# Libraries and Open Journal Systems: Hosting and facilitating the creation of Open Access scholarship

*There is a growing availability of free tools and software for academic publishing. How might libraries leverage existing platforms?* **Anna R. Craft** *describes one experience of an academic library hosting locally-produced open access journals through Open Journals Systems (OJS). But even "free" software is not without costs in relation to time and expertise. Care should be taken in facilitating a supportive environment to meet an institution's journal-hosting needs.*
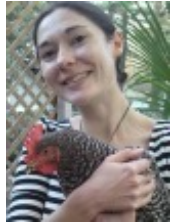
Historically, the primary role of libraries has been the collection and preservation of content created by others. Today, many libraries are also emphasizing the facilitation of local content creation. The University Libraries of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro have a multi-faceted strategy for promoting this new direction.

We support publication of open access articles through an Open Access fund for authors. We fund the production of open access classroom materials through grants for Open Educational Resources (OER). We disseminate the university's scholarly output through NC DOCKS, a locally-developed institutional repository hosted at UNCG and shared with seven other UNC system universities. We provide technology and expertise for the creation of multimedia projects and for 3D printing in our Digital Media Commons. We fund research grants and prizes for students who create content using materials held in our Special Collections and University Archives. We provide Digital Partners grants for faculty who need assistance in creating online databases and websites, as well as other "new media." And, as we explore further in this post, we host locally-produced open access journals.



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In 2010, in response to faculty requests for assistance in the creation and hosting of open access journals, we adopted Open Journal Systems (OJS). Created by the Public Knowledge Project, OJS is an open source publishing and journal management platform that strives to make open access publishing "a viable option for more journals." OJS expands our role in establishing ties throughout the university and promoting scholarly discourse on campus and beyond.

Now we host ten active journals in OJS, with several others in development. These journals cross the academic spectrum, with content areas including archives, service learning, and mathematics and statistics. This endeavor has been successful in meeting campus journal-hosting needs, while also supporting our initiatives to further scholarly communications and open access on campus, but this project is not without challenges and growing pains. Even "free" software is not without costs in relation to time and expertise. And where do library roles begin and end when it comes to supporting hosted open access journals?

At UNCG, the University Libraries host the OJS software and support its use. We provide:

- Long-term archiving of journal content
- A professionally-run server environment
- An up-to-date, secure version of the OJS software
- User training and support for use of the software
- A moderate degree of customization for individual journals

OJS support roles in the University Libraries are focused in three areas: server and software administration and development, user support and training, and general education and outreach. An interdepartmental team handles this work, with each area assigned to a point person who has specialized expertise. OJS duties make up only a small part of the overall work of each team member. Requests for these services fluctuate and can be difficult to predict, but as journal numbers grow, the number of support requests grows as well.

Our hosted journals share one OJS software implementation, meaning that most top-level customizations done by our technical team will affect all journals. So while training and technical support can often be provided on an individualized basis, advanced web customizations generally cannot. We feel that this support model allows us to meet 95% of the needs of our journals. To address the remaining 5% of requests, we would likely need to hire an additional OJS support position. And even with the current support model, if the number of hosted journals continues to increase, the support team will eventually require additional resources.

With library personnel managing the software and training users, journal personnel can focus on recruitment, review, editing, and presentation of content for their publications. Management teams for individual journals are generally comprised of scholars from across the field–not just faculty on our campus. These teams are generally made up of experts in their content areas, but these personnel are not always fully aware of other skill sets they will need– especially those relating to design and technology.

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Our support team is proactive in educating users about the variety of skillsets that may be needed in the production of their journals. Journal management teams will find value in having personnel with experience in article layout, graphic design, and web design, as OJS offers options for individual journals to control many elements of content presentation, even in a shared hosting system. As noted above, the University Libraries' support team does not have the resources to pursue and fulfill all customization requests, especially those related to journal design. When journal personnel request resource-intensive customizations that we are unable to provide, they can pursue customizations themselves, either within the hosted platform or by downloading OJS for free and running it themselves.

Potential users should also be aware of the learning curve associated with the OJS software. OJS is a powerful but intricate online system, and some users have expressed frustration with its complexity. Journal managers who do not wish to learn to use the system sometimes hire graduate students to manage the online platform, but this staffing model can cause difficulties when students graduate, unless sustainability planning is handled well in advance.

At UNCG, we promote sustainability planning for journals, and require that each journal maintain a primary on-campus contact person. If the primary journal manager or initiator leaves the university, he or she must designate a new on-campus contact in order to maintain the journal's continuity in the UNCG OJS system. If no new sponsor steps forward, then we can either transfer the entire journal to a new home at another institution, or cease to add new content and maintain the extant journal volumes as a backfile. It is possible for journals to move from one OJS instance to another, and the University Libraries have facilitated the transfer of journals in the past. Once a journal leaves our hosted system, we no longer provide support and training services.

This OJS staffing and support model meets current needs at UNCG, but our model will not be the right fit for all institutions, nor for all journals. Providers of OJS hosting have the latitude to consider their own expertise and available resources before determining the level of support that they will offer to end users. At UNCG, OJS helps

strengthen relationships between the University Libraries and its constituencies, including campus faculty and scholarly communities, while also facilitating the creation of open access scholarship on campus and beyond.

*This post is based on a presentation given by the author titled* Help, we started a journal! : adventures in supporting open access publishing using Open Journal Systems [slides]

*Note: This article gives the views of the author(s), and not the position of the LSE Impact blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our* Comments Policy *if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.*

**About the Author:**

**Anna R. Craft** is a member of the faculty at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where she serves as Metadata Cataloger in the University Libraries. In a role that integrates aspects of metadata and scholarly communications, she helps to ensure that the Libraries' resources (print and electronic) are discoverable and available for patrons worldwide. She writes, speaks, and teaches on general metadata, MARC cataloging, open access, institutional repositories, library career building, and related topics.