

[OIPA Symposium Spotlight: Lancaster University Open Journals](#)

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Introduction

Lancaster University Open Journals is a platform for hosting a distributing scholar-led Open Access Journals. The service reflects the institution's commitment to fostering a more sustainable, equitable, and researcher-driven scholarly communication landscape. This blog post outlines the background, development, and implementation of the platform, as well as the collaborative approach taken with researchers to ensure it meets the needs of the academic community.

Project background

Lancaster University is a medium sized but research intensive university based in the North West of England. Over the last few years, the library had been approached independently by several colleagues who were either already involved in managing a scholar-led journal or were interested in developing one to enquire what support the library could provide for their initiatives.

These interactions coincided with the library beginning to take a more proactive role in contributing to the research culture of the institution and work in partnership with our researcher community. The library recently published along with the N8 Research Consortium the [N8 Statement on Sustainable Scholarly Publishing](#), which sets out the library's commitment through this consortium to move towards a more sustainable scholarly publishing environment. This includes a commitment to promoting more diverse approaches to scholarly publishing by engaging with researchers within our universities and developing the scholarly publication routes available to researchers.

With this in mind, we began to consider how we could support researcher colleagues with publishing scholar-led Open Access Journals. In April of 2024 we held an experience sharing workshop with colleagues from a range of research disciplines who all shared an interest in scholar-led publishing to explore how the library could support their work.

During this workshop, several key challenges emerged, the most prominent being the financial challenges of using external hosting platforms, which can cost up to £1500 per year per journal. Other challenges included the need for support and guidance with archiving and indexing and lack of funding to cover start-up costs. There was also widespread agreement that colleagues would benefit from a forum and community to share best practices and advice with.

Following the workshop, we developed an options appraisal with library colleagues to decide on suitable next steps. During these discussions, it became clear that there was buy-in and appetite from the institution and research colleagues for the library to develop a hosting service for Open Access journals.

The platform

The [Lancaster University Open Journals platform](#) launched in January 2025. It makes it possible and easy for Lancaster University colleagues who wish to develop scholar-led open access journals to host their publications and manage their workflows on the platform for free. The service uses the Open Journals Systems open-sourced software and is hosted internally on institutional servers. The platform acts as a host and distributor, with the management, administration, and content of the journals the responsibility of the journal editors. The Open Journals service can support a variety of publication types including peer reviewed journals and conference proceedings and supports the entire publishing workflow from researcher to reader, including submission, peer-review, and online publication.

The library provides some support for colleagues using the platform, including support for obtaining DOIs and understanding how to use the platform. We have also created a Lib-Guide pulling together a range of useful resources and toolkits for managing open access journals, as well as an online forum for journal managers to share useful resources and learn from other colleagues developing similar initiatives to address some of the other issues identified in our workshop.

The evidence gathered during our experience sharing workshop was especially useful when advocating to key stakeholders for the project, particularly in obtaining university server space for the platform. This evidence base also enabled us to develop a proposal to receive institutional Enhancing Research Culture funding to support colleagues managing and developing scholar-led open access journals.

After approaching colleagues in our university research services, we were able to launch a [small grants scheme](#) to provide funding of up to £1000 per journal. These grants could be applied for by Lancaster University Researchers involved in managing or developing scholar-led open access journals and was also open to journals that were not hosted on the library platform. The funding was used for a range of activities, including supporting a journal launch event and conference, hiring a web developer to create an external facing webpage and employing support to migrate the existing journals over to the new platform. None of these activities could have been undertaken without this funding, which has allowed these journals to meet start-up costs and transition towards being self-sustaining.

As of October 2025, 6 open access journals are publicly using the platform, with another journal preparing to migrate their content to the platform over the coming months. These journals cover various disciplines including Creative Writing, Law, Sociology, and Business and Management.

Reflections and next steps

One of our main takeaways from this project has been the importance of including the voice of our researcher community both in decision making and when engaging with key stakeholders across the institution.

Developing the platform has been a learning experience for many colleagues involved. As well as developing our understanding of the OJS system, we have had to develop our library knowledge of several aspects of managing an open access journal, such as indexing. Consequently, we felt that it was important to utilise the existing experiences of our interested journal managers. To do this we asked these colleagues to act as ‘development partners’ to work with us to develop the open journals service. This approach proved quite successful; it allowed us to draw on the passion for scholar-led publishing from our journal managers who readily contributed ideas and shared their experiences. In turn, it also helped us to manage expectations, as these partners were flexible and supportive, enabling us to refine workflows and processes in true partnership.

Having developed the service and onboarded several journals, we are now preparing to promote it more widely to Lancaster University colleagues. We are also keen to engage with the wider sector, particularly as a member of OIPA, to further establish both the platform and University publishing more broadly.