

Editorial

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Abstract

This editorial marks the completion of my time as the Student Journal Editor for the Essex Student Journal (ESJ). The ESJ is an open access journal that allows University of Essex students to publish their work and enter the world of scholarly publishing. As the editor, I have had the opportunity to facilitate this experience for fellow students. To commemorate this rewarding experience, I have written this piece to reflect on my role and all that I have learned.

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Editorial

As a current PhD student and aspiring researcher and academic, writing and publishing are at the core of my work. Part of my routine involves drafting my findings, drawing conclusions and parallels between my work and the literature, and constantly editing my writing. For the past year, however, I have been on the other side of the publication process, as I have had the honour of being the Student Journal Editor for the Essex Student Journal (ESJ). This experience has been incredible, to say the least, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to highlight the positives and challenges that came with this role in this editorial.

Opportunities for students

I was initially drawn to the role of ESJ editor as it is run “by students, for students”. Academic publishing was previously something that I associated with academics who have worked in their

respective fields for quite some time. It wasn't something that I could see myself being involved in at undergraduate level as I felt I needed more experience. I do, however, believe that all students should have the opportunity to get involved in publishing, especially given how competitive academic publishing can be. Allowing students to experience the publication process early on gives them insight into what they can expect if they intend to undertake a career in research and academia. For those who are unsure of their career interests, this opportunity would give students the chance to try something new and see if it sparks their interest.

As mentioned above, the ESJ's motto is that it is run "by students, for students." I want to take a moment to emphasise the importance of this motto. Our editors are PhD students, our peer reviewers are PGRs, and our authors are undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. This means that the ESJ community is student-focused and structured in a way in which students are able to support each other through their respective roles. Our undergraduate and taught postgraduate authors are able to publicise their hard work, while PGRs can advise their peers and gain peer review experience that will boost their portfolios as early career researchers. Essentially, the entire student community is benefiting from the Journal and gaining experience in academic publishing together. The University of Essex is also one of only a few UK universities to have a student journal, especially one that is supported by the Library Services, so this well-established and unique opportunity is one from which students at all levels can seek to reap benefits.

Running and promoting the Journal

Over the past year, my role has involved two key components: running the Journal's publication process, which was made possible with the support of the Journal's amazing managers, Tom and Hannah, and promoting the Journal to students and academics. Each day, I would check the Journal's online platform and assess the suitability of new submissions for the publication process, assign peer reviewers to submissions, liaise with authors to ensure the necessary revisions were made to submissions, and work with our brilliant team of volunteer copyeditors to finalise publications. I would also meet with the ESJ team on a regular basis to discuss promotional events. From engaging with students during Welcome Week, to presenting at the Government Department's annual student conference, I have been able to encourage students to publish and

gain recognition for their hard work. I feel that student-to-student encouragement is incredibly effective and motivating, especially since we all go through similar experiences and emotions throughout our studies. As a postgraduate research student, I am always happy to push fellow students at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level to excel in their studies and academic careers, and the Journal has provided a platform for myself and other editors to do so.

First ever ESJ Conference

This year, the ESJ hosted its first ever conference. Months of effort and planning were put into bringing this conference to life, and I am beyond pleased to have had the honour of hosting the event. Five of our authors presented their research and experiences with the Journal: Louis Mitchell (presented “Racial Injustice in America”), Mawadah Nofal (presented “Redefining the Digital Divide”), Akshana Ravikumar (presented “Gender Gap in the Labour Market”), Pablo Soriano Mena (presented “Declining Labour Share of Income Worldwide”), and Luke Wheeler, who we interviewed about his experiences as an author and ESJ Frontrunner, as well as his research on the intricacies of cancer and Huntington’s disease development and treatment. Our authors did an incredible job with presenting their work to so many attendees, and I was pleased to hear that publishing in the ESJ boosted their confidence in their work.

Three of the previous ESJ editors, Sara Sheriff, Dafni Kalatzi Pantera, and Aisyah Shamshun, also joined the conference to speak on their experiences as editors. The Journal has grown steadily over the years, and it is thanks to the great effort put in by each editor. Sara worked hard to establish the Journal’s processes; Dafni digitalised the entirety of the Journal’s back issues; and Aisyah contributed to laying the groundwork for the conference and advocating for the Journal, such that the number of submissions received over the last couple of years has dramatically increased. Each editor has done an incredible job of building on the previous editor’s work, and I believe the passion we all feel for allowing the Journal to flourish has brought the Journal to where it is today. On this note, I would like to highlight that the Journal recruits a new editor from the PhD cohort each year. This means that fresh ideas for the Journal’s growth are brought forward on a yearly basis. Each editor has their own flair and unique style of running the Journal, and I believe this greatly

contributes not only to the Journal's growth but also to the support the student community gets, as each editor has their own way of encouraging students to publish and publicise their work.

Final thoughts

Now that I am ending this reflective piece, I feel that I have only just scratched the surface of all that the ESJ has achieved this year. It has been a fantastic year, and I have thoroughly enjoyed every part of it. I will miss working for the Journal, working with the ESJ team, seeing my lovely colleagues in the Library, and engaging with the student community, but I have an even greater love for research and academia now and look forward to seeing what the future holds, both for my own academic career and for the Journal's growth. I am especially excited to continue seeing fellow students' publications. The whole publication process, from writing, to getting accepted (or maybe getting rejected – which is absolutely fine!) is something that I hope all students have the chance to experience. It is such a valuable way to celebrate our efforts, learn, and grow our network of peers who share our passions. It is my hope that opportunities, such as those provided by the ESJ, boost students' confidence in their potential. Every student deserves to have their own spotlight, and it has been the biggest honour for me to facilitate a process that celebrates students' individuality and creativity.

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