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Shine bright like a diamond: what can library hosting services offer in the academic publishing market?

This article provides a summary of the library-based diamond open access (OA) publishing services offered by Edinburgh Diamond at the University of Edinburgh and the Open Journals Service at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). The article, based on a presentation given at UKSG 2024, looks at similarities and differences observed by the managers of the two services and, although Edinburgh Diamond also publishes books, will focus predominantly on journal hosting. It also looks at the advantages of running a hosting service, before reviewing some key factors to consider: skills and personnel, financial and business models and overall sustainability. This article concludes by looking to the future and what the two services hope to achieve.

Keywords

diamond open access, library publishing, library service and resources, open access

Introduction

This article provides a summary of the library-based diamond open access (OA) publishing services offered by Edinburgh Diamond at the University of Edinburgh ([University of Edinburgh, 2024](#)) and the Open Journals Service at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) ([Liverpool John Moores University Open Journal Service, n.d.](#)). The article, based on a presentation given at UKSG 2024, looks at similarities and differences observed by the managers of the two services and, although Edinburgh Diamond also publishes books, will focus predominantly on journal hosting. It also looks at the advantages of running a hosting service, before reviewing some key factors to consider: skills and personnel, financial and business models and overall sustainability. This article concludes by looking to the future and what the two services hope to achieve. To note, the terms hosting service and publishing service are used interchangeably to mean a library-based initiative that supports academics, staff and students in their publishing endeavours by providing the required infrastructure.

Both Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals were set up to provide hosting solutions for existing journals that were self-publishing online without a formal publishing infrastructure in place. The services have both since grown organically then purposefully as interest in and demand for diamond OA support grew. Both services were also part of strategic plans for their respective institutions. Further information on why and how the services were set up can be found in previous articles written by the authors ([Dishman, 2017](#); [Wojturska, 2023](#)).

Although both services operate under a diamond OA model, this article does not seek to define diamond OA in its entirety, but instead aims to shed light on two services engaged in diamond OA activities within the context of library publishing. We broadly use the Plan S definition which states 'Diamond Open Access refers to a scholarly publication model in which journals and platforms do not charge fees to either authors or readers. Diamond Open Access journals are community-driven, academic-led, and academic-owned publishing initiatives ([Plan S, n.d.](#))'.



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The intended audience of this article is the librarian running or hoping to launch their own diamond OA hosting service. At the end of the article, there is a resources section that lists tools both the Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals services use to launch new journals and run their overall publishing programmes.

Advantages

There are many advantages to running a library-based hosting service. Below are a few that the Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals services have found.

Freedom in content selection

Firstly, there is scope for more freedom in what is published as more risks can be taken when content selection is not based on profitability. The Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals services shape themselves around incoming projects and suggestions, rather than determining in advance exactly what they want to host. As such, a library hosting service does not need to specialize in subject areas or disciplines and can instead exist to highlight the important and exciting research from their institution, no matter the area it is in. There are also no conflicts of interest between publishers and authors, which can strengthen the integrity of the research.

'there is scope for more freedom in what is published ... when content selection is not based on profitability'

Library environment

Hosting services tend to be led by institutional libraries, which gives scope to be involved in teaching and learning activities on top of traditional publishing activities. For example, the service can be used to facilitate students in running a journal to help prepare them for an academic or publishing career, or to develop useful administrative skills. LJMU Open Journals *Student Law Journal* publishes works from undergraduate and postgraduate Law students and provides an opportunity for students to be involved in an editorial board. Papers are peer reviewed by LJMU staff, PhD students and external reviewers ([LJMU Student Law Journal, n.d.](#)). Another example of involvement with teaching and learning activities is the option to work with other services within an institution, such as an open education resources (OER) team, to provide open textbooks and materials that are tailored to a course. Edinburgh Diamond worked with the University of Edinburgh's OER team, along with academics and students, to facilitate the creation of a tailored textbook: *Fundamentals of Music Theory* ([Edwards et al., 2021](#)). The book converted existing course content into convenient and reusable open formats suitable for use by staff and students both within and beyond the University. As of the date of publication, the book has had over 50,000 downloads. The example activities outlined above connect various stakeholders within an institution and help bring the power of publishing back to the creators, while engaging in teaching and learning activities.

Collaboration

Library publishing is a growing area, and there is opportunity for collaboration and collective action between institutions. For example, the Open Institutional Publishing Association (OIPA) was founded to connect and encourage OA publishing activities within the UK, including library hosting services and institutional presses. Working together strengthens individual services, encourages transparency and helps showcase the variety of OA publishing models available, including gold OA, diamond OA or hybrid approaches. Both Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals are members of OIPA. Another example is the ALPSP Library Publishing Special Interest Group, which the authors co-lead. The group meets quarterly and exists to connect individuals engaged or interested in library publishing. A final example is the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries (SCURL) Open Hosting Shared Service, where members can sign up to pool knowledge and resources to run library hosting and publishing programmes.

'Working together strengthens individual services, encourages transparency and helps showcase the variety of OA publishing models'

Transparency

Library hosting services tend to publish exclusively under a diamond OA model, which in this sphere generally means there is no cost to people using the service, no cost to publish in the books or journals hosted and no cost for readers to access the content. They also tend to use Creative Commons licences which, when combined with the efforts in transparency, can help with the reproducibility of research. Overall, this helps make academic publishing more equitable and inclusive.

The diamond OA model also comes with a responsibility to be more transparent about processes, including showing the inner workings of publishing practices. Transparency in academic publishing means more informed choices can be made by researchers and readers, and can be a hallmark of quality for the publisher. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is an advocate for transparency and its inclusion criteria is a good starting point for library hosting services to check their hosted journals are of a high quality. Both services use Creative Commons licences and DOAJ guidance to aid transparency, and they also help their journal teams with policies on topics including peer review and open access, all to ensure prospective authors and readers have the information they need about the journal.

'The diamond OA model also comes with a responsibility to be more transparent about processes'

Professional development

Although this list of advantages is not exhaustive by any means, a final point is that being involved in a library publishing service can provide professional development opportunities. For librarians with little or no publishing background it provides an opportunity to learn more about this process as well as the systems that facilitate it. For service managers with little or no library background it provides the opportunity to learn more about library publishing, how that interacts with the library more generally and how that differs with more traditional commercial publishing. Increasing the skill set of staff benefits the institution in terms of development of the service and staff job satisfaction as well as raising the profile of the support the library can offer.

Considerations

There are important considerations to take into account when running a library hosting service; those outlined below are common to both Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals.

Skills and personnel

One of the biggest considerations is personnel, both in terms of running the service and the running of individual journals. For the service, often these programmes are managed with minimal staffing, leaving risks for a single point of failure if a role changes or long-term leave is taken. Larger publishers are likely to have cover and processes in place to mitigate such risks, whereas library-based hosting services do not usually have the resources, meaning a potential risk to the sustainability of the service. Up-to-date documentation that details processes for the service helps with leave and transitions. Also, having a strong governance hierarchy in place, such as a service advisory board, can be key in professionalism, decision-making and advocacy. Similarly, it is important that the journals themselves remain up to date and in line with current policies and regulations. Both the Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals services perform regular health checks of their hosted journals, which can help identify quality gaps and ensure the portfolio is up to date. It is also important that journal editors are committed to maintaining their journal and have a succession plan in place to mitigate for them leaving either the institution or journal team.

In terms of service personnel, both Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals are operating with small teams. Edinburgh Diamond consists of two full-time members of staff: one person responsible for managing the service direction and the publishing side of the service and the other dedicated to the technical development side of the service – bug fixes, content migrations, upgrades and much more. This is beneficial for Edinburgh Diamond as it means use of open source software – in this case PKP's (Public Knowledge Project)

Open Journals Systems (OJS) and Open Monograph Press (OMP) – can be moulded to their needs in-house. LJMU Open Journals, by comparison, operates with one member of staff who manages the service in addition to other duties. LJMU also uses the OJS software, but this is externally hosted and so the systems support, backups, upgrades and more are provided by their hosting organization and paid for by the LJMU library service. Day-to-day running and technical support for journal managers is offered by the in-house service manager.

In terms of further governance, Edinburgh Diamond has a service board comprised of academics, students, librarians, publishers and a representative from Edinburgh University Press. They meet twice a year to discuss the future of the service, providing a useful source of peer support and industry guidance when needed.

As for skills, although the academic publishing landscape can feel like it evolves at a glacial pace, there is actually constant change and ideas to keep on top of. When a small team runs a hosting service, ensuring staff have the skills – or capacity to develop the skills – required to support the service is key. Activities including reading articles, attending conferences, becoming members of various organizations (such as Open Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA), Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) and Open Institutional Publishing Association (OIPA)) and reaching out to people running similar initiatives are all ways to stay in the loop.

‘When a small team runs a hosting service, ensuring staff have the skills ... required to support the service is key’

Online resources have also proved invaluable to both services. PKP School tutorials are openly available and offer step-by-step instructions on navigating OJS and OMP from the different roles within the publishing journey, which can be vital for library staff, authors and editors new to publishing. Rebecca comes from an academic publishing background and Cath does not so therefore found such a tool particularly useful in understanding the publishing process, which, in turn, helped her to support journal editors. Cath needed to get to grips with various peer review processes and licensing and copyright options, as well as acquiring the skills required to navigate the software. For LJMU Open Journals, editors often take on multiple roles within a journal so bespoke user guides have been produced to support them, utilizing the online guides provided by PKP. Other resources used by both services are the Jisc New University Press Toolkit and the Library Publishing Curriculum – more information about both can be found in the resources section.

As noted, Cath has a library background and Rebecca is from an academic publishing background. They have found that a mix of librarian and publishing skills are crucial for library hosting services. Rebecca found that speaking to various library colleagues helped further her understanding of the library infrastructure and how Edinburgh Diamond could fit into that. Cath found that online resources were valuable for building her understanding of publishing processes (and her being part of the researcher engagement team at LJMU, supporting researchers with their publishing queries, was helpful). Neither service has the financial resource to outsource (except for LJMU outsourcing their technical hosting), but recommend doing so where possible to ensure gaps in skills that cannot be developed for whatever reason (such as capacity or remit) are filled as much as possible.

Financial and business models

Another consideration is financial and business models. Hosting services employ a variety of models, with similarities in costs, service criteria, workflows, provisions and staffing. For funding models, many hosting services are funded by their respective core library budget, which is the case for Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals. The main costs that both services incur are:

- service staff salaries
- the technical infrastructure, such as paying for server spaces, domains and hosting
- Crossref and Datacite Digital Object Identifier (DOI) registration fees
- service memberships, such as CLOCKSS (Controlled Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) and COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics)

- professional body memberships, such as ALPSP and OASPA
- conference attendance, which is important for knowledge-building and networking.

In terms of income, neither service currently has a set annual budget to offset costs, instead relying on continued overhead funding from the respective core library budgets.

As previously mentioned, LJMU Open Journals has less than 0.5 FTE (full-time equivalent) whereas Edinburgh Diamond has 2.0 FTE. As such, Edinburgh Diamond is internally hosted and managed, where LJMU Open Journals is externally hosted. LJMU's data repository is also hosted by the same provider as their Open Journals service, which makes it more cost-effective as the fee covers both services with the cost of an additional 'repository' added on to the base cost. Therefore, if LJMU were to move their data repository to another provider this could have a knock-on effect on the Open Journals Service and potentially make it too expensive to host with the current provider. This would then involve looking at other options. The Datacite DOI registration cost also covers both the repository and hosting services.

Another consequence of financial challenges is a lack of time and resource for certain publishing activities. Tasks that are usually provided by a commercial publisher – such as marketing, copy-editing, typesetting and proofreading – are not always offered by hosting services. Journal editors, who are often managing the journal in addition to their core role, do not always have these skills and so may not be able to pick up these additional and important publishing tasks, which are often part of a separate professional role at a commercial publisher (copy-editing, for example). It is therefore important to at least offer guidance around these processes and to generally ensure the service is as robust as it can be with the resources available, so that the service is a viable publishing route for researchers. Publishing tasks that hosting services tend to provide include: allocation and management of ISSNs, ISBNs, DOIs; archiving and preservation of content; inclusion in library catalogues; indexing submissions; annual metrics reporting; provision of an open-source workflow management and publishing system.

'Another consequence of financial challenges is a lack of time and resource for certain publishing activities'

Due to limited capacity and wanting to have quality assurance measures in place, Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals have criteria for using their service. Both require that the journals taken on have a connection to the institution. For LJMU Open Journals this means that a staff member must be on the editorial board for academic-led journals and a student must be the journal manager for student-led journals, with a staff contact to ensure journal continuation after the student leaves the institution. For Edinburgh Diamond this means that staff and students must be on the core editorial team, preferably Editor-in-Chief or Managing Editor, for their respective journals. Both services require a journal proposal form to be filled in, with LJMU requiring a sign-off by the Head of School or Service so they are fully aware that a new journal is being proposed. Once a journal has been agreed to be hosted (by a formal Decisions Group in the case of Edinburgh Diamond), both services send out a setup form that asks for the information needed to set the journal up on OJS, with meetings arranged to provide additional information and to ensure all involved are happy with the look and feel of the journal. System and workflow training is provided so journal teams become familiar with the OJS system, and a test journal is provided, along with links to the formal PKP guidance, so they can continue training themselves in their own time. Service staff are then on hand for publishing and technical queries, but journal editors are expected to manage and run their journals themselves, including managing submissions, sourcing peer reviewers, file format creation and publishing.

'journal editors are expected to manage and run their journals themselves'

Sustainability

Sustainability is tied in with financial and business models, as a model needs to work in order for a service to be sustainable. Infrastructure is key to helping a hosting service remain sustainable!

LJMU Open Journals and Edinburgh Diamond engage in archiving, preservation and indexing activities so that hosted content is widely shared and preserved. This strengthens a service

and ensures hard work and content is not lost should something happen. Preservation services to look into include: CLOCKSS, LOCKSS and the PKP Preservation Network (the latter for OJS users). Core indexing services include the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Scopus and the Web of Science, and there is also a wealth of smaller subject-specialist databases. Acceptance into such indexing databases can be a hallmark of quality and used to attract submissions and readers to your journals.

Ensuring robust policies are in place is also important. Publication ethics, digital preservation, open access and peer review policies – to name but a few – professionalize the service while providing crucial guidance to authors and editors. The less the users require of service staff and the more confident and competent in running their own journals they are, the better!

It is also important to consider reputation or kudos with sustainability, as this has to be built up from scratch. Well-known publishers can have that immediate kudos for authors; authors have heard of them and may have published in journals published by them. For institutional publishers there is a need to get beyond the perception that theirs is 'just' an institutional journal and that a better-known or commercial publisher somehow has higher editorial standards. The challenge is to convince researchers that your journal, on your institutional hosting service, has high standards and is a good place to publish. Membership with industry organizations can help the service's reputation as it benefits from industry expertise and collaboration, and indexing journals in places like the DOAJ helps with boosting a journal's quality standards.

'The challenge is to convince researchers that your journal, on your institutional hosting service, has high standards and is a good place to publish'

Strong marketing and promotion are also important, but can often be put on the back burner as more time-sensitive or service-critical tasks appear. Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals have both found that engaging in activities including posting on social media platforms, attending conferences and writing articles helps improve service visibility, benefitting the service itself as well as the hosted journals, as these activities can also help attract readers and submissions.

Finally, collaboration can also be an important factor in ensuring sustainability. When a service has minimal staffing – as both the Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals services do – collaboration becomes increasingly important in efforts to transform academic publishing. It would be difficult to grow sustainably without a support network of peers with whom to share targets and challenges, especially when internal resources are limited. Some memberships and projects to explore include OIPA, ALPSP and the Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication (DIAMAS) project. There is more information about these services in the resources section.

Conclusion

To conclude, in the authors' opinion the advantages outweigh the challenges of launching and running a hosting service. Library publishing is an exciting area to be a part of: it helps put the power of publishing back into the researcher's hands, while ensuring an institution is further involved in supporting OA and the publishing endeavours of its staff and students. Librarians are well-placed to offer these services as they have transferable skills from supporting the University in publishing related matters.

Looking to the future, Edinburgh Diamond and LJMU Open Journals look to expand and widen their reach, both internally and externally. Prospective activities are listed below.

'Library publishing is an exciting area to be a part of: it helps put the power of publishing back into the researcher's hands'

Engagement with DIAMAS

Both service managers are enthused about the development of the DIAMAS project, which aims to 'deliver an aligned, high-quality, and sustainable institutional OA scholarly publication ecosystem' (DIAMAS, 2025). Both services aim to make good use of DIAMAS

project tools, namely the Diamond Open Access Standard (DOAS) self-assessment tool and the Diamond OA Sustainability check, to assess the service's compliance with quality standards and identify areas for development. Overall, both services desire to integrate DIAMAS standards into their respective workflows.

Archiving, preservation and indexing

Both services aim to look into or further develop archiving, preservation and indexing activities. LOCKSS, CLOCKSS and the PKP Preservation Network will be reviewed for archiving and preservation, and submissions will be made to indexers including the DOAJ, Scopus, Web of Science, and others.

Promotion

Promotion is a key task and difficult to coordinate, due to resource and complicated networks within institutions. Promotion also comes in two strands: the internal and external promotion of the services themselves, and the internal and external promotion of hosted journals and content to support journal managers. Collaboration with journal managers could be a way to improve promotion of individual journals.

Skill sharing and resource

As previously identified, there is a risk of a single point of failure. In order to reduce this, both services aim to spread knowledge about the service processes to other members of staff within the team to reduce this risk. Each service also plans to research resource opportunities to further expand and enrich their scopes.

Collaboration

All of the above will be best achieved through collaboration. Cath and Rebecca are passionate about working together and making the best use of collaboration opportunities where they arise, including through their memberships of OIPA. Diamond OA and library publishing continues to grow in the UK, and by pooling resources and sharing best practice, we can work together to ensure a sparkling future, where diamond OA shines even more brightly.

If you have read this and would like more information, just reach out to Cath Dishman and Rebecca Wojturska, who are more than happy to help with the nitty gritty of launching and running a hosting service.

Resources

Below are a list of resources mentioned throughout the article and which will be helpful in setting up and running a library hosting service.

ALPSP: Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers provides events and training which could be useful for people running hosting services and trying to get to grips with the different aspects of publishing ([ALPSP, n.d.](#)). In addition Rebecca and Cath co-chair the ALPSP Library Publishing special interest group.

COPE: is the Committee on Publication Ethics which aims to bring together those involved in scholarly publication to promote and support them making ethical practices a normal part of publishing culture. It provides guidelines, flowcharts and cases to help those dealing with issues around publication ethics ([COPE, n.d.](#)).

DIAMAS: (Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication) is a project that aims to map the current landscape of institutional publishing service providers (IPSPs) in the twenty-five countries of the European research area. The aim being to coordinate and improve efficiency and quality of IPSPs by developing a quality standard to act as a benchmark for a gap analysis. It also wants to create communities of practice to help support IPSPs in their activities ([DIAMAS, 2025](#)).

Jisc: their new university press toolkit, despite its name, is also very useful for hosting services as it provides guidance on publishing, governance of journals and marketing amongst other areas ([Jisc, n.d.](#)).

Library Publishing Curriculum: offers synchronous and asynchronous professional development opportunities for librarians to assist in the launching and enhancing of scholarly publishing activities ([Library Publishing Curriculum, n.d.](#)).

OASPA: describes itself as ‘a diverse community of organizations engaged in open scholarship with a mission to encourage and enable open access as the predominant model of communication for scholarly outputs’ ([OASPA, n.d.](#)).

OIPA: is the Open Institutional Publishing Association which aims to bring together university presses and institutionally affiliated publishing operations striving for open access. The idea behind the association is to share experience, resources and best practice in open access publishing for books and journals ([OIPA, n.d.](#)).

PKP: their user guides and PKP School cover different aspects of the system and include information about installing and setting up OJS as well as guidance on using the system to process journal submissions. They cover the various stages of the editorial process ([PKP, n.d.](#)).

SCURL Open Hosting Shared Service: Members of the Scottish Confederation of University & Research Libraries (SCURL) can sign up to receive book and journal hosting on a shared service basis. Technical infrastructure is provided by the University of Edinburgh, and all members meet quarterly to determine the direction of the service ([SCURL, n.d.](#)).

Abbreviations and Acronyms

A list of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this and other *Insights* articles can be accessed here – click on the following URL and then select the ‘full list of industry A&As’ link: <http://www.uksg.org/publications#aa>.

Competing interests

The authors have declared no competing interests.

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