Publication Notes

Title: Mapping the Scholarly Communication Landscape 2019 Census - Case Studies

Author: Katherine Skinner

Editors: David Lewis, Mike Roy

Publisher: Educopia Institute, 235 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 400, Atlanta, GA 30303

Cover Image Credits: bharath g s, Unsplash.

Copyright: 2020

This publication is covered by the following Creative Commons License:

**Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International**

You are free to copy, distribute, and display this work under the following conditions:

- Attribution – You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner.
- Noncommercial – You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder. Your fair use and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

The above is a human-readable summary of the full license, which is available at the following URL: [https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Suggested Citation: Skinner, Katherine. *Mapping the Scholarly Communication Landscape 2019 Census - Case Studies*. (Atlanta, Georgia: Educopia Institute, 2019)
About This Publication

These published case studies feature a few of the programs and entities that participated in the 2019 Census of Scholarly Communication Infrastructure Providers, a Census produced by the “Mapping the Scholarly Communication Infrastructure” project team (Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Middlebury College, 2018-20).

The Census was created to document key components comprising the organizational, business, and technical apparatuses of a broad range of Scholarly Communication Resources (SCRs) - the tools, services, and systems that are instrumental to the publishing and distribution of the scholarly record.

The case studies focus on Humanities Commons, Open Journal Systems, Ubiquity, and PubPub, four entities that operate publishing and platform services used by a variety of scholarly communities.

Each case study opens with an overview of the mission, founding, and services of the SCR. Each one then provides an organizational history of the SCR's tools and infrastructure, and then gives an “at a glance” synopsis of the entity's key features, its administrative infrastructure, its finances and human resources, its governance model, and its community engagement.

As documented more fully in the Mapping the Scholarly Communication Landscape 2019 Census report (Educpia Institute, 2019), the Scholarly Communication Infrastructure Provider (SCIP) Census included 123 questions delving into an organization's mission, vision, and scoping; technical development and design; administrative and financial scaffolding; community engagement activities; and governance model.

We conducted the Census between February-March 2019 through direct invitations, contacting just over 200 identified scholarly communication resource providers by email to participate. More than 60 SCRs responded to us during this period, and more than 40 tools, services, and platforms ultimately participated in the Census.
MISSION:
TO PROVIDE A SPACE TO DISCUSS, SHARE, AND STORE CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

HUMANITIES COMMONS
https://hcommons.org

Founded in the US in 2016, Humanities Commons is an open, not-for-profit social and professional network and knowledge exchange environment for scholars, researchers, and practitioners across the humanities and around the world. Humanities Commons provides a communication infrastructure that unites professional profiles, group discussion spaces, a WordPress-based publishing network, and a library-grade repository, CORE.

Humanities Commons unites a broad spectrum of researchers within an open-source and open-access environment that clearly differentiates it from commercial networks. It is focused on providing a space to discuss, share, and store cutting-edge research and innovative pedagogy—not on generating profits from users' intellectual and personal data.
A network of networks.

Humanities Commons initially began as a project hosted by the Modern Languages Association (MLA) in partnership with the Association for Jewish Studies; the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies; and the College Art Association. Each society developed its own Commons hub in which it expanded its member engagement from annual in-person events to year-round virtual networking. This society-based usage provided an initial set of networks, and it also evidenced the need for a broader network that could serve humanities practitioners well beyond their disciplinary and institutional affiliations and memberships.

Based on the open source "Commons-in-a-Box" software developed by the City University of New York and the CUNY Graduate Center, and the open source "CORE" repository software developed by MLA and Columbia University's Center for Digital Research and Scholarship, the technical framework provides users with ways to store, share, and access syllabi, course materials and learning objects, course sites, digital anthologies, articles, white papers, code, and other research outputs and creations. It also encourages and supports network-building "micro-community" environments wherein a group can develop and facilitate its own interactions through discussion arenas, shared calendars, resource collections, website building, and other scaffolding components.

Development of this community infrastructure has been supported by a range of funders, including the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the MLA, and the Center for Digital Research and Scholarship at Columbia University. It was administered by the MLA until 2020, when Humanities Commons began its organizational move from MLA to Michigan State University. In its new instantiation, Humanities Commons will be a hosted program of MSU, and its development will be overseen by MESH Research. It is currently expanding its membership options to encompass colleges and universities.

"Scholars are increasingly recognizing that while their accounts on for-profit networks might be 'free,' there are hidden costs to the academic community as a whole. These networks are not transparent in their operations or their values, and they often have egregious, predatory data-sharing and intellectual property policies written into their terms of service."

- Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Founder and Director
Features
HC provides an academy-owned alternative to commercial repository, publishing, and profile services. It enables users to build, share, and access syllabi, learning objects, course sites, digital anthologies, articles, white papers, code, data, and other research outputs and creations. It also encourages the growth of "micro-communities" to facilitate user interactions through shared calendars, discussion arenas, resource collections, and website tools. The Commons' technical environment is based in Amazon Web Services, and the repository is hosted by Columbia University Libraries. HC provides export functions and is developing APIs for its users.

Administrative Infrastructure
HC has developed a strong communications backbone that clearly distinguishes between three stakeholder groups: individuals, societies, and academic institutions. Its staffing is light and geared towards encouraging usage of its tools and services, building a strong set of leadership voices within its three current user communities, and funneling needs and technical requests into an ongoing, transparent development roadmap.

Finances and Human Resources
Most of HC's financial support currently comes from a blend of host-institution and partner support (60%) and sponsored funding from federal (10%) and foundation (30%) sources. Currently, HC is working on a business plan that will decrease its reliance on grants and increase its fiscal support by participating organizations and institutions. It is also fundraising to build an endowment, aiming for at least a 3:1 match against a $500,000 Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Its staffing and HR framework for the Commons Team and consultants is hosted by MSU.

Governance
HC is a hosted program of MSU, which provides its official financial and legal identity. HC's leaders have documented dependencies on and exit strategies from MSU to ensure the community has an appropriate range of motion for its future development. HC is implementing a governance model that includes formal bylaws and a shared governance environment with checks and balances provided by three interrelated advisory groups (Participating Organization Council, Technical Advisory Group, and User Advisory Group). It explicitly values transparency and communication about its governance processes, and it embeds user privacy requirements and an intent to maintain its nonprofit orientation in its bylaws.

Community Engagement
HC began as a "network of networks," bridging a set of humanities societies. It has already grown its community to include a broad spectrum of independent users, and with the launch of MSU Commons, it is beginning to build academic organization members as well. Engagement is encouraged by all members and users (including end users, publishers, funders, members, code contributors, and volunteers) – via platform usage, advising on technical direction, and assisting in governance. HC has Guidelines of Participation, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Service.
2. OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS

https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/

Established in 2001 in Canada, Open Journal Systems (OJS), has provided a platform for the management and publication of scholarly journals. A project and output of the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), this open source software guides users through a publication process that includes developing a journal Web site; tracking submissions; and managing issues, indexing, distribution, and archiving.

OJS enables institutions to maintain local control of journal publishing. The software itself is developed by a partnership comprising two institutional anchors (Simon Fraser University Library and Stanford University) plus four major development partners (Ontario Council of University Libraries, the University of Alberta Libraries, the University of British Columbia Libraries, and the University of Pittsburgh Libraries). It has an expansive, global reach and has helped to forward the adoption and creation of open access scholarship.
"research should be open"

In 1998, John Willinsky, then in the Faculty of Education at University of British Columbia (UBC), with Pacific Press Endowment, founded the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) to improve the scholarly and public quality of research. One of its first initiatives was to build Open Journal Systems (OJS) - an open source software released in 2001 - to help academic institutions to host scholarly journals. This initial work was funded by UBC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Max Bell Foundation, and the Catherine and John D. MacArthur Foundation.

In 2005, the partnership supporting both PKP and OJS expanded, and Simon Fraser University Library became its administrative and operational home. In 2008, Stanford University became an institutional hub for PKP's strategic direction and research activities after Willinsky relocated there. Over the next few years, both PKP and OJS continued to grow into a collaboratively hosted and increasingly virtual work environment.

By 2012, PKP both recognized and realized a vision for a transparent and participatory governance process, formalizing community-engaged processes for monitoring, sustaining, and continuing to develop PKP and its projects, including OJS. In 2017-18, it undertook a community consultation and a fiscal review with support from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, to guide its maturation process. While PKP is still a project, supported by grants and hosted administratively by SFU, it is currently transitioning toward a more formal organizational model.

OJS continues to serve as both the flagship and the cornerstone of PKP's software outputs, with an estimated 10,000 journals operating on this platform in more than 100 countries. OJS also is the core service offering of PKP Publishing Services, through which PKP provides hosting services to institutions that do not want to run infrastructure in their local environments.
OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS

At a glance...

Based largely on responses to the Census of Scholarly Communication Infrastructure, the details below provide an overview of the organizational and business framework used by OJS.

Features

OJS provides an academy-owned alternative to commercial publishing. The open source software provides tools for tracking and managing submissions throughout the review and editing process; tools for publishing a journal website and its associated issues; and tools for tracking usage and readership information. OJS also supports XML imports and exports and provides an API. OJS is connected to and supports PKP Publishing Services, a fee-based service offered by the team at SFU that installs and hosts OJS for authors and institutions.

Administrative Infrastructure

OJS communications and administrative infrastructure elements rely deeply upon PKP’s Operations Management Team, which provides support for all of PKP’s services and projects. PKP maintains close connectivity with its extended user-base, including through online engagement via the PKP Community Forum and global events hosted in a range of geographical locations. PKP maintains a publicly available development roadmap and engages directly with its user communities to produce and prioritize tasks.

Finances and Human Resources

OJS financial and human resources are embedded within PKP (its parent project) and SFU (PKP’s legal and fiscal host). PKP historically utilized SFU’s financial system, but a separate cost centre has now been established at the SFU Library to support the financial administration of PKP and enable deeper engagement by the Advisory Board in its fiscal stability. It is currently supported mostly by a mix of revenue sources including sustainers (15%), services (40%), and federal grants (40%). The core PKP team includes approximately 30 full- and part-time staff, including developers, technical and support specialists, researchers, graduate students, librarians, and other contract staff, and the majority (88%) of its budget is spent on staffing. It makes an annual financial report publicly available each year.

Governance

As a project of PKP, OJS is subject to PKP’s governance structures, as well as those of its host, SFU. PKP’s governance includes a set of committees comprised of community members: the Advisory Committee (strategic decisions and high-level governance), the Technical Committee (input on software development methods and priorities), and the Members Committee (feedback on strategy and technical directions).

Community Engagement

OJS stakeholders (including end users, implementers, service providers, publishers, funders, members, code contributors, and volunteers) are regularly invited to engage in a range of activities, including governance committees and a broad swath of interest groups. They are also regularly invited into coding sprints where the community gathers and addresses specific tasks, sets priorities, builds documentation, evaluates user experiences, and helps to improve the software according to institutional and user needs. The community’s interactions are governed by PKP’s Code of Conduct developed by the staff and reviewed by its committees.
3. UBIQUITY PRESS

https://www.ubiquitypress.com/

Founded in 2008 by Brian Hole, the UK (and now also US-based) company Ubiquity Press publishes open access, peer-reviewed scholarship and hosts publishing infrastructure and services as well as repositories for universities and societies.

The aims of Ubiquity are 1) to forward open access to enable the widest possible dissemination of research, including both traditional forms of scholarship (journals, monographs) and associated resources such as data and software; and 2) to ensure the control of publishing remains in the hands of academic societies and university publishers. To these ends, Ubiquity publishes only open access, CC-BY-licensed materials, and it encourages the use of transparent, low Article Processing Charges (APCs) for both cost recovery and, where appropriate, subscription income replacements.
"researcher-led publishing"

Ubiquity Press has specialized in researcher-led, 100% open access academic publishing since 2008, when it was launched and incorporated by Founder and CEO Brian Hole. From its inception, Ubiquity Press has both used and championed open source solutions, reminding users that open source solutions increase researcher control and greatly lower the risk of lock-in and entrapment in publishing infrastructures.

Ubiquity aims to increase both open access to research and transparency into publishing business processes. To fulfill these aims, it has formally partnered with leading publishing and library developer communities, including Open Journal Systems, Hyku-Samvera, and OPERAS.

In 2018, the shareholders of Ubiquity created and adopted a charter to formally govern its own business practice and to ensure that even in the event of a change of control of the company, it will adhere to the three central tenets documented therein. The charter specifies that all Ubiquity–published articles and books will be open access, "universally and freely accessible via the Internet, in an easily readable format, with a Creative Commons Attribution license," that all code licensed as part of the Partner Press Platform will be open source and free for reuse, and that all products of Ubiquity will be unbundled, or "available for sale individually...not...made exclusively available as part of larger product bundles."

Although Ubiquity operates as a for-profit entity, shareholders provide Ubiquity with both control and guidance, Ubiquity also involves stakeholders from across its user communities in additional structures, including a Ubiquity Partner Advisory Board, a General Advisory Board, a North America Library Advisory Board, and a set of special interest groups. These groups help to keep Ubiquity connected to the broader community of journals, presses, authors, editors, and librarians that it serves.

"THE FOCUS OF THE COMPANY IS ON BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION IN THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY BY IMPROVING ACCESS TO RESEARCH INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE LARGELY EXCLUDED BY CURRENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POLICIES OF SOCIETIES AND PUBLISHERS."

- BRIAN HOLE, FOUNDER AND CEO
At a glance...

Based largely on responses to the Census of Scholarly Communication Infrastructure, the details below provide an overview of the organizational and business framework used by Ubiquity Press.

Features
Ubiquity provides a platform for open access publishing. This includes full infrastructure and services for journals, books, conferences and repositories, as well as university press/library publishing portals (Ubiquity Partner Network) that provide infrastructure and services to university and society presses. Preservation of all published content is provided through the CLOCKSS preservation network. Ubiquity’s platform and infrastructure are built on open source software components, including Open Journal Systems and Hydra-Samvera, and it offers both an API and full export capabilities to mitigate against lock-in.

Administrative Infrastructure
Ubiquity’s administrative framework seems to focus primarily on its members and partners. Its development roadmap is created and maintained by the staff and team, shared with internal stakeholders, and prioritized by stakeholders. Ubiquity does not provide a public version of this roadmap.

Finances and Human Resources
Ubiquity regularly assesses the market for all parts of its platform, looking both at areas of commercial opportunity, and those areas where a more community-oriented service is needed. Currently, fiscal support for Ubiquity includes Article Processing Charges, grant funding, contracted services, and partner contributions. Ubiquity begins each year with an approved budget. It includes approximately 30 employees, including a CEO, COO, CTO, CFO, and a range of editorial and technical support and development roles. It provides public accounting documentation via the UK Companies House website.

Governance
Ubiquity is a for-profit company, and as such, it is officially controlled by its shareholders. However, Ubiquity has put explicit checks and balances in place via a Charter and a formal Partner Advisory Board so that its mission and vision cannot be undermined even if the company changes hands. It also engages multiple stakeholder communities (including end users, implementers, service providers, publishers, funders, members, and code contributors) in an advisory capacity, with a Ubiquity Partner Advisory Board, a General Advisory Board, and a North America Library Advisory Board, in addition to special interest groups.

Community Engagement
Ubiquity aims to be the open access publisher of choice for learned societies and university partners. It regularly engages with its stakeholders in advisory committees, and it partners with both open source software groups (e.g., OJS, Hyku-Samvera, OPERAS) and institutions including university presses, libraries, and museums. It has Terms and Conditions and a Privacy Policy, as well as its Charter to help govern its interactions with stakeholders.
PubPub

The open-source, privacy-respecting, all-in-one collaborative publishing platform for communities small and large.

Manage, evolve & perfect your publishing process

MISSION

TO GIVE RESEARCH COMMUNITIES OF ALL STRIPES AND SIZES A SIMPLE, AFFORDABLE, AND NONPROFIT ALTERNATIVE TO EXISTING PUBLISHING MODELS AND TOOLS

4. PUBPUB

https://www.pubpub.org/

Founded at MIT and built by the Knowledge Futures Group in 2018, PubPub is an open source publishing platform that aims to host a full workflow for conducting research, drafting, reviewing, and publishing research. Initially created in response to static, opaque review processes, the platform provides authors with more control over the publication process, ensuring the fidelity and integrity of their work.

PubPub harnesses peer commentary by treating the discussions that evolve from the source text as potentially significant collateral scholarship. PubPub developers believe that the process of research and discovery (including the failures and detours) is as valuable as the final, publicly available manifestations of the research. The platform is designed to socialize the practice of knowledge making.
Organizational History

"opening conversations between authors and readers"

PubPub is an open authoring and review environment that began as a thesis project by then-graduate student Travis Rich, in collaboration with Thariq Shihipar, under the direction of MIT Media Lab Associate Director and Senior Research Scientist Andrew Lippman in 2016-17.

From the start, the publishing platform was designed to explicitly support open access and open review, breaking open and making visible the often closed process of research peer review and publication. In PubPub, conversation, annotation, and versioning are exposed as key factors in the refinement and improvement of research. The platform also supports graphical components beyond the PDF. It is intended to support a range of works, including journals and monographs, but also other forms of research publication (e.g., data, code). By conscious design, it provides ways to acknowledge, highlight, and credit contributions for all who play a role in the creation or improvement of a work, whether as author or reviewer or copyeditor or otherwise.

When MIT Press and the MIT Media Lab partnered to create the Knowledge Futures Group (KFG) in 2018, PubPub became one of its first projects and pillars. It is currently used by MIT Press and KFG to publish MIT Press Open, a series of titles and experiments in dynamic publishing. It is also offered as a hosting platform where any community can create a pubpub.org subdomain and publish works therein, or where an organization can pay a flat annual fee to use its own custom domain name and have access to more features. The open source codebase is available on github.

PubPub aims to increase the engagement of readers and authors in the research process, and it seeks to enable academic institutions to control the production apparatus upon which they depend for the dissemination and use of scholarly outputs.
At a glance...
Based in part on responses to the Census of Scholarly Communication Infrastructure, along with publicly available information about PubPub and KFG, the details below provide an overview of the organizational and business framework used by PubPub.

Features
PubPub provides an open source platform for open access publishing. It focuses on making explicit and visible the reciprocal relationship that often develops between authors and reviewers during the peer review and editing process. It also seeks to enable dissemination of content beyond a PDF format, engaging a readership with rich visuals, discovery tools, and annotating/commenting capabilities. PubPub also provides analytics and metrics information to aid in understanding the impact and reach of publications. PubPub has begun as a hosted platform at MIT; support for installations at other locations may be a future service offering.

Administrative Infrastructure
PubPub explicitly calls out the need for a partner and community driven product roadmap to guide its development. The publicly available roadmap is developed by the PubPub staff and team, and it is shared with internal stakeholders. Decisions and prioritization are handled by stakeholder consensus.

Finances and Human Resources
PubPub’s initial funding has come from in-kind contributions and two foundations: the Sloan Foundation and the Siegel Family Endowment. In 2019, PubPub spent approximately 75% of its budget to support staff salaries and benefits; additional funding supported equipment and travel/meeting costs. Currently, PubPub is supported by seven staff members, including a managing director, lead developer, product manager, partnerships director, senior project editor, full-stack developer, and UX/UI designer.

Governance
PubPub is a project of the Knowledge Futures Group, a 501c3 nonprofit organization that provides its legal and fiscal identity. Since its founding at MIT, KFG has only recently become an independent entity, and as such, it is still in early-phase development. PubPub is in the process of planning its assembly of an advisory board, and its reported aim is to include active users/community members, leaders in scholarly communication, and funders within that group.

Community Engagement
PubPub actively engages with stakeholder communities (including users, society publishers, and university presses) to inform development and strategic directions. PubPub’s Terms and Conditions are available publicly.