
Professional Development

Using the Directory of Open Access Journals to Expand Publishing Opportunities and Stay Competitive

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This article is an introduction to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), which is a free search engine of indexed academic journals from across the globe covering many academic disciplines and dozens of languages. With the ever-present need for university teachers to publish their academic research to gain stable employment and engage in professional development, the directory can be an invaluable resource for both novice and veteran researchers alike in selecting a journal in which to submit a manuscript. This paper reviews relevant literature to establish that publishing original research is necessary for university teachers. It then offers an overview of how the DOAJ can be effectively utilized by researchers to find reputable, academically rigorous journals in which to publish their work more widely at no cost. The ways in which demographic changes in Japan have resulted in increased competition for a static number of teaching positions at the university level are also outlined.

Publish or Perish

Previous studies in the field of Japanese labor trends indicate that publishing research is one of the keys to stable university employment (e.g., McCrostie, 2010). An examination of the job postings on the Japan Research Career Information Network website ([https://https://www.jrecin.jst.go.jp/seek/SeekTop](https://www.jrecin.jst.go.jp/seek/SeekTop)) reveals the necessity of having a certain number of publications on one's résumé. The phrase "publish or perish" is often heard at conferences and generally anywhere that university teachers may gather. Although the sentiment is still expressed today, the phrase itself is close to a century old (Case, 1928). Furthermore, the trend shows no signs of reversing, and publication requirements will only

become stricter as jobseekers move on from term-limited employment to tenure-track positions (McCrostie, 2010). Therefore, university-level teachers seeking to advance their careers should publish as much as possible.

In the Japanese teaching context, the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), its special interest groups (SIGs), some prefectural chapters, and major conferences offer a plethora of publishing opportunities. JALT's own data indicate that its chapters, SIGs, and conferences produce a total of 20 journals, not all of which require JALT membership (JALT, n.d.). Publishing in post-conference proceedings also has the added benefit of allowing presenters to add an article onto their résumé, in addition to presenting research results. However, some writers do not research and write on a schedule that coincides with conferences, and busy lives may mean that responding to a call for papers gets overlooked. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) can help to remedy some of these issues by helping researchers find journals which fit their publishing needs.

New Way to Find Journals

The DOAJ is a free search engine which indexes thousands of peer-reviewed academic, open-access journals from around the world covering all academic disciplines. According to the directory's main page, it indexes over 17,000 journals—about 12,000 of which feature no article processing charges (APCs)—and features journals written in 80 languages as of August 2021 (Figure 1). This free service is made possible by virtue of the DOAJ being a non-profit organization which receives some financial support through sponsors like open-access group PeerJ and academic societies like the Royal Society of Chemistry. The DOAJ is not unlike other search engines such as Google or Bing. Writers who are familiar with academic search engines like Journal Storage (JSTOR) will have little trouble using the DOAJ. According to the DOAJ's mission statement, it strives to “increase the visibility, accessibility, reputation, usage and impact of quality, peer-reviewed, open access scholarly research journals globally” (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2021a, para. 4). A team of over 100 volunteers is tasked with reviewing and vetting possible new journals to be indexed by the DOAJ, and

there are no fees to apply to have a journal indexed.

In fact, creating an account—a staple of almost every online interaction these days—is only mandatory for publishers whose journal is indexed by the DOAJ. Otherwise, it is voluntary. For users who are often locked out of journal directories stored behind paywalls or who feel uncomfortable using their Google account to log in to everything from news sites to online shops, the DOAJ offers its users a free and anonymous research resource.

There are only two settings to configure on the directory’s front page (Figure 1). Users can choose to search through either journals or articles, and searches can be narrowed down by title, ISSN, subject, and publisher.

When wishing to find a journal suitable for their manuscript, users can simply type in the kind of journal they are looking for in the search bar. A search of “teaching” brings in 498 results across all represented disciplines and languages. The search results page lets users narrow search terms down even more. Academic discipline, language, license, publisher, country of origin, peer review type, and date added can all be customized. A search for double-blind, peer-reviewed education journals written in English, for example, returns 280 results. After a search has been conducted, clicking on the name of a journal will open a new tab, where more information about that journal will be displayed. Information about that journal’s publication fees, its aims and scope, average

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THE DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Find open access journals & articles.

Journals Articles

In all fields

80 LANGUAGES	130 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED	12,281 JOURNALS WITHOUT APCs	17,531 JOURNALS	7,293,330 ARTICLE RECORDS
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Figure 1. The DOAJ’s front page.

turnaround time from submission to publication, author copywrite information, and journal keywords will be displayed. This information can help a researcher decide where to send a manuscript for publication based on, for example, how much time will be invested from submission to publication and whether the scope of the journal aligns with the research of that researcher.

Avoiding Predatory Journals

Jobseekers looking to build their résumé can fall prey to several traps. Newcomers to higher education may not know which conferences are reputable and academically rigorous, which can lead some to present at so-called pay-to-present conferences (McCrostie, 2018). Such conferences are held with the goal of turning a profit and can result in a damaged reputation for presenters. Part-time or contracted teachers without access to a robust source of research funds will find themselves unable to travel further afield to international conferences. Yet presenting at academic conferences and publishing in scholarly journals is essential to building a competitive résumé. This practice has reached the publishing world, as well, in a trend that Beall (2012) calls *predatory publishing*, in which journals charge fees for either submission or publication. Although Beall's work focuses on the sciences, the humanities are not immune to the problem of pay-to-publish journals. With that in mind, one important search function to switch on when using the DOAJ is the *Without article processing charges* (APCs) option (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2021a, top left button after accessing "Journals Without APCs on the homepage). This will ensure that any journal which appears in the search results will not charge authors for submitting or publishing an article. At the time of writing, the DOAJ contained 11,933 journals without APCs across all represented disciplines, languages, and countries.

The DOAJ Seal

While the DOAJ indexes thousands of journals, it saves its seal for those which meet certain publishing and copyright conditions. According to its site, "The DOAJ Seal is awarded to journals that demonstrate best practice in open access publishing. Around 10% of journals indexed in the DOAJ have been awarded

the Seal” (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2021b, para. 1). The criteria for receiving the DOAJ Seal include digital preservation, persistent article identifiers, metadata supply to DOAJ, license type, license information in articles, copyright and publishing rights, and self-archiving policy (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2021b). While journals do not need to receive the DOAJ Seal to be indexed in the directory, it may be worthwhile for researchers to also switch on the *With a DOAJ Seal* option from the search results page. Doing so will ensure that the journals which appear on the search results page meet these strict criteria.

While the DOAJ Seal is not an indicator of the quality of a journal per se, users who may be interested in reproducing their research on ResearchGate, their personal websites, or across social media could find it worthwhile to look for DOAJ Seal journals when browsing the site, so as to avoid infringing copyright or other publishers’ rights.

Publishing Outside of Japan

Language teachers and researchers in Japan may be aware of JALT and some of its publications. However, a DOAJ search for “JALT” returns zero results. The reason behind this is that the DOAJ does not actively seek out journals to index. Instead, journal editors or staff must petition the DOAJ staff to include their journal in the DOAJ database. What this means for users of the DOAJ is that they will be able to find previously unfamiliar journals which can help expand their professional network. Japan-based researchers can have their name and work seen and read by entirely new groups of people in countries where JALT is not the largest English-teaching organization. Potentially, this kind of branching out of a professional network can lead to new opportunities for researchers in terms of collaboration with other professionals in their discipline.

Writing for and submitting articles to various journals can also help researchers become familiar with varied formatting requirements and citation styles. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, for example, follows the American Psychological Association style guide. Researchers who have published in any of the JALT journals will be familiar with this reference style. *Learning and Teaching*, published by Berghahn Books in the

United States, however, uses the *New Oxford Style Manual* and adopts British English spelling and punctuation. Having this kind of writing and publishing experience can give writers more confidence when updating their résumé and applying for jobs. How many researchers or job applicants can claim an in-depth familiarity with a range of bibliographic styles? Having this kind of publishing experience can also help university teachers advance their career by leading to editing or proofreading duties in their own university publications.

Demographic Challenges and the Need to Stay Competitive

Using the DOAJ to find and publish in academic journals can be one method of staying competitive in a shrinking job market. Demographic data gathered from various sources (Harada, 2015; Hollingworth, 2008; Terada, 2007) indicate Japan's population of 18-year-olds has fluctuated since 1966 but "has remained basically steady over the last several years" (Harada, 2015, para. 2). Harada (2015) also notes that while the number of high school graduates entering some type of post-secondary institution is as high as 80%, Japan's slowing birth rate means that even this high enrollment rate will not be enough to save universities, which are facing a student shortage. This problem has affected universities in rural areas (Terada, 2007), as well as private universities across Japan (Crosby, 2016). It is simply not possible to fill every student vacancy every year, and universities have been forced to merge, cut departments, or close altogether. Harada (2015) goes on to mention that even long-standing institutions, such as Tokyo Jogakkan College, founded in 1888, face the possibility of closure due to falling student enrollment. A static number of college-aged students means a static number of teaching positions, since there is no expansion of the university system; universities that cannot attract a sufficient number of students are at risk of closing. What this ultimately implies for university teachers in Japan is that the number of universities will not grow with time. There will be more competition for a static or dwindling number of teaching positions at the university level, which means that jobseekers must keep their résumés competitive by publishing their research in academic journals, along with a range of other professional development and resumé-enhancing

activities. Using the DOAJ can help jobseekers stay competitive.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to show how the DOAJ can be used to search for reputable journals to which users can submit their research when engaging in professional development and improving their résumés. The need to publish to gain stable employment within academia has been established and the usage of the DOAJ has also been described. Predatory journals were also discussed, as well as the DOAJ Seal journals, which meet certain publishing criteria set by the DOAJ. Demographic changes among college-aged individuals in Japan were described and linked to school closures and consolidations, further making the case that applying for university teaching positions will continue to be competitive and necessitate having a strong résumé with publications in reputable journals. Although the prospect of gaining full-time university employment can seem daunting, especially for newcomers, using the DOAJ to find and publish in a variety of academic journals can help strengthen a candidate's résumé.

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Author bio

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