLoS and PubMed Central), and from there, creating attractive HTML, PDF, and ePub article views from the XML. This service is intended to decrease the labour involved in typesetting, and to facilitate the creation of archive-friendly and web-native article formats. It is called Open Typesetting Stack, or OTS for short. The OTS service is being integrated into OJS 3 as a plugin and is developed alongside Substance Software's [Texture WYSIWYG XML editor](#). More details are [here](#).



## 5. DO YOU TRACK AND ANALYSE STATISTICS?

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.



## 6. HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR JOURNAL'S VISIBILITY AND DISCOVERABILITY

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

### 6.1 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](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 \(https://core.ac.uk/faq/\)](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](#).

## 6.2 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.

[\(From Getting Your Journal Indexed PKP Wiki\)](#)

### 6.2.1 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.

## 6.2.2 Tips for indexing with Google Scholar

There is no need to register your site for it to be indexed. The Scholar crawler will automatically find the site. The standard OJS URL structure has worked well for a long time.

Example of standard URL: <http://seer.unipampa.edu.br/index.php/agropampa/article/view/23142>

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](https://github.com/pkp/ojs/blob/stable-3_1_2/dbscripts/xml/upgrade/3.1.2_update.xml#L41..L42)

## 6.3 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.

## 6.4 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>.

## 6.5 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 [similarity check](#).

## 6.6 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 13,750 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>. Before you start, read DOAJ [information for publishers](#), review your website and make sure that your journal fulfills all the criteria. DOAJ provides some [guidance on the information that they are looking for](#), but that list is by no means exhaustive.

It is not possible to save your progress on the online application form, so DOAJ recommends that you gather the information you need before you start filling in the form. Once you have gathered all the information needed, you can draft and save your answers in [this guide](#), and when you are ready, you can fill in the online application form. Guides are also [available in other languages](#) ([العربية](#), [中文](#), [فارسی](#), [français](#), [Bahasa Indonesia](#), [Italiano](#), [日本語](#), [Polski](#), [Português](#), [Română](#), [Русский](#), [Español](#), [Türkçe](#), [Українська](#)).

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



## 7. 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).

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 grant to the publisher the non-exclusive right to publish the manuscript](#);
  - [authors retain copyright and publishing rights without restriction](#);
  - [author statement](#) and
  - [copyright transfer agreement](#).



## 8. 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.
- [Basic Steps for Starting a New Journal](#)
- [PKP School](#) - an online, open, self-paced collection of courses:
  - [Becoming an Editor](#)
  - [Becoming a Reviewer](#)
  - [Writing for Publication](#)
- 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](#).