

# Journals Unbound: e-Infrastructure for Small and Medium-Sized Journals

**Dr Joseph Gelfer**

RMIT Publishing, Melbourne, Australia, joseph.gelfer@rmit.edu.au

In recent years there has been a massive worldwide development of e-infrastructure for academic journals. From a top-down perspective, journal databases and aggregators of various stripes have enabled the delivery of journals directly to anyone with an internet connection and subscription. In Australia, for example, RMIT Publishing's *Informit* full text databases have played a crucial role in connecting Australian researchers with accessible, searchable Australian research. From a bottom-up perspective, a variety of Open Access publishing and repository platforms have enabled researchers to share their research on the internet with minimal effort and cost. Both these aspects of e-infrastructure are important, but do not provide a complete solution. RMIT Publishing has created a solution which provides small and medium-sized print journals the opportunity to transition to a fully supported online environment, and existing online journals the tools required not just to be online, but to look professional and be discoverable within a wider research e-infrastructure.

## **THE CHALLENGE FOR PRINT JOURNALS**

As researchers increasingly move online to undertake research, small and medium-sized print journals face the danger of being rendered invisible if they have no online presence. Many journals have been successfully making the transition online for a number of years. However, there remain a significant number of journals that publish excellent research but which do not have either the financial or human resources to independently put their content online. Even if these journals partner with an aggregator to scan their journals there remain a number of problems: quality of scanning; imperfect optical character recognition software reducing search efficiency; lack of e-infrastructure tools such as DOIs which need to be implemented at the publishing rather than aggregating stage; being bound to a pdf format in a world which demands content via multiple formats. Print journals also face the challenge of complementing the quality of the research they carry with a professionally typeset and distributed published product of comparable quality.

## **THE CHALLENGE FOR ONLINE JOURNALS**

Many online journals have learned the hard way that "build it and they will come" is a rather optimistic strategy to employ in the dissemination of research. The unfortunate reality is that while Open Access and repository platforms do an excellent job of enabling the delivery of research, they rarely address the presentation or discoverability of research. In the same way as print journals, online journals may still lack e-infrastructure tools such as DOIs and are often bound to either a pdf or html format in a world which demands content via multiple formats (ideally from a single source). Online journals also face the challenge of complementing the quality of the research they carry with a professionally typeset and distributed published product of comparable quality. And despite being online, such journals often remain undiscovered due to being hosted outside of a wider research context.

## **THE RMIT PUBLISHING SOLUTION**

RMIT Publishing has developed a solution which can be engaged by journals at several stages depending on their level of need and resources. The entry point of the solution is the existing e-Library model which is suitable for journals who wish only to aggregate the existing pdf of their print journal while benefiting from the search functionality and wider research context of the *Informit* platform. However, RMIT Publishing has also developed an xml-based workflow which can convert articles from a single Microsoft Word document to a professionally-typeset pdf file, html page or other pre-defined output. Each article can then be assigned a DOI for resolving via CrossRef, as well as benefiting from the search functionality and wider research context of the *Informit* platform. This process can work solely with provided content, or with the added value of editorial management. In short, the RMIT Publishing solution can turn a manuscript on an editor's desk into a high-quality published product with a full suite of e-infrastructure tools at relatively low cost and high speed.

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