

BANGLAJOL AND THE JSR

Experiences with the online journal system

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The Journal of Scientific Research (JSR) was designed to bridge a gap as the first international, interdisciplinary journal to operate from Bangladesh. Through Bangladesh Journals Online (BanglaJOL) and the Open Journal System (OJS), JSR has seen substantial growth in international submissions and reviewers since its launch - resulting in and increase from one issue annually to three.



Journal of Scientific Research Vol. 1:1 2009

As a physicist I have been an editorial board member of two national journals and reviewer of several national and international journals. However, until recently, I had never been associated with an online journal. My first experience with this began in March 2008, when I was made the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Scientific Research (JSR), which was planned to launch in January 2009.

The idea of launching a journal that would publish high quality scientific works was planted earlier that year during a science faculty meeting at Rajshahi University. In fact, at that time, no international journal (online or print) with an interdisciplinary character, specifically catering to the academic needs of the international community, operated from Bangladesh. The new journal aimed to fill this gap, to be a bridge for the scientists from the east and the west and become a forum for the dissemination of knowledge.

After the decision to launch a journal, the key challenge was to build a website that would serve our purposes in terms of management and publishing. Then, fortunately, we became aware of Bangladesh Journals Online (BanglaJOL) which offers participating journals the opportunity to take control of their own area within BanglaJOL. This enables them to load, edit and update their own journal information. Joining BanglaJOL relieved the burden of building and managing a website of our own. I must thank INASP and its Publishing Support staff, particularly Mrs. Sioux Cumming, for helping us publish via BanglaJOL.

After we began our journal on the system, we received roughly 65% of submissions online (out of a total 145 in the first 9 months). The rest came through e-mail submissions. In the beginning, while uncertain, I was

determined that I could handle the processing job. I soon learned to use the system largely on my own, although I occasionally sought help from Sioux when necessary.

Sudden growth in submissions and the volume of work

Within a month of JSR's call for papers, the manuscripts submitted to JSR started to flow in. However, in the second month, the submission rate increased dramatically following the start of online submissions. There has been a corresponding increase in the geographical spread of the articles too, i.e., submissions from diverse regions such as Africa, Latin America, France, USA, Japan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Iraq as well as Bangladesh. Initially JSR was launched with the intention of publishing one issue annually. But because of a substantial number of submissions each month it has been decided that we would publish 3 online issues per volume with 1 print volume per year.

This growth in submissions has led to an increase in the volume of work that I have to handle personally (since there is no editorial staff except the occasional assistance from the faculty) at various stages of the review process. On top of that I have to handle about 35% of the e-mail submissions which are more time-consuming. Further, the accepted articles from email submissions have to be loaded online along with their metadata. The rejected manuscripts were not included in the journal statistics data till last month.

Online Reviewing

The advantage of the online editorial system is that the multidisciplinary reviewers from far and wide are now available relatively easily, which is considered a major constraint with the conventional editing system. At the beginning of June we had 209 reviewers registered with the system (in a little over 9 months). Only 20% (roughly) of these enlisted reviewers are personal contacts or were recruited by me.

One of the important tasks in the review process is the selection of reviewers. At present I, as Editor-in-Chief, generally choose two reviewers from the reviewers database on the JSR website (the Editorial Board members also help in suggesting names of reviewers) for each manuscript. The database of registered reviewers (comprised of both external and internal reviewers), enables us to obtain a broad range of opinions. The external reviewers come from USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Japan, Singapore, Korea, India, Pakistan, Iran, and people from different universities and institutions of Bangladesh. Some of the reviewers are not yet registered with the system as they have reviewed e-mail submissions. They will, in the future, be included in the database and we have plans to increase further the number of reviewers in order to improve the process.

Visibility, CrossRef, DOI, and Indexing Databases

I know that the existing Bangladeshi print journals face shortages of good quality submissions. Often, funds are also in short supply because of high production costs. Low visibility, timeliness and the quality of reviews are also issues faced with print journals. In terms of visibility, online publication is a great benefit as readers need only visit the website rather than have a publisher send the print journal to their library or directly. Linking to and from abstracting and indexing databases, and citation linking using Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) and CrossRef are thus important ways to take readers reliably to the journal's front door.

From the very first issue I have been assigning DOIs to each of our articles published in JSR. BanglaJOL is registered with CrossRef, enabling me to export metadata (computer-readable descriptive information) of an online article to CrossRef for allocation of DOIs. It then automatically becomes 'visible' for linking by all the other users of the service.

Furthermore we use CrossRef links to add DOIs for each of the cited references of JSR articles before publication. This cross-publisher citation linking system allows a researcher to click on a reference citation on one publisher's platform and link directly to the cited content on another. My suggestion to the editors is to use these for improved visibility.

Fig. 1 shows the high number of article views over 6 months for Vol. 1(1). This is a strong indication of high visibility, especially for a new journal over such a short period of time.

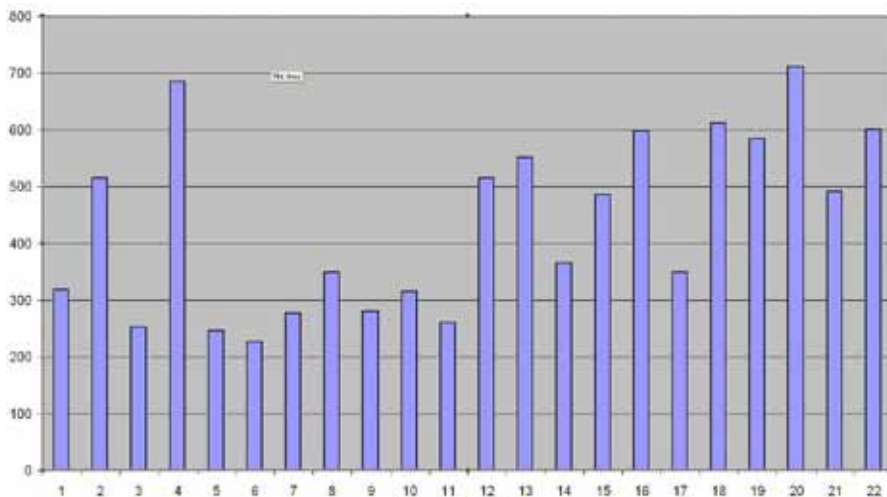


Fig. 1 Views per article in JSR Vol. 1(1) January-July 2009

Future Plans of JSR: 2010 onwards

The success of JSR through BanglaJOL has been very encouraging and we hope to maintain and improve upon this in the future. Plans include:

- Retaining the online submission system and gradually phasing out email. Reducing our workload drastically and making the JSR system more efficient
- Training and familiarisation on OJS software
The lack of awareness and familiarity among some authors and most reviewers regarding online submission, resubmission and reviewing are key challenges.
- Ensuring visibility on major Internet search engines through databases and indexes
- Introducing Hybrid Open Access, in which authors of accepted articles pay modest publication charge to defray the partial cost for the print version.
- Building networks and partnerships to create a higher quality, sustainable journal.

I personally feel and envisage that BanglaJOL services would be crucial in supporting research and raising the quality of national and regional research and increasing its visibility both nationally, regionally and internationally. Additionally, this would offer further opportunities for regional and international collaboration.

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Visit the BanglaJOL site at:

www.banglajol.info

For more information on the Journals Online project, please visit the website:

www.inasp.info/jols