INDEXING OF STUDENT JOURNALS:
BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCOVERABILITY

Library Publishing Forum 2023

Mariya Maistrovskaya
Digital Publishing Librarian
University of Toronto Libraries
mariya.maistrovskaya@utoronto.ca

Research questions

➜ What barriers exist for student-run journals looking to get included in academic indexes / databases / aggregators / search engines?

➜ What does discoverability mean for student journals and how do they prefer for their content to be found?

Methodology - indexes

Select indexes:

- Directory of Open Access Journals
- Scopus
- Web of Science
- Érudit
- Medline
- ProQuest
- HeinOnline
- Google Scholar

Data collection:

- Comparative scan of inclusion criteria and process

- Interviews with index representatives
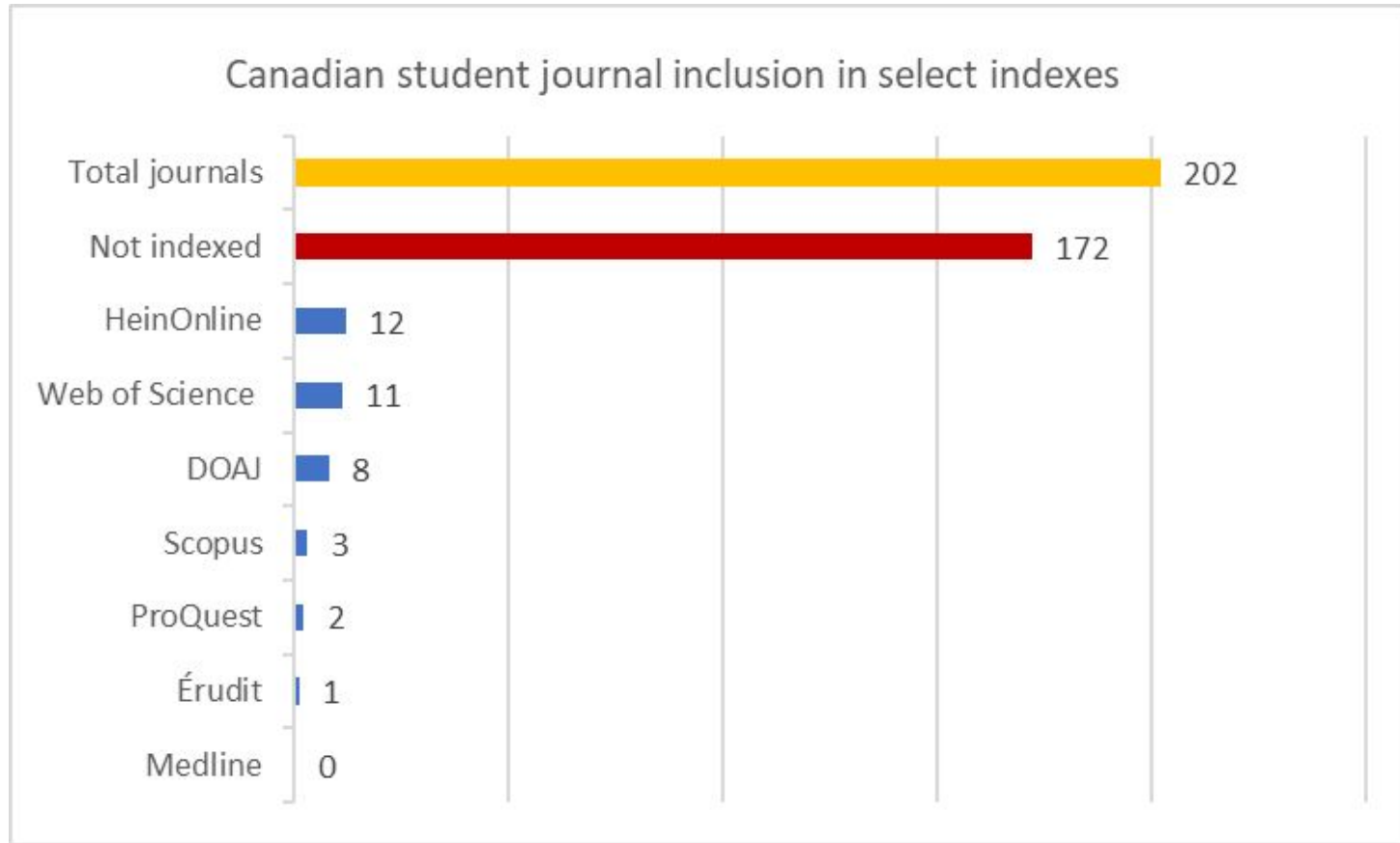
Methodology - student journals

Select journals:

- Student-run

- Canada-based

- Actively publishing

- Online or online+print

- Dataset shared at
  https://doi.org/10.5683/SP3/QXEUVH
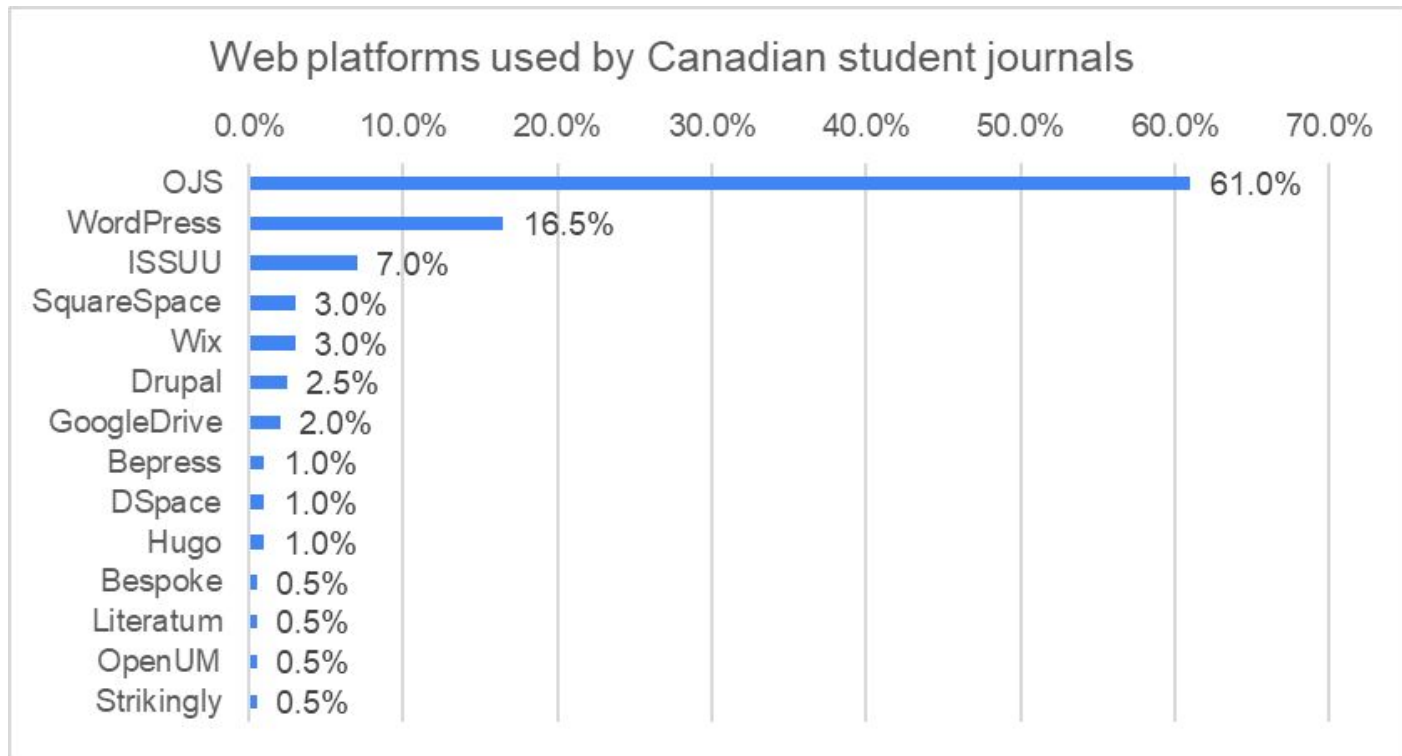
Data collection:

- Query select indexes against the journal list to check their indexing status

- Survey + follow up interviews with student journal editors re their discoverability preferences

Where are Canadian student journals indexed?

Canadian student journal inclusion in select indexes

Index	Count
Total journals	202
Not indexed	172
HeinOnline	12
Web of Science	11
DOAJ	8
Scopus	3
ProQuest	2
Érudit	1
Medline	0

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES

Online platforms used by Canadian student journals

Web platforms used by Canadian student journals

Platform	Percentage
OJS	61.0%
WordPress	16.5%
ISSUU	7.0%
SquareSpace	3.0%
Wix	3.0%
Drupal	2.5%
GoogleDrive	2.0%
Bepress	1.0%
DSpace	1.0%
Hugo	1.0%
Bespoke	0.5%
Literatum	0.5%
OpenUM	0.5%
Strikingly	0.5%

Journal platform vs Google Scholar indexing

Canadian student journal content indexing in Google Scholar by platform
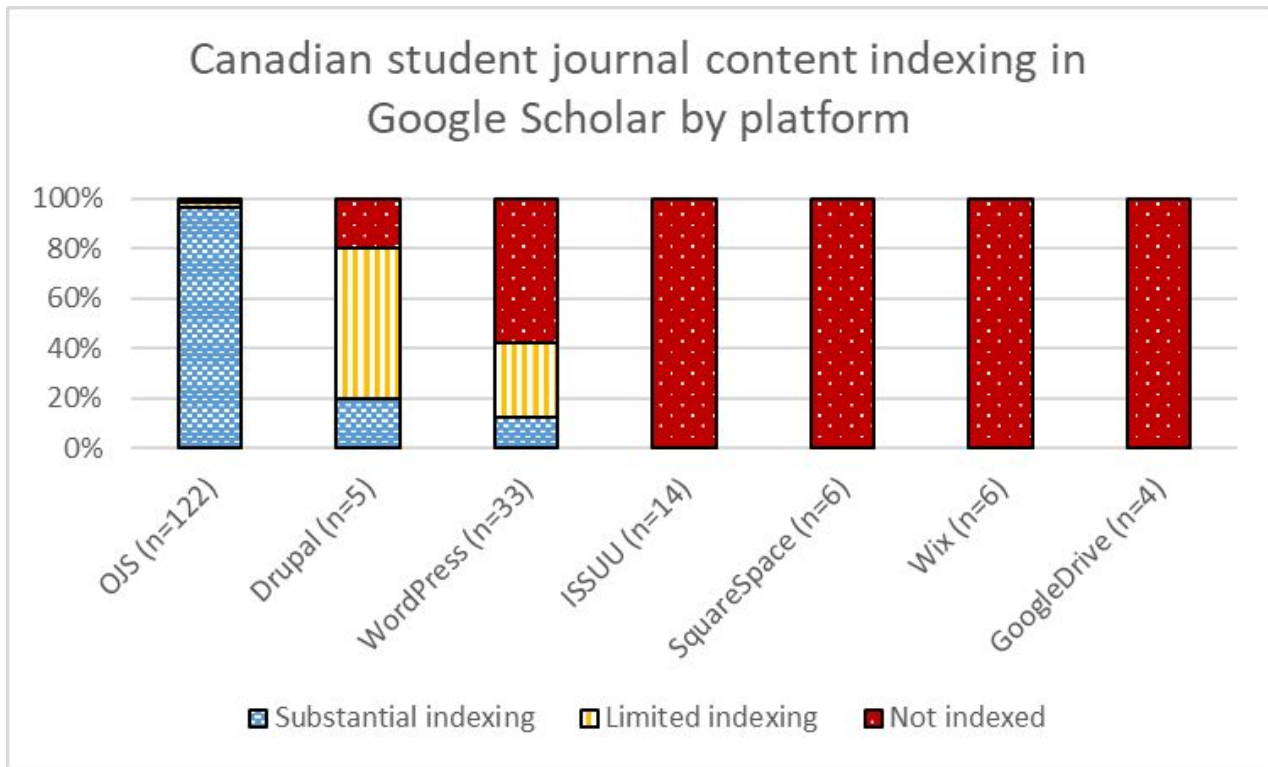
Substantial - a significant number of post-2019 articles appear in GS
Limited - occasional post-2019 articles appear in GS, or only
        citation-level results, or records have metadata issues
Not indexed - no content since 2019 appears in GS

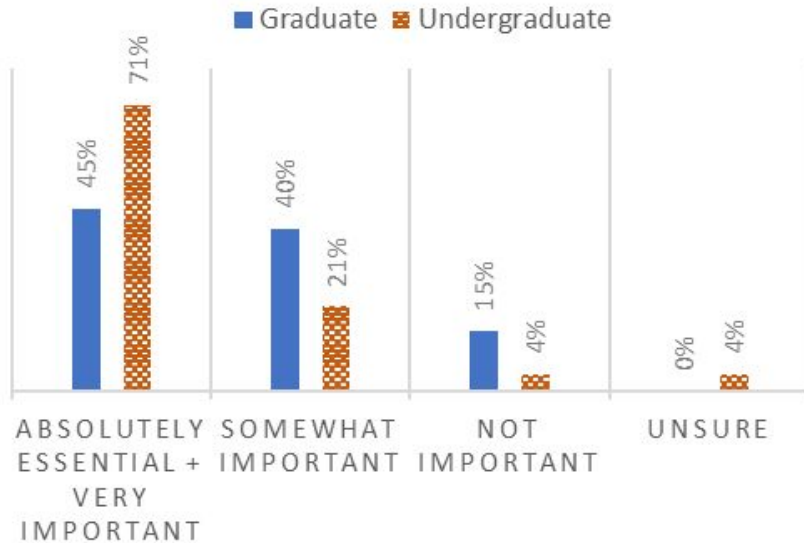UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES

Student journals' top discoverability strategies

1. Make content openly available online on the journal's website

2. Promote journal content via word of mouth

3. Provide each article with standardized metadata

4. Have the journal included in the institution's library catalogue

5. Send targeted journal promotion to specific reader groups in the department / institution / professional community
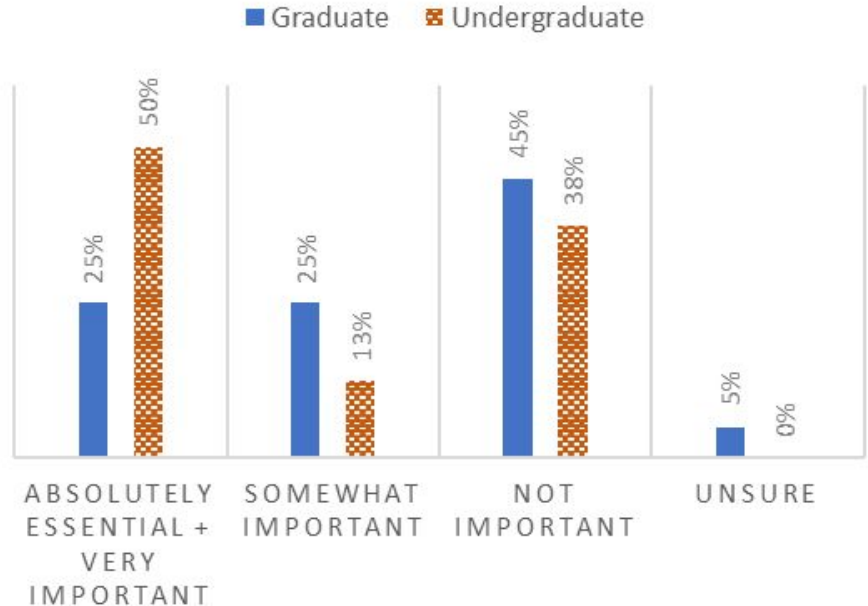
Undergraduate journal preferences

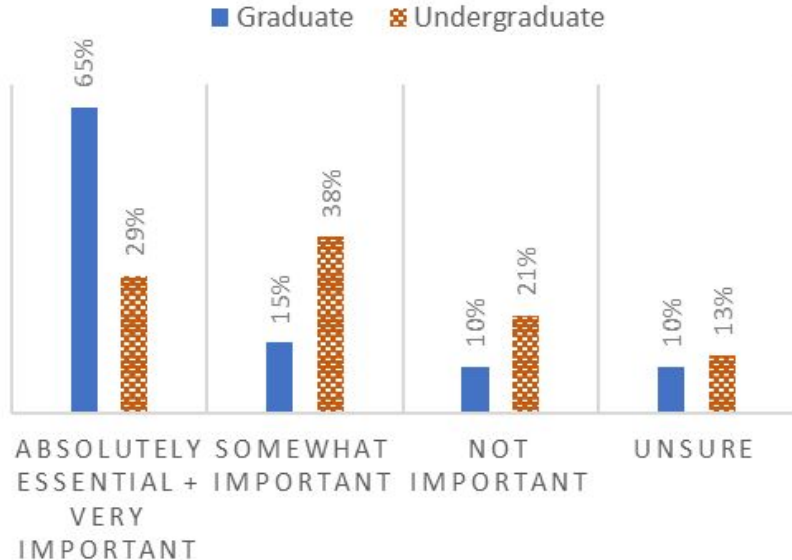SEND TARGETED JOURNAL PROMOTION TO SPECIFIC READER GROUPS

■ Graduate ■ Undergraduate

	Graduate	Undergraduate
ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL + VERY IMPORTANT	45%	71%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	40%	21%
NOT IMPORTANT	15%	4%
UNSURE	0%	4%

DISTRIBUTE PRINT COPIES OF THE JOURNAL

■ Graduate ■ Undergraduate

	Graduate	Undergraduate
ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL + VERY IMPORTANT	25%	50%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	25%	13%
NOT IMPORTANT	45%	38%
UNSURE	5%	0%

Graduate journal preferences

INCLUDE JOURNAL CONTENT IN SCHOLARLY INDEXES, DIRECTORIES, OR DATABASES

- Graduate
- Undergraduate

	Graduate	Undergraduate
ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL + VERY IMPORTANT	65%	29%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	15%	38%
NOT IMPORTANT	10%	21%
UNSURE	10%	13%

HAVE JOURNAL CONTENT APPEAR IN SCHOLARLY SEARCH ENGINES, SUCH AS GOOGLE SCHOLAR

- Graduate
- Undergraduate

	Graduate	Undergraduate
ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL + VERY IMPORTANT	70%	29%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	25%	42%
NOT IMPORTANT	5%	17%
UNSURE	0%	13%
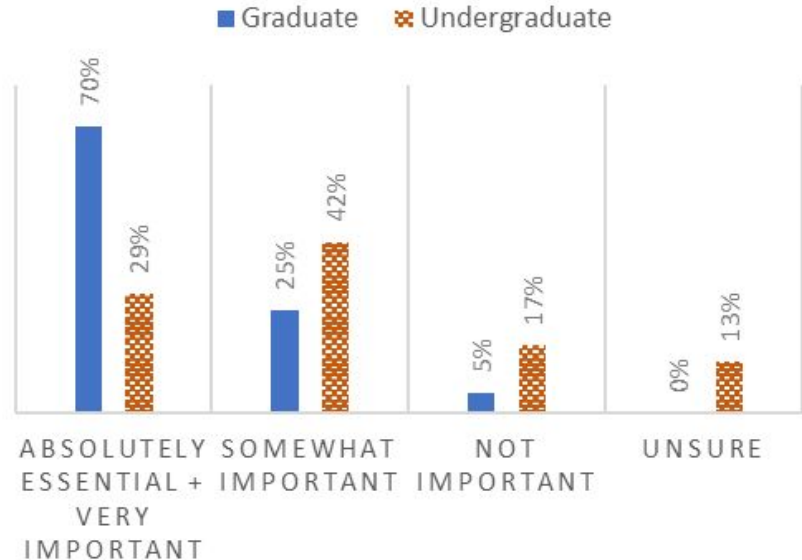
Would you like to be indexed?

"Our articles are, I think, of quite high quality, with important work on each of the articles, and rigorous peer review, and it would be important to make it more known." (A graduate journal)

"The early stage nature of undergraduate research does not seem to justify inclusion in a large database like PubMed which is expected to house professional research articles. We have discussed the need for perhaps a database focused on the results of undergraduate research studies." (An undergraduate journal)

"Our aim is to publish content that reflects the identities of the campus community and serve as a public forum for community expression. The board has not expressed interest in being included in scholarly indexes." (An undergraduate journal)
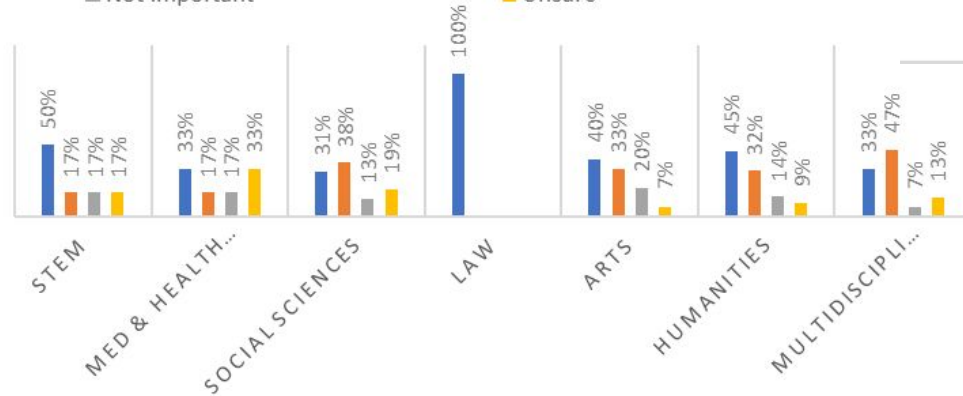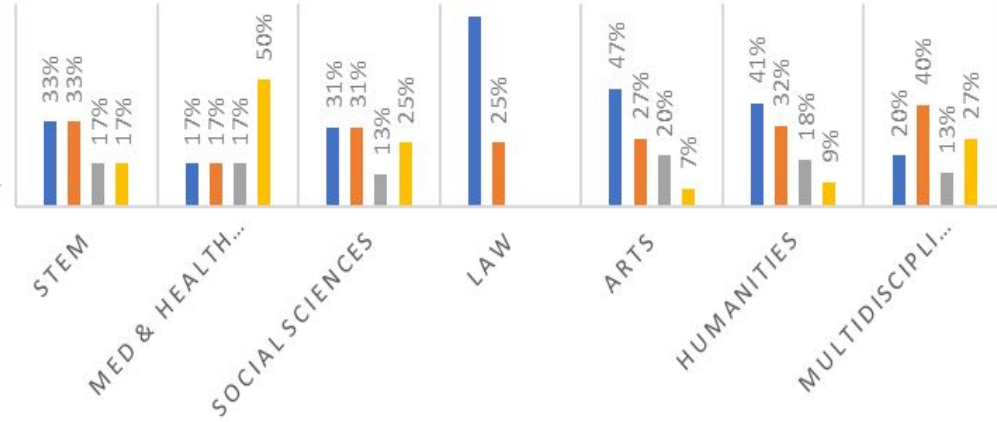
Discipline perspective

INCLUDE JOURNAL CONTENT IN SCHOLARLY INDEXES, DIRECTORIES, OR DATABASES

■ Absolutely essential + Very important ■ Somewhat important
■ Not important ■ Unsure

STEM: 33%, 33%, 17%, 17%
MED & HEALTH...: 17%, 17%, 17%, 50%
SOCIAL SCIENCES: 31%, 31%, 13%, 25%
LAW: 75%, 25%
ARTS: 47%, 27%, 20%, 7%
HUMANITIES: 41%, 32%, 18%, 9%
MULTIDISCIPLI...: 20%, 40%, 13%, 27%

HAVE JOURNAL CONTENT APPEAR IN SCHOLARLY SEARCH ENGINES, SUCH AS GOOGLE SCHOLAR

■ Absolutely essential + Very important ■ Somewhat important
■ Not important ■ Unsure

STEM: 50%, 17%, 17%, 17%
MED & HEALTH...: 33%, 17%, 17%, 33%
SOCIAL SCIENCES: 31%, 38%, 13%, 19%
LAW: 100%
ARTS: 40%, 33%, 20%, 7%
HUMANITIES: 45%, 32%, 14%, 9%
MULTIDISCIPLI...: 33%, 47%, 7%, 13%

Editor-identified indexing challenges

- Confusing indexing requirements

- Long review process

- Lack of editorial team's capacity

Editors on indexing challenges

"I think one of the biggest challenges for us is having the time to do these tasks. We're not professionals, everything we do is on our own time while we're also trying to get our own coursework, research, and everything else done at the same time."

"The editorial team for the journal typically changes year-over-year. This lack of consistency with leadership has contributed to the journal not being as discoverable as it potentially could be, in my view."

"If we start getting too much notice, and then a ton of submissions, and then we grow even more rapidly - we can't support that. We don't have resources for that at all."

"I really don't know anything about indexing, and I feel like that was never really taught to me or anyone else that I'm working with."

What kind of support would help?

- Clear and easy to follow indexing instructions - and making existing guides known to students

- Dedicated staff to take on indexing tasks, preferably someone more permanent than the rotating editorial staff (could library help?)

- Mentorship / consultation opportunities on discoverability practices in the field (could faculty advisor or library help?)

Guides and resources

- [Student Journal Toolkit: Visibility and Impact](#) on PKP Docs

- [Index Application Guide](#) on PKP Docs

- [DOAJ Application Guide for OJS journals](#) on PKP Docs

- [Dataset of Canadian student-led journals](#)

Thank you!

Mariya Maistrovskaya

Digital Publishing Librarian

University of Toronto Libraries

mariya.maistrovskaya@utoronto.ca

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARIES