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Editorial: Volume 31 Issue 1

In this editorial we explain the shift of AJET towards early release of articles. This means that as soon as articles have been accepted for publication and have been copyedited and typeset they will be made available online. The process in the past has been to delay publication of the article until (a) there were sufficient finalised articles to fill an issue, and/or (b) the pre-determined publication date of the issue. However, this means that some accepted articles may take several months before publication. For instance, AJET currently has 20 accepted manuscripts that have or are currently undergoing copyediting. Some of those articles may wait three months or more before publication in the next available issue.

Early release allows us to disseminate research into the public domain more rapidly, and thereby more effectively serve our authors and readers. Importantly, this does not reduce the rigor of our peer-review or copyediting processes, but does make the journal more current for our readers, and more appealing to authors who want their research to be in the public domain as efficiently as possible.

When we explored the options surrounding early release we realised there is a great deal of ambiguity in the terminology. This is partly arising from the different ways journals and publishers use terms such as early release, advance online publication, post-print, online first, and rapid online publication. While some publishers use the terms distinctly, others use them as synonyms. Even when they use the same term the specific usage can vary.

This confusion particularly surrounds the usage of the terms pre-print and post-print. SHERPA and CrossRef use the term pre-print as the version of the article before peer review (for example it could be a version before submission, or a version that has been submitted) and post-print as the version after peer-review and any necessary revisions but not necessarily in its final publication form, such as typesetting (see: http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeoinfo.html, and http://www.crossref.org/02publishers/glossary.html). Inefuku (2013) suggests that both the pre-print and post-print versions are those held/produced by the authors, not those produced or published by journals. However, we have found instances of publishers, such as Emerald, using the term post-print to refer to the online release of articles post-acceptance but prior to final formatting. Therefore, the meaning of post-print is quite broad, referring to both an author's version after peer-review edits have been completed, or a journal's pdf manuscript prior to official publication in an issue. To add to the confusion, there are varying practices surrounding author publication of pre and post-print versions (for example in an institutional repository or on a personal website) arising from interpretations of copyright laws as well as many publishers' granting authors various rights to release a pre or post-print version of an article online.

Due to the confusion surrounding the term post-print we also explored other likely alternatives including advance online publication. The American Psychological Association describes advance online publication as material that has been "peer reviewed but may not have been copyedited or formatted for final production. It may also refer to work that has been reviewed, copyedited, and typeset but has not yet been given volume, issue, or page numbers" (p. 13). However, in AJET's case articles published early will be the final copy edited and typeset version including the volume and issue number and consequently does not fit with their definition of advance online publication.

After considering the options, and in an attempt to avoid confusion surrounding the alternatives, we have decided to adopt the term *early release.* At AJET we specifically refer to an early release as *an article that has been through the peer-review process, has been accepted for publication and has been copyedited and typeset*. The article is the final manuscript format, but is distinguished as an early release simply because it has not been delayed until a full issue publication. When the issue is complete, and an editorial is written, the issue will be archived with its own table of contents.

The shift towards early release has a number of implications for AJET policy and editorial processes through to more prosaic issues of final typesetting, however, there will be no change to the submission or review process. Authors will still submit articles to the journal via the OJS publication system (http://ascilite.org.au/ajet/) and articles will go through an unchanged editorial review and peer review process overseen by AJET's lead and associate editors. This is an initiative which may require further

minor alterations to how we format, schedule, and release both the issues and articles. Nevertheless, we are certain that this shift will benefit the journal, its authors and our readers.

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