INDEXING OF STUDENT JOURNALS: BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCOVERABILITY

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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

- Total journals: 202
- Not indexed: 172
- HeinOnline: 12
- Web of Science: 11
- DOAJ: 8
- Scopus: 3
- ProQuest: 2
- Érudit: 1
- Medline: 0
Online platforms used by Canadian student journals

- 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

**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
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**
  - Absolutely Essential + Very Important: 45%
  - Somewhat Important: 49%
  - Not Important: 15%
  - Unsure: 9%

- **Undergraduate**
  - Absolutely Essential + Very Important: 71%
  - Somewhat Important: 21%
  - Not Important: 4%
  - Unsure: 4%

**DISTRIBUTE PRINT COPIES OF THE JOURNAL**

- **Graduate**
  - Absolutely Essential + Very Important: 25%
  - Somewhat Important: 25%
  - Not Important: 45%
  - Unsure: 5%

- **Undergraduate**
  - Absolutely Essential + Very Important: 59%
  - Somewhat Important: 13%
  - Not Important: 38%
  - Unsure: 6%
Graduate journal preferences

**Include journal content in scholarly indexes, directories, or databases**

- **Absolutely essential + very important**
  - Graduate: 65%
  - Undergraduate: 29%
- **Somewhat important**
  - Graduate: 38%
  - Undergraduate: 15%
- **Not important**
  - Graduate: 10%
  - Undergraduate: 21%
- **Unsure**
  - Graduate: 10%
  - Undergraduate: 13%

**Have journal content appear in scholarly search engines, such as Google Scholar**

- **Absolutely essential + very important**
  - Graduate: 70%
  - Undergraduate: 29%
- **Somewhat important**
  - Graduate: 42%
  - Undergraduate: 25%
- **Not important**
  - Graduate: 5%
  - Undergraduate: 17%
- **Unsure**
  - Graduate: 0%
  - Undergraduate: 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

Have journal content appear in scholarly search engines, such as Google Scholar

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

Include journal content in scholarly indexes, directories, or databases

- Absolutely essential + Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- Unsure
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!

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