

To be honest, **“Square peg, Round hole”**, isn’t a great name for a presentation. What would be a lot better (and probably a lot more accurate) would be, **“What We Should (and Should Not) Learn from Emergent Behaviour and Metadata Abuse in Open Journal Systems”**. It’s just that the expression “putting a square peg into a round hole” assumes the actor is operating in good faith and we shouldn’t make that assumption. You can fit a square peg into whatever-sized circle if it is small enough. What’s important is the broad idea of making due. **Mike Nason is a librarian at the University of New Brunswick and a Publishing Services Associate for PKP.** I hope you’ve got sharp visual acumen wrt contrast.

I'd like to think that it goes without saying but I've seen enough to know that a lot of folks don't necessarily understand that **metadata is actually pretty important**. It helps you get found. It helps you stay found. It helps extend the reach of your research. It helps you find other people's research. But, a lot of people see metadata fields in a CMS as a place you can put information to make it appear in **certain spaces of a webpage**. They aren't used to making websites consistently display information system-wide. But, they are definitely used to changing the formatting of a font to look like a header instead of selecting "header" from the "section" drop-down. That's kind of fine, **but, also, it's at least a little problematic**.

I can think of **two really great examples** off the jump. One has to do with author fields in corporate names. The **OJS 2.x native DTD** only has **first and last name author fields**.

Obviously, corporations don't work this way. This is why you might have a first name of "Canadian Association" as a first name and "of Research Libraries" as a last name. When I ask OJS for a citation, that paper is going to be written by "of Research Libraries, Canadian Association." That's not what you want, obviously. But you want your table of contents to look as you intended a lot more than you're (probably) worried about how citations are going to render. The other is that **long-dead people don't have email and they probably don't need to.**

I guess the point here is that **a lot of people manipulate (abuse) metadata** to make OJS display content a certain way it doesn't currently (or, does in a way that is obtuse to the user). I've seen **DOIs in article titles**, extraneous information in page number fields, people abusing the metadata fields in Journal setup to add more keywords or a description in the "Other" box, which then displays those keywords at the very top of the journal, **multiple languages jammed into one locale field**, **DOIs and keywords added to article abstracts**, HTML tags in article titles to manipulate display, vanity DOIs, and **thousands of probably fake but sometimes, I bet, actually not-as-fake-as-intended email addresses.**

**But what can we learn?** Lots of things! The first thing is that “intended use” is probably subjective. A lot of users don’t approach OJS from the same perspective as it was developed. This means that some things aren’t obvious, like how or why metadata works as it does. **We can mitigate that by allowing customizations that work outside of item metadata and allow tweaks to display.** Customizable table of contents would be great. So many folks come from print and all they really want is the same level of control over display that print afforded. It’s also clear that **many people aren’t aware that OJS has different display options that might meet their needs,** like suppressing unnecessary author fields.

But if users don't know where the options are, we should investigate why. **Are solutions too buried?** Are they obtuse? Or, is it possible that the native dtd is too simplistic (spoiler: it is)? Why don't we have corporate name fields? Why do I have to make up fake metadata for required fields if the object I'm describing doesn't have those properties? **What are users trying to tell us with their elaborately customized houses of cards?** It's probably not wise to leave many of these customizations up to well-meaning folks who may not understand that making their files\_dir web accessible could possibly solve one small display problem while also exposing the whole system to hacking. **They're saying "easier please".**

We have a few **clear takeaways** here. First of all, **OJS should embrace a more granular, existing standard (like JATS)** for article metadata that will allow us the flexibility to prevent or mitigate fake entries. Secondly, myriad **display options should be made more transparent to users** where possible. I don't want to undermine the good work done by the UI/UX team, especially in regards to OJS 3, but, moving forward, it's vital that the **seemingly-oddball customizations made by users to solve seemingly-unique issues should be carefully considered** (within reason) in future versions. Decoupling some display options from database/object metadata might improve metadata fidelity in general... or not?

Obviously, **not every example has a lesson to learn.** Some OJS users probably didn't choose OJS based on a realistic evaluation of needed features. Maybe they should have used Drupal? **There is a risk – if flexibility increases too broadly – of OJS being used in entirely unintended ways that fall outside the scope of the PKP's core mission.** There's certainly value in saying “no” when a change is inappropriate. **Sometimes, also, people just want ridiculous or irrational things.** But this narrative of “intended use” is one that can cause significant pitfalls in the growth of the platform. How much do users need to bend their intentions to fit within ours? When should our intentions shift?