Using Open Access Publishing to Promote Undergraduate Research

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Editor-in-Chief & Associate Editor
1. Undergraduate Journal with 30+ Years of History

2. Due to staffing and student volunteer changes, the journal had gone dormant for 5+ years

3. Journal had been previously hard copy with some online content

4. As Pitt’s Honors College began to grow, the need for a public-facing publication to showcase student work also grew
The Pittsburgh Undergraduate Review

- Instead of starting a new journal, we decided to revitalize the existing journal
- Due to budgetary restraints, the journal had to be completely online
Steps to Revitalization

1) Who – Who will be involved
2) What – What will be the content and focus of the journal
3) Where – Where will it be housed and how (e.g., paper, online, etc.)
4) Why – Why is an undergraduate journal needed?
5) When – When will the journal publish its next issue (e.g., timeline)
6) How – How will we receive, review, and publish student work?
7) Recruitment
Who?

• Student Run (provides experiential learning)
• University Honors College (interdisciplinary home)
• Director of Honors Research (promotes stability)
• Hillman Library (platform support & expert advice)
What?

• An interdisciplinary journal that publishes research, scholarship, and creative work across all disciplines
• A student-run, peer reviewed journal
• A completely online, open-access journal
Where?

- Housing the journal in an Honors College ensures that it receives content submissions from students across disciplines and has an academic unit as a home.

- Partnering with the Hillman Library ensures there are stable resources and digital publishing experts that can support sustainability and administration of the journal.
Why?

- Honoring the existing history of the journal and work of previous students

- Provides an educational experience AND a practical team/applied experience for students

- Undergraduate Research is HIP (high-impact practice)!
When?

Sample timeline from original planning documents:

December 2019 – February 2020:
- Initial journal development and benchmarking (review previous and existing undergraduate journals)
- Formation of journal name, general focus, and student position descriptions.

February 2020 – March 2020:
- Director of Research met with Pitt’s Office of Scholarly Communications and Publishing to discuss publishing resources.
- Student editorial board applications advertised.
- Editorial Board formed in March 2020.

April 2020:
- First meeting of the PUR student Editorial Board.
- Student position descriptions evaluated and refined.

Summer 2020:
- Multiple Editorial Board meetings and journal policy and submission development.
- Peer review training development.

Fall 2020:
- Peer Review Training (September or October, 2020)
- First call for papers scheduled to be sent October 1st, 2020. First submission deadline scheduled for December 2020.

Spring 2021:
- First round of submissions and reviews.
How?

• Peer Reviewed by students, for students!
• Peer Review Training developed by Director of Research
• OJS (Online Journal System)
• OJS system training offered through Hillman

Appendix A: Peer Review Training Curriculum & Rubrics

Overview

What’s the purpose of peer review?

1. In general, peer review serves two important purposes in the scholarly world:
   a. To ensure that research or scholarship being published in a particular field represents
      high-quality work, is significant to the respective field of study, and meets professional
      standards and expectations of the field.
   b. Ensures the same research work is not already published or addressed elsewhere.
   c. Peer review also serves to “improve the quality of manuscripts deemed suitable for
      publication” within a particular field (Kelly, Sadehbeh, and Adel, 2014).

2. Moreover, peer review can help scholars and researchers do the following:
   a. Connect with, and contribute to, a larger academic community.
   b. Ensure ethical and rigorous research is being conducted in a field.
   c. Help guide the conversation and direction of research across disciplines.
   d. Ensure that no research or scholarship is exempt from scrutiny.

What is not appropriate in peer review:

1. Criticism of scholarship based on personal bias or limited understanding of a subject.
2. Criticism that does not include clear, reasonable, and constructive feedback.

Basics of Peer Reviewer

When considering acting as a peer reviewer, you should ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you have the necessary expertise and training to effectively review and provide feedback for
   the papers or projects you are being asked to review?
2. Are you able to commit the time and effort to review the article?
3. Do you have any personal or professional conflicts of interest that might negatively affect your
   review?
4. Are you familiar with the standards and expectations of the journal you are reviewing for?

If you answered yes, yes, no, and yes to the previous four questions, then you might be ready to act as a
peer reviewer. Work closely with the editor(s) of the journal who requested your feedback and make
sure you follow any directions they provide about the review process.

Starting Your Review

When you begin your review, use the following guidelines:

1. Step 1: Read the abstract and introduction. Are you comfortable reviewing this work? Do you
   think you will be able to provide the necessary feedback? If not, go back to the editor and state
   your concerns. Maybe this paper isn’t for you. If you are comfortable, move on to step 2.
2. Step 2: Review the paper once, quickly skimming the entire article to get a sense of the focus of
   the paper and its subject. Pay special attention to the following items:
Journal Proposal & Approval

- Title of Publication
- Frequency & Schedule of Publication
- Scope, Focus, and Description of Content
- Target Audience
- Types of Content (i.e., essays, research, etc.)
- Description of Peer Review Process (if applicable)
- Journal Personnel & Support
- Open Access and Copyright Policies
- Target Implementation Dates
- Rationale (for new journals only)
Students developed bylaws and submission guidelines after reviewing previous journal documents and undergrad journals.
# Obstacles, Costs, and Considerations

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<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Student Recruitment</td>
<td>• OJS Platform (minimal)</td>
<td>• Consideration of Other Student Journals</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marketing</td>
<td>• Student Stipends (eventual)</td>
<td>• Timeline</td>
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<td>• Reinvention</td>
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<td>• Sustainability Planning</td>
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<td>• Student Training</td>
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Questions?