



# Undergraduate Research Journals:

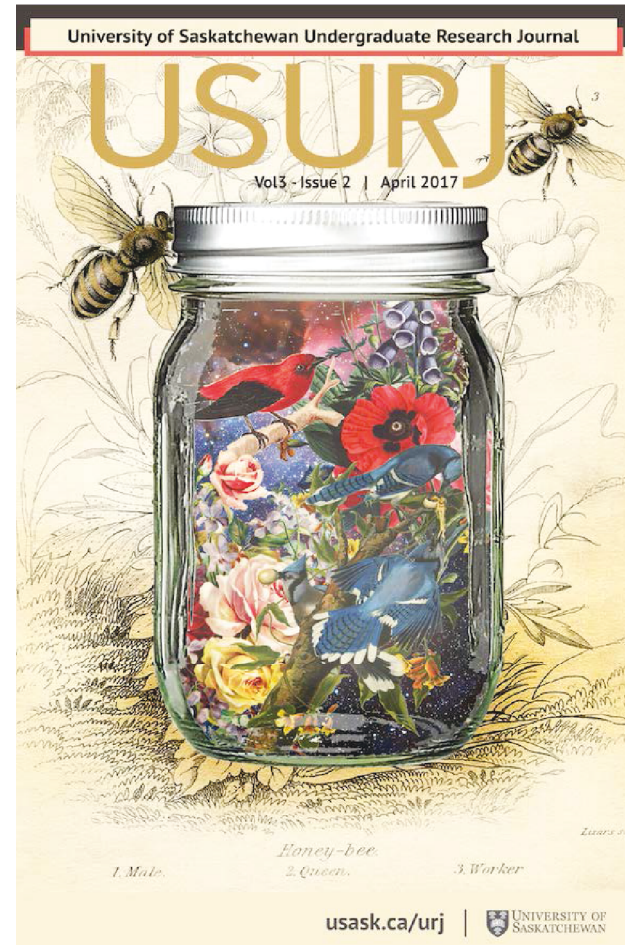
## Benefits and Good Practices of Involving Students in Content Creation and Other Scholarly Communication Activities

Liv Marken & DeDe Dawson  
University of Saskatchewan  
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# ■ Presentation Outline:

- About USURJ
- Involving undergraduate students in content creation
- Benefits
- Good practices of running an undergraduate research journal





# ABOUT USURJ



# **The *University of Saskatchewan* *Undergraduate Research Journal (USURJ)***

- Multidisciplinary
- Open Access (DOAJ)
- Founded by undergraduate students in 2013
- First issue in 2014
- Two issues a year
- All submissions double-blind, peer reviewed by faculty or endorsed graduate students
- A selective, not showcase, journal

# USURJ ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Faculty Advisor:  
DeDe Dawson

Graduate Editor-in-Chief:  
Katya Macdonald

Undergraduate Editor-in-Chief:  
Courtney Ballantyne

Web Editors

Communications  
Co-Editors

Senior Editor  
Layout

Senior Editor  
Humanities &  
Fine Arts

Senior Editor  
Social Sciences

Senior Editor  
Interdisciplinary

Senior Editor  
Health Sciences

Senior Editor  
Natural Sciences

Associate  
Editors Layout

Associate  
Editors  
Humanities &  
Fine Arts

Associate  
Editors Social  
Sciences

Associate  
Editors  
Interdisciplinary

Associate  
Editors Health  
Sciences

Associate  
Editors Natural  
Sciences

Staff Adviser: Liv Marken  
Writing Help Coordinator,  
University Learning Centre

Science Advisor:  
Chris Todd

Graduate  
Advisors  
One per Section

Most USURJ positions are reserved for undergraduate students, since part of the journals' mandate is to provide learning experiences to undergraduate students.

USURJ is run by two editors-in-chief. The graduate Editor-in-Chief is counselled by the faculty advisor.

The journal is comprised of five academic sections (Humanities and Fine Arts, Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary, Health Sciences, and Natural Sciences), each of which is run by a senior editor in charge of a team of associate editors.

The staff advisor and faculty advisor provide USURJ with guidance, continuity, and stability. This is necessary, as volunteer turnover occurs annually, as students leave the journal in pursuit of other successes.

Since USURJ work tends to attract a lot of humanities and social sciences students, the science advisor provides editors with scientific expertise and advice when those leading the journal cannot.

Whenever possible, a graduate student advises each academic section, and typically is a former USURJ editor or someone with publishing experience. Graduate advisors provide recommendations on an as-needed basis, leaving final decisions to the editorial team.

## Writing Centre Involvement

**Educative:** Journal quality; knowledge of communication, culture of academia; knowledge of finer points of peer review, author communication, and publication cycles; support for editing and proofreading education, plus group editing practicalities, supplies; knowledge of academic integrity, copyright.

**Practical:** Group editing logistics; built-in leadership training and experiential learning frameworks; nurture and give context to editors' experiences (CVs, portfolios, transferable skills; access to campus networks; learning commons room booking; record-keeping).

# Library Involvement

**Educative:** Information literacy; new media; in-depth research skills; citation management; scholarly communication; publication processes; researcher profiles; education and advocacy around OA; permissions; indexing; copyright; authors' rights.

**Practical:** Assistance with publication and hosting; technical infrastructure; preservation of original student work; institutional repository; operational guidance and support; access to established networks across the disciplines.

## Authors

- Currently 31 papers in review and editing stages.
- 59 paper published (some multi-authored)
- Over three years, 125 articles (some are multi-authored) have been rejected, but of those, 60% went to peer review. Those outright rejected were given feedback from editors.



## Editors

Since 2013/2014, 86 students (unique) have worked as editors for USURJ (average 20 students per year).



# Authors

<b>Author Accomplishments</b>	<p>Six articles cited 15 times (Google Scholar).</p> <p>Authors of one article have gone on to publish related article in <i>Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine</i>.</p>
<b>Article Views and Downloads</b>	<p>May 2016 to April 30, 2017</p> <p>-25,664 article views -10,247 article downloads.</p>



# INVOLVING UNDERGRADS IN CONTENT CREATION

## ACRL Documents:

*Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy* (ACRL, 2013)

*Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (ACRL, 2015)



Both advocate for educating students to be both knowledgeable content consumers ***and*** content creators/contributors

## ■ ACRL Framework (2015)

“Students have a greater role and responsibility in creating new knowledge...”  
p2

*USURJ* supports student learning primarily in the Frames:

- **Information has Value**
- **Scholarship as Conversation**

# *ACRL Frame:* “Scholarship as Conversation”

**“Contribute to scholarly conversation at an appropriate level, such as ... undergraduate research journal...”**

**“Critically evaluate contributions made by others in participatory information environments”**

(ACRL, 2015, p8)

## Students as Authors

“I thought my paper and research was rock solid when I handed it in and was at first a little disheartened to see so many comments, but the comments made me dig deeper into my research, think more broadly about my topic, and even change some of my arguments.”

- *USURJ author*

## Students as Authors

“I learned a lot more about the process of research and writing research articles. The knowledge from publication was more concrete than what I learned in class.”

- *USURJ author*



## Students as Editors

“In three years of school I have had almost zero experience reading other students' work. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses in other undergraduate work has greatly improved my own writing.”

- *USURJ editor*

## Students as Editors

“[Teamwork] wasn’t my motivation at the beginning, but I really grew to appreciate the team dynamic.”

- *USURJ editor*

“I learned so much about the process of creating an academic journal. I had no idea what to expect going in and was very pleased.”

- *USURJ editor*

## Students as Editors

75% : learned how scholarly publication contributes to the research community

92% :

- how to write about research for an informed public audience
- process for publishing in a scholarly journal, & how to use the OJS platform

# Graduate Attributes

“...a framework of skills, attitudes, values and knowledge that graduates should develop by the end of their degree programmes.”

(Hill and Walkington, 2016, p222)

# Core Learning Goals

U of S Learning Charter's “Core Learning Goals”

A few are:

- Critical & creative thinking
- Use & apply knowledge with judgement
- Intellectual integrity & ethical behaviour
- Communicate clearly
- Share knowledge
- Exercise leadership

## Summary

### Benefits to Student Editors (& Authors):

- Unique, immersive/rich experience (editors especially)
- Transferable skills (graduate attributes)
- Preparation for grad school



# BENEFITS

# ■ Benefits to Library & Writing Centre

- Articulating value (of Library & Writing Centre to institution)
- Concrete support of institutional mission
  - Undergraduate Research Initiative
  - University Learning Charter
  - Research output



## ■ Benefits to Institution

- High-Impact (Educational) Practices (HIPs)
  - Teaching & learning practices beneficial to students
    - = student retention & engagement
  - Undergraduate Research is one such practice

(Kuh, 2008)

## More Benefits to Institution

- Student recruitment (UofS using it as a recruitment tool; lots of student interest)
- Graduate attributes
- Increased research output & profile
- Faculty mentorship of students translates to increased success in grant applications

## ■ Benefits to Academy

- Better prepared grad students (more likely to succeed)
- 100% of USURJ editors surveyed felt that they learned how to prepare their own work for publication:

“I think this has helped me understand what makes a strong research paper and if I continue my education will make me a better academic.”

- *USURJ editor*

## ■ Benefits to the Academy

- New generation of researchers (& citizens) more aware of challenges in scholarly communication
  - = potential for cultural change to transform unsustainable & inequitable publishing system



# GOOD PRACTICES

# Good practices, lessons learned

Challenges	Solutions
Sustainability	Involvement of permanent staff; technology; advocacy; assessment; mentoring of editors (morale); OJS training and support; traditions and celebrations; more editors.
Peer Review Process	Interpreting and giving feedback; knowledge of academic publication processes; experience as published authors; connections to reviewers.
Journal Quality	Editing and proofreading processes; connections to reviewers; assistance with vetting; rigorous peer review; editing and proofreading; bolstering credibility; education around OA, academic publishing.

# Questions?

engage, enlighten, explore  
at your  
library



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[Survey Results: USURJ authors and editors, 2015-2017 \(handout during session\).](#)