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The Politics of Open-Access Publishing: *M/C Journal*, Public Intellectualism, and Academic Discourses of Legitimacy

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Peta Mitchell

Introduction: about M/C Journal

M/C Journal was created in 1998 as a student project for an Internet studies honours course, taught by David Marshall, in the then English Department of [The University of Queensland](#) (UQ), Australia. Its stated goal was to become an internationally significant media and cultural studies journal that was created in and for the Web, that was dedicated to the principles of open access to scholarly work, and that would, moreover, foster a spirit of public intellectualism by providing a “crossover [...] between the popular and the academic.” It was also, from the outset, dedicated to the principles of complete open access. Despite numerous funding and institutional support crises, its parent organisation [M/C – Media and Culture](#) (M/C) has remained committed to providing free access to online scholarship and has never considered charging either for access or submission.

The journal is now in its eleventh year of uninterrupted publication, not having succumbed to the five-year “arc of enthusiasm” noted by Walt Crawford in his 2002 study of extant e-journals. It is also one of very few purely online, peer-reviewed open-access journals that is government accredited, which I will soon explain more fully. M/C’s core editorial and administrative team now comprises a mixture of full-time academic staff, postgraduates, and creative industries practitioners from a number of universities and institutions.

M/C as a publishing organisation has, over this time, continued to evolve and extend the scope of its publishing interests. Indeed, M/C now has four subsidiary publications: *M/C Journal*; [M/C Reviews](#), launched only months after the journal; the [M/Cyclopedia](#), a wiki focussing on new media issues, launched in 2005; and [M/C Dialogue](#), which publishes interviews with prominent figures in media and culture and which was launched in 2006. The launch of the M/C wiki came soon after the journal’s institutional shift from UQ to the [Creative Industries Faculty](#) at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). In this paper, however, I’m concerned principally with *M/C Journal*—the original core of the M/C organisation—and the way in which its pursuit of three overriding goals—academic legitimacy, open access, and public intellectualism—continues to sit uneasily in the current Australian academic research environment.

E-publication vs P-publication: online scholarship in the 1990s

M/C Journal was born at the height of the 1990s debate over the validity and potential longevity of online scholarship, a debate that was in evidence in Australia in the early ‘90s. In 1993, the Australian Academy of the Humanities, supported by the Australian government, organised a conference on scholarly electronic publishing, which led to the development of the [National Scholarly Communications Forum](#) (NSCF), a peak body whose aim is to “disseminate information changes to the context and structures of scholarly communication in Australia and to make recommendations on what a broad spectrum of participants see as the best developmental policies” (“National”). Certainly, this speaks to the investment the Australian government and the learned Academies had, and continue to have, in investigating and developing new modes of scholarly communication. The 1993 conference and its published proceedings are more interested in the idea of the electronic library—in the idea of electronic or online *editions*, and *repositories*, *archives*, and *databases* that store digital copies of previously published scholarship—than in open-access scholarly publishing itself. However, even here we can detect a certain ambivalence about the effects online scholarship might have on the quality of scholarship more broadly. As Stuart Macintyre notes in his paper, although he sees the “electronic library” as a “partial remedy” to the problems facing academic scholarship at the time, he still has reservations:

My conclusion, then, proceeds from the conviction that the impediments to cultural and intellectual life are less to do with the provision of information than with the circumstances of its creation. In the social sciences and the humanities we are encouraging too many academics to produce too many superfluous or artificial publications at the expense of genuinely creative scholarship. From this argument two readings of the advent of the electronic library

are possible, one optimistic and the other pessimistic. The optimistic conclusion is that the electronic library will satisfy information storage requirements more cheaply, more efficiently and with far less damage to trees. The pessimistic conclusion is that for precisely these reasons it will encourage more of the same. (178)

As Macintyre's quote exemplifies, like many debates over new media at the time, the debate over online scholarship was in many respects a polarised one between technophiles and technophobes, or perhaps, less dramatically, between early adopters and conservatives. On the one hand, there were those, such as Stevan Harnad, Rob Kling, and Lisa Covi, who in the mid-1990s began to champion the potential of the Web to liberate scholarly discourse. From the advocates' perspective, online academic journals could not only speed up the often tediously slow process of scholarly publishing, they could open academic work up to a much larger, more international audience. And for *free*.

Resistance to this liberatory view of online scholarship was focussed around the same three principles—speed, cost, and access—but with a decidedly more negative inflection. Sceptics acknowledged that the process of peer-review, editing, and publication in print journals may well take years, but maintained that this process was a known quantity, producing a known quality. 'Speed' carried with it the negative connotations of 'fast' ('fast scholarship' sounded a bit like 'fast food') and 'free' the negative connotations of 'cheap'. As for 'access', this raised the thorny problem of the desired academic audience, and this hesitation over speaking in a forum *directly* accessible to the public—a hesitation often left unaddressed in the literature—I will later discuss in more depth.

At base, however, what critics of online scholarship were questioning was the legitimacy and integrity of the medium itself. As Edward J. Valauskas explains in his 1997 article on the evolution of the open-access online journal [First Monday](#), the principle underpinning the publication of academic work—either in print or online—is “decidedly not about communication per se, but about validation and acceptance, so that a given idea expressed in a paper is legitimised by its publication” (Valauskas). Proponents of online scholarship found themselves having to counter an entrenched attitude within the conservative world of academic publishing that electronic texts were not quite publications. Writing in 1999, Rod Heimpel suggests a subversive, metaphorical strategy—complementing Harnad's seminal 1994 “[subversive proposal](#)” for electronic journals—to promote the legitimacy of electronic texts. Heimpel states that what is needed is a “*jeu de langage*” that undercuts the dominant publication principle: “our task,” he writes, “is to legitimate the metaphor: WEBPAGES ARE PUBLICATIONS” (16).

Simplistic though Heimpel's call-to-action may seem, it highlights a radicalisation of the online medium by the conservative print-based world of academic publishing. To compensate for this radicalisation, Harnad, Heimpel, and Valauskas, among many others, can be seen to espouse a “same-but-different” approach in order to establish the legitimacy of online scholarship. This is particularly true in relation to the process that lies at the very heart of academic scholarship, that forms its ground, and that guarantees its rigour and its validity: peer review.

Indeed, in these early debates over the legitimacy of online scholarship, peer review was the major sticking-point (Archer et al 10–11), and in 1996, Harnad attempts to set the record straight. “There are no essential differences between paper and electronic media with respect to peer review,” he states, before going on to promote the virtues of electronic peer review: “All in all, implementing the traditional peer review system purely electronically is not only eminently possible, but is likely to turn out to be optimal, with even paper journal editors preferring to conduct refereeing in the electronic medium” (Harnad, “[Implementing](#)” 112). Yet, despite these assurances, the 1990s witnessed a continued uncertainty about the legitimacy of online scholarship, for as Rob Kling and Lisa Covi found in their [1995 study](#),

Today, many scholars are confused about the formats and intellectual quality of e-journals. In extreme cases, they feel that e-journals must be of lower intellectual quality than p-journals, because they sense something insubstantial and potentially transient—ghostly, superficial, unreal, and thus untrustworthy—in electronic media. In practice, some refereed e-journals publish high quality articles, but they are not well known by their existential critics. (266)

The relationship of *M/C Journal* to its then host institution, UQ, in the late 1990s and early 2000s corresponds roughly with this dialectic. Despite the fact that the research and

teaching interests of at least one academic in the Department of English (now the School of English, Media Studies, and Art History) enabled *M/C Journal* to be established, the journal was never fully accepted at a school or an institutional level. The journal's history in its host school at UQ was characterised by continual technological and ideological battles—technological battles over access to server space and to e-mail and ideological battles over whether the journal “counted.” For instance, for a period of time, the journal's host school at UQ refused to acknowledge its staff's publications in *M/C Journal* as legitimate academic publications, despite the fact that *M/C Journal* had been listed for a number of years in the Australian Government's register of peer-reviewed academic journals. Not only did this mean authors could not claim an article in *M/C Journal* as a peer-reviewed publication as they had been able to in previous years, but it also meant the school could not claim the government funding that would have been attached to that publication. Although it could be argued that this was more a departmental concern about staff publishing in an “in-house” journal, this stricture was not placed upon publishing in the department's other in-house print-based journals.

This restriction was admittedly short-lived, and academics in the School of English, Media Studies, and Art History at UQ now freely claim their articles in *M/C Journal* as legitimate publications to be listed in the Australian Government's [Higher Education Research Data Collection](#) (HERDC), which determines how the Government allocates research income to institutions. Indeed, this article is a case in point. However, *M/C*'s 2004 shift from UQ to QUT—from a traditional Arts faculty to a Creative Industries faculty—was prompted by what the editorial staff of *M/C Journal* considered to be a continued lack of support for and lack of understanding about online scholarship in the relatively conservative research environment of UQ. I do not mean to say that this is the case for all open-access journals in the humanities or even for all open-access humanities journals in Australia. [Australian Humanities Review](#), which began publication in 1996, and is based at the Australian National University (ANU), for instance, may have a very different institutional history. Rather, I wish to draw out the ways in which the history of *M/C Journal* appears to depict the ambivalence inherent in debates over open access research and to describe the ways in which it must adapt to respond to current and future debates.

The era of open access: the current research landscape and the future of online journals

Despite this continued scepticism, however, in general the current debate around online scholarship is a very different one from that of the 1990s. The ‘[serials crisis](#)’ that has been plaguing university libraries for most of the last decade is expected only to worsen, and this, in turn, has made free, open-access online journals much more desirable (see Awre, and Edwards and Shulenburg). Their credibility has also been enhanced by such movements as the 2002 [Budapest Open Access Initiative](#) (BOAI), which proposed the formation of new journals that—much like *M/C Journal*—will

no longer invoke copyright to restrict access to and use of the material they publish. Instead they will use copyright and other tools to ensure permanent open access to all the articles they publish. Because price is a barrier to access, these new journals will not charge subscription or access fees, and will turn to other methods for covering their expenses. (*Budapest*)

The open access movement—headed by Peter Suber, and reinforced by Lawrence Lessig's [Creative Commons Organization](#), groundbreaking open-access repositories such as the [Public Library of Science](#) (PLoS), advocacy groups such as the [Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition](#) (SPARC), and resources such as the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) (DOAJ) and Charles W. Bailey's [Open Access Bibliography](#)—has provided online journals like *M/C Journal* with a new *raison d'être*. As Stephen Pinfield explains,

The subscription-based publishing paradigm is now being questioned by an increasing number of stakeholders in universities who believe it does not give them what they want. An alternative paradigm, open access, is beginning to emerge as a serious possibility. The two ‘roads’ to open access, open-access journal publishing and self-archiving on open-access repositories, are now being seen by some as possible ways of better addressing the wants of stakeholders in universities. Open access does appear to create significant possibilities: maximizing the impact potential of research papers (making them available to the widest possible audience), achieving greater affordability for institutions (creating a competitive market in which only the essentials of publishing are

paid for), and lowering access barriers for the research community (in which potentially all of the literature is freely available). (310)

As a result of these developments, the research directors of universities that have traditionally privileged print publications, and may well have viewed online scholarship with extreme scepticism up until a few years ago, now see open-access as the way forward. Pinfield in fact links the open access movement with the UK [Research Assessment Exercises](#) (RAEs), arguing that in the current climate universities are increasingly seeking “the rapid and wide dissemination of content” (308). Similarly, in the Australian context, Roslyn Petelin reports that the [Group of Eight](#) Australian research-led universities released a statement in 2004 that “confirmed their ‘commitment to open access initiatives that will enhance global access to scholarly information.’ The statement advocates ‘timely, cost-effective dissemination of the highest quality scholarly information’” (Petelin 120). The fact that an [Australian research assessment exercise](#)—the Excellence in Research for Australia (or ERA)—has been in development for a number of years and will be implemented in 2009 is unlikely to be mere coincidence.

Early career academics and the (continuing) perils of publishing online

Given these developments—the establishment of the BOAI, support for open-access initiatives from chronically under-funded libraries, a changing research focus at the institutional level away from print-based journals, and evidence that researchers do not discriminate over which medium they use to do their research (Thomson ISI 6)—it would seem that open-access journals like *M/C Journal* will soon enjoy a stamp of legitimacy equal to that of print-based journals, indeed that they will have their day.

Or will they? All “stakeholders” have now agreed that open-access journals are cheap, fast, and quantitatively sound, and that, in this era of economic rationalism, these are good things. But does the traditional scepticism over what constitutes a “real” scholarly text and “real” academic work continue to hold sway? I would argue that the answer to this question is still, to a significant degree, yes, and particularly in the case of open-access journals in the humanities like *M/C Journal*. According to Petelin, while the developments of the last decade have led to “a much broader acceptance of electronic publication in the sciences [...], print is still paramount in the humanities arena” (121). Moreover, while Thomson ISI’s statistics show that academics are not afraid to *cite* articles in open-access journals, they do not indicate whether those same academics would be willing to *publish* their work in open-access journals. Writing in 2000, Raymond Siemens maintained that, despite the benefits of the electronic medium, “there is a reluctance—among the same group that makes use of electronically-based academic resources and participates in electronically-facilitated exchanges—to publish in refereed electronic outlets or make their scholarship available electronically in other ways” (2).

Moreover—and all studies into online scholarship agree on this point—the authors of articles in open-access journals are, more often than not, comparatively *young* (see Parks 9–10 and Rowlands et al 264, for example). This is perhaps unsurprising, considering that one of the main drivers in the Australian tertiary sector—as in all sectors—is the need to “utilise” new media technologies in all areas of teaching, research, and administration. Most often, it is new, early career academics to whom it falls (in that it is written into their contract) to teach technology-intensive courses: to administer distance-learning courses and to develop flexible-delivery methods within internally taught courses. However, the fact that established, mid- to late-career academics in all disciplines are not drawn to publishing in open-access journals in the same way as their early career colleagues (and, as Siemens notes, despite the fact that they themselves *use* online scholarship), indicates a continuing scepticism over the textual legitimacy of the medium. This apparent generational divide is borne out in a 2005 study into the attitudes of almost 4000 senior researchers across 97 countries towards open-access publishing. The results of this study demonstrated that, while “younger authors were more likely to be positive about the outcomes of OA [Open Access] publishing,” “older respondents were more likely to worry about the quality, for example, that papers will become less concise” (Nicholas, et al 512).

And this scepticism has been argued to have serious and tangible consequences for early career academics. When it comes to applying for promotion and tenure, Robert Parks contended in 2002, “the young author has incentive to remain with the extant [print-based] journal. [...] Convincing a dean that an article in a [scholarly open-access journal] has the same value as a hard copy journal article will be difficult if not impossible” (9-10). In 2000, an Indiana University study claimed to demonstrate that publishing online in fact adversely affects the chances of achieving promotion and tenure for early career academics. In a mock promotions round, a fictional early career academic’s application for

tenure was turned down by fellow staff members as a result of continuing “skeptical[ism] about the quality and effectiveness of online research and teaching” (Kiernan 45).

Opinion is divided as to whether this situation has changed in recent years following the exponential growth of open-access publishing. Certainly, the abovementioned 2005 study indicates that most respondents did not see open-access publishing as “radical” or as having no career advantage (Nicholas, et al 507). However, this is tempered by the fact that authors from countries that had a “poor commitment to OA publishing”—notably Australia, North America, and Western Europe—“associated OA with ephemeral publishing, poor archiving and no career advantage” (517). Moreover, as the authors of the study note, “perhaps the biggest finding to emerge from the study is the general ignorance of OA publishing on the part of relatively senior scholarly authors” (515).

Yet there are signs that open access or online scholarship is becoming more broadly accepted. In the humanities, the [Modern Language Association](#) (MLA) has made decidedly positive policy statements relating to online scholarship over the past three years, indicating a clearer acceptance of online scholarship. In 2003, the MLA released a [policy statement](#) in support of the electronic journal, which it regards as “a viable and credible mode of scholarly publication” that “represents a particularly important development in the light of recent constraints on university press publication” (“Statement”). Moreover, in 2006, the MLA released their [report](#) on evaluating scholarship for tenure and promotion in language and literature departments. Among other recommendations, the report proposes that tenure should not be hampered by biases towards publication in print, and explicitly states that “departments and institutions should recognize the legitimacy of scholarship produced in new media, whether by individuals or in collaboration, and create procedures for evaluating these forms of scholarship” (“Report” 63). However, according to [SPARC](#) steering committee member Ray English, despite the growing prestige and impact of a number of open access journals, risks remain for younger, non-tenured researchers considering publishing their research online (“Open Access”).

The ongoing nature of the open-access debate reveals the core of the problematic facing open-access journals: that while it is now deemed safe to *use* online scholarship, it is still not entirely safe to *produce* it. Furthermore, I would argue that this problematic is even more strongly registered in relation to humanities open-access journals than it is in their counterparts in the sciences. The difference here, I argue, relates to purpose and audience. That is, the intended audience of open-access science journals remains the same as their print equivalents: researchers working within the particular discipline and familiar with disciplinary research discourses in the sciences. For open-access science journals, on the whole, the online medium is simply a way of disseminating knowledge *to the same audience* more effectively and cheaply. On the other hand, the mission of a number of pioneering humanities open-access journals—such as [First Monday](#), [PMC](#), and *M/C Journal*—was to use the medium of the Web to open online scholarship up to new audiences, to serve a public-intellectual function. Again, this disciplinary divide is borne out by Nicholas et al’s 2005 study, which found that senior researchers in the humanities, the social sciences, and economics were more sceptical about the quality of open-access publications than those in material science, mathematics, agriculture, biochemistry, biology, and immunology (513–14).

Who’s afraid of the public intellectual?

For *M/C Journal* it is the journal’s public-intellectual focus that defines and constitutes its relevance. In 2004, the Murdoch-owned [Australian](#) newspaper published a table ranking the “top ten online political directories” in Australia. *M/C Journal* appeared on this list, beating both the Liberal Party’s website and also that of the then opposition leader, Mark Latham. Why the *Australian*—via the traffic monitor [Hitwise](#)—categorised *M/C Journal* as an influential “political directory” is unclear, though it perhaps may relate to the fact the journal promotes itself as “a place of public intellectualism.” Political directory might seem at first a misnomer for a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, but it registers the ambiguity that surrounds *M/C Journal*.

Clearly, then, *M/C Journal* has some kind of “public” impact beyond academe. The ideal for any academic is, speaking simply, to have an impact (this is, after all, why we teach, why we publish, why we attend conferences), and the most admirable academic is one whose ideas speak beyond the more-often-than-not closed circuits of academic discourse and enter into the public domain. Moreover, perhaps more than ever before, it is institutionally required for academics in the humanities to prove their value by doing public cultural work and documenting that work in their administrative academic portfolios. Yet, if this is the case, why did *M/C Journal*’s citations in the popular press garner it not cachet, but further

questions from its host school at UQ over content and integrity? Again, I would argue, the concept of unrestricted access to scholarly discourse is one the traditional research agenda is not entirely comfortable with, for it raises the dialectics of private and public and inside and outside. Using the online medium to “go public” in a self-aware way—unlike the science model of using open-access journals to continue to speak to a restricted academic audience—in this context, smacks, once more, of cheapness and a lack of scholarly credibility.

Further, given the relative youth of those producing online scholarship, claims to public intellectual status, in this same Australian academic context, might well also be attended with cynicism. In the Australian context, the public intellectual is a figure who inhabits the print world or the airwaves. Meaghan Morris and Iain McCalman claim that this media construction of the public intellectual in Australia has solidified into what they term the “icon” of the public intellectual, and when academics, journalists, or media personalities talk about public intellectuals the same names invariably keep cropping up. These are names such as Inga Clendinnen, Robert Manne, Henry Reynolds, Geoffrey Blainey, Helen Garner, Humphrey McQueen, and Keith Windschuttle to name only a few. Big-name people making big stands on the same “big issues” that define and are defined by public intellectualism in Australia—issues such as elites and elitism (intellectual versus sporting); multiculturalism, race, and immigration; feminism; culture wars; history wars; indigenous issues; the generational divide; and, finally in this inexhaustive list, the media, its lack of independence, and its right-wing bias.

In the last few years, the humanities has seen published at least four book-length studies on the future of public intellectualism (see, for example, Carter, Collini, Fuller, and Furedi). However, in each of these works, the Internet or new media figure either barely or not at all. In a 2003 essay, Patrick Brantlinger does investigate the impact of computing technologies (again, making only passing reference to the Internet) upon “professors and intellectuals,” but his fear of computers in the academy is almost palpable: “Intellectuals may have retreated into the academy, but the academy itself is being rapidly transformed into an electronically wired ‘iron cage,’ increasingly staffed not by intellectuals or professors, but by computers and their satraps” (136). The same, but in reverse, can be said of research in new media—the term “public intellectualism” seems to be of little interest to Internet studies scholars. Research in new media inevitably notes the technological transformations going on within the public sphere, but rarely examines what sort of “intellectual” practices might be going on within new media. In the Australian context, in particular, I would argue that much of this is due to the generational debate surrounding public intellectualism—that is, the question over who can, and at what age can they begin to, call themselves a public intellectual—along with the debate over what, in fact, constitutes public cultural work.

Changing the culture of scepticism

The similarities between academic anxieties over public intellectual work and over online scholarship I believe are marked, and it is this combination that places *M/C Journal* in an ambiguous position in relation to dominant discourses of academic legitimacy. Moreover, the continued resistance in academe to recognising both the value of *producing* online scholarship and public intellectualism registers the double-bind facing early career academics. While these academics are more than ever before institutionally bound to demonstrate public cultural work and to use new media technologies, the traditional textual notions of legitimate academic work that continue to pervade the research agenda of the traditionalist research universities militate against this. *M/C Journal* continues to operate within this zone of ambivalence, but it is also seeking proactive ways to change this prevailing culture of scepticism in relation to open-access e-journals in the humanities.

The announcement of the Australian government’s ERA initiative to measure research quality in Australia has also prompted *M/C Journal* to seek new ways to make visible the quality of research it publishes. Although, as I have explained, research assessment exercises tend to bring with them reinvigorated discussions about the place of open access scholarship, they also bring about new criteria by which publications are assessed. Prior to the ERA, the only criterion for government accreditation was peer-review; a documentable peer-review process would allow a journal to be placed on the Australian Government’s (now defunct) [register of peer-reviewed academic journals](#). Publishing in a journal on this list would allow Australian authors to claim publication “points” for their articles and this, in turn, would translate into funding for their institution.

Since the announcement of the ERA, this register has been replaced by a [tiered ranking system for journals](#), which is currently undergoing a process of consultation in the

Australian higher education sector. In the draft list of ranked journals (some 20000 in all), released two months ago, *M/C Journal* is listed as a “B” journal, two ranks below the top “A*” rank and one rank above the lowest “C” rank. It shares this provisional rank with two other Australian open-access humanities journals, [Australian Humanities Review](#) and [Borderlands. First Monday](#). *First Monday* has been given a ranking of “A,” and *PMC* does not appear in the list, along with most of the peer-reviewed open-access humanities journals listed in the [DOAJ](#). With the announcement of the ERA and the tiered ranking system, peer-review is no longer the sole determinant of a journal’s academic status. Under the old system, all journals on the government register were treated equally. Under the new, tiered system, an article published in an “A*” journal will be worth more—in points and funding—than an article in a “B” journal. Concerns about this shift to tier rankings are widespread in the humanities, and are evident in [Guy Redden’s article](#) for this issue and in the [discussion forum](#) of the Cultural Studies Association of Australia (CSAA) in early July 2008. Many of those who posted to the CSAA list expressed concern that these rankings will negatively affect emerging journals, specialist journals, or online journals, favouring instead established, generalist, and broadly print-based journals.

Although *M/C Journal*’s international focus, reputation, and research base means it is well placed to weather any national fall-out from the rankings, these changes have prompted the journal to reconsider its publication strategies and to implement new processes for tracking peer review and establishing its quality. *M/C* has established, and will continue to establish, research projects and new publications (for example, *M/C Dialogue*) that examine the relationships between new media and public intellectualism as well as implementing new processes that foreground its public-intellectual focus while protecting the integrity of the journal’s peer-review process. One of these new developments is *M/C Journal*’s shift to the online journal management system [Open Journal Systems](#) (OJS). Many open-access journals in the sciences have turned to commercial, third-party web-based manuscript submission and peer-review tracking systems in order to make the peer-review process faster, more manageable, and, importantly, more transparent. Some journals, such as the [Journal of Medical Internet Research](#) (*JMIR*), have established their own online submission systems that promote open-access initiatives through creative commons licensing. However, many, if not most, open-access journals that employ web-based manuscript systems have passed the cost of creating or purchasing this infrastructure on to authors by charging manuscript “processing fees.” *JMIR*, for instance, charges authors US \$90 per article submission, and US \$350 for a “fast-tracked” submission. Moreover, in the majority of cases, open-access journals that use these systems use them in order to create archivable PDF documents that recreate the “look and feel” of a printed journal in an online environment.

By contrast, OJS is an open-source journal management and publishing system created and made freely available by the [Public Knowledge Project](#)—a SPARC-endorsed research initiative funded by the Canadian government and based at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. *M/C Journal*’s aim is to employ OJS software to build a fully integrated manuscript submission, reviewing, and publication system that promotes efficiency and transparency, but speaks more specifically to the concerns of an open-access web-based humanities e-journal. (*First Monday*, for instance, moved to OJS in late 2007.) In particular, *M/C Journal* is working to create a system that focuses on multimedia and hypertextual publication and that does not assume PDF as a default article format; that promotes open-access initiatives by incorporating creative commons licensing and by ensuring submission and access to articles is completely without cost to the user; and that further fosters a spirit of public intellectualism not only through an increasingly transparent and interactive peer-review process, but also through enabling public commentary on articles and issues post-publication. This tenth anniversary issue on the topic of ‘publish’ is *M/C Journal*’s first issue to be published through the OJS system. Whether these strategies will have any discernible effect on *M/C Journal*’s national standing will not be clear for some time yet. However, by continuing to interrogate the discourses of academic legitimacy that surround the production, consumption, and accreditation of online scholarship, *M/C Journal* hopes to carve out a new space for academic discourse that maintains the principles of academic rigour and can immediately be recognised as “legitimate” scholarly work, but does not neutralise the online medium’s potential for public cultural work.

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