

Unjournal/Kotahi (Sciety) reboot

Unjournal 2025: considering (return to) working with Kotahi and/or Sciety

TLDR: [Unjournal.org](https://unjournal.org) considering working with Kotahi to migrate our evaluation package hosting, and maybe our evaluation management process. May also build innovative automations etc. A lot of orgs using PubPub are in a similar situation, and we might help coordinate/communicate .

CHatGPT 03/40 queries and corrections to this doc: <https://chatgpt.com/share/6859a379-ce2c-8002-b798-9a6c63acdec4>

Background:

Unjournal: (Unjournal.org) We commission experts to publicly evaluate and rate research. We aim to make impactful research more rigorous make academic work more useful, support open science, open access, and transparency, and improve peer-review, helping align research incentives with truth-seeking and social value. We focus on research in economics, policy, and other quantitative social science with potential for global impact. See our output at unjournal.pubpub.org

A key element here: We do not host research and we do not see ourselves as “publishing research”. We commission and publish *evaluations and ratings* linked to research that is already hosted on working paper archives like NBER.

In 2023-24. We worked with Kotahi to set up a system for managing our evaluations Which would then be pushed to our group in Sciety here: <https://sciety.org/groups/the-unjournal>. (See notes in “Older: Kotahi and Sciety” tab in this Gdoc)

Previous experience with Kotahi/Sciety: We had some major challenges in gaining DOIs for our evaluations and author responses, particularly when the original research was hosting in places like NBER rather than OSF or ARXIV (if I recall). The interface for posting/viewing the evaluations also had some limitations at the time. We decided to go with PubPub instead (and I, David, apologize that I did a terrible job of communicating this.)

PubPub (‘legacy’) experience: Since then, we’ve had mixed experiences with PubPub. [Unjournal.pubpub.org](https://unjournal.pubpub.org), on the ‘legacy PubPub’ is the place where evaluation packages are hosted works pretty well. It has an attractive interface, a lot of good connection and metadata features, can convert to and from a variety of formats from (Markdown, LaTeX, Pdf etc), math notation, tables, and more. It’s easy to get a DOI for each element and to show explicit connections between the elements of the evaluation package and the paper itself (with nice previews)

However, it has been difficult to automate certain parts of that process, and a major limitation has been the difficulty of getting our evaluations to show up in Google Scholar and high-visibility places. We’ve had to use a -manual workaround involving a server where we leave ‘rds’ files for the “Repec” tool. Even this has not been completely satisfactory, as the evaluations citing the papers do not come out as citations in Google Scholar and other places.

“Editorial management system and PubPub Platform”: We have also been working for years with PubPub on developing an *interface* for our evaluation management process and for the evaluation forms themselves. They took a step back to build a separate tool called PubPub Platform, which enabled flexibility in building these interfaces, but as a consequence, it’s taken us a long time to get an interface that actually works for us. In the meantime, we have been using coda.io, which we use as our internal knowledge base for many editorial management functions, including the evaluator/evaluation interface.

There have been many failures to meet milestones and timetables. As of June 2025, we’re almost at the point where it’s able to do much/most of what we’re looking for after many iterations. Although ‘Platform’ still has many limitations for us, e.g., (1) the system does not easily move the content into the “PubPub legacy” – we still have to do that manually. (2) The emails their system sends seem to go to spam/bulk quite a lot.

And they are now announcing a wind down, and it's not clear to what extent this tool will be supported. At the very least, we would have to host it on our own.

→ **Deadlines**

- Dec 2025: PubPub platform will no longer be hosted/supported (This doesn't affect our current processes too much. As noted above, we mainly use [Coda.IO](#).)
- Dec 2026: PubPub legacy will (probably) no longer be hosted or supported. We need to move our content by then, hopefully preserving backlinks, forwarding links, connections to bibliometrics, the structure, sidebar contents, et cetera.

Possible next steps (sketch/brainstorm)

1. Hosting Unjournal evaluation package content

Within the next 18 months, we probably need to move our evaluation package content out of PubPub legacy. We also need a place to put new content. We'd like it to preserve the format metadata inside of our comments, to continue to link the DOIs and to Repec, etc.

Ideally, we'd also like a system that better incorporates our structured ratings (and predictions, claim assessment etc.) these should be stored as structured data/metadata, providing visualizations and allowing filtering and sorting according to these ratings. (At the moment, this is not possible in PubPub. We've used text tables as a workaround and a separate [evaluation data dashboard](#).)

There are a range of other improvements and features (e.g., code and data replication work, chat interfaces) we've envisioned, that we'd be happy to talk about.

Possible options, maybe not mutually exclusive:

- Continue to self-host on PubPub?
- Build "preprint server" with Kotahi
- Kotahi → Sciety
- Scholastica?
- Other provider/tools (Github etc)

2. Editorial (evaluation) management system and evaluation interface(s)

We need a tool to manage our processes, things like

... Protect evaluator anonymity (where desired)

Enable submissions

Invite evaluators in different areas with careful queuing

Manage and batch emails, provide deadlines and reminders (also to the evaluation managers, aka 'managing editors')

We also need an *interface* for their evaluations, including a range of structured content (e.g., asking for ratings, predictions, and explicit uncertainty bounds).

Ideally also:

Help recommend evaluators both within and outside our evaluator pool (perhaps leveraging ML, LLMs, and existing tools like descis's nascent [referee recommender](#))

Push the evaluation package to its public space.

We're currently using a combination of Coda and PubPub (platform) at the moment, with some additional workarounds like links to privately shared Google Docs. We've built a lot of content in both of these systems, and it's working for us decently, but it has its limitations and could definitely be more efficient.

See “Extra context and detail” tab for some of this context

Possible options:

- Self-host and fork Pubpub platform
- Kotahi tools
- Scholastica?
- Integrate with existing Coda systems
- Secret fourth option involving AI

3. Other tools and automations

We're exploring a range of tools involving AI/LLMs, collaborative annotation, bug checking, etc... along the lines of what CoS Life Cycle Journal is doing, as well as initiatives like Alphaxiv. We have been exploring using LLMs and reasoning models to write evaluations and give ratings (to supplement the human evaluations), to check for internal contradiction in the research or inconsistency with pre-analysis plans, and to help evaluators check their reports against the research to see if they misunderstood or overlooked things. We've done some preliminary work on this, both as an applied and academic project.

These tools could also be helpful in communicating our work in various formats and providing interfaces where readers could chat with the evaluations, offer feedback to evaluators and authors,

Older: Kotahi & Sciety for
Unjournal: exploring

Kotahi and Society for Unjournal: exploring

Our “Dev Spec”

A development spec instance has been deployed; <https://unjournaldev.cloud68.co/login>

1. `ryan.dixpeek@gmail.com` I'd love to get a sense of what the different field types mean ... do they imply different access and permissions? Are the results passed to different places

Supplementary file – adds the raw file as an attachment, any file type

Visual abstract – a particular type of abstract

Text field – open text box (formatted? How long?)

“Author input” is the type of field

Either the editor or the author can add the manual submission form, add the URL, etc. No different permissions

Links Input ‘captures a URL’

“Abstract editor” allows for rich text ... copies nicely from word processors etc

Checkbox group: you can select boxes, names, colors.

- Note you can configure it to be viewable in the manuscripts table (for easy view)

Select field: dropdown ... similar to checkbox group

Radio: X colors button

On the submission form we can have fields for editors etc. ... “Hide from author”

We see it in the manuscript view

“Validate as DOI” – only relevant for doi field probably

Other options in creating field

Internal name is what shows up in the database backend

Placeholder is ghost text

Field description is instructions below the field

Show in reviewers preview: what they see before they accept a review

Pulling in data from an archive

2. Can we change the ‘titles’ of sections/headers, to say things other than ‘decision’

Decision Form Builder

synthesis



+ New Form

⋮ Decision (AbstractEditor)



⋮ Files (SupplementaryFiles)



⋮ Assessment status (RadioGroup)



⊕ ADD FIELD

Hard coded for now, cannot be adjusted, but it will be at some point ryan.dixpeek@gmail.com any timeline on this?

- Could I get RID of the decision form?

Dashboard:

- can we make Submit URL as the default/big option?

TODO: Gitlab [project issues board](#), figure out how to log bugs but for now prefer a mail (Or a shared Gdoc?)

Meeting 9 Feb 2023

1. Integrating with NBER
 - a. Lina: DOIs are 'on the page but not in the link' but...
 - b. Gavin shared <https://doi.org/10.3386/w28106> – Lina says this is more familiar
2. "DOI for evaluations and authors' responses" issues:
 - Sciety: We retrieve papers from DOI's
 - Could retrieve evaluations this way as well
 - Gavin: Could make a 'Zenodo community'
3. Formatting on Sciety/Sciety group and representing quantitative ratings and predictions (some sort of 'numerical/data object')
4. Further integrations with Hypothes.is ... enabling 'actual collaborative annotation' coming from or linked to the evaluators' content
 - a. In the near future they will be getting maps straight from Kotahi to Sciety
 - b. If we have individual contributions we could represent it in Sciety
5. Getting formats into Sciety ... what about images and rendering?
 - a. They don't host images → we would have to host and link it ourselves?

Ways this integrates ... we want readers to be aware that the evaluation

- Building with "COAR notify" to notify other parts of the ecosystem eg PRereview and Kotahi

Check out 'Arcadia science' hypothes.is group

Meeting 28 Jun 2022

There are a lot of ways DOI can interact with the system

At the end of a DOI "we don't know what exists". It is a paper of some format. Instead we provide a link to the source material. DOI is a URL forwarder. Let people find it.

"Ingesting an asset that has a DOI" ... you cannot publish a review to that DOI unless you had an org.

DOI 'assumes it is a scholarly object' ... may not be enabled. Root level = publisher, last part is identifier ... all the way to paragraphs.

You want to be able to find your way from paper to reviews and vice/versa.

Jupiter notebooks link to a binary archive as a snapshot.

TODO followups

1. DR to share Airtable workflow and Kotahi mocks things up ... puts first 5 papers in ... maybe working in real time
2. Ryan will set up an instance ... 48 hours cloud68 will set up

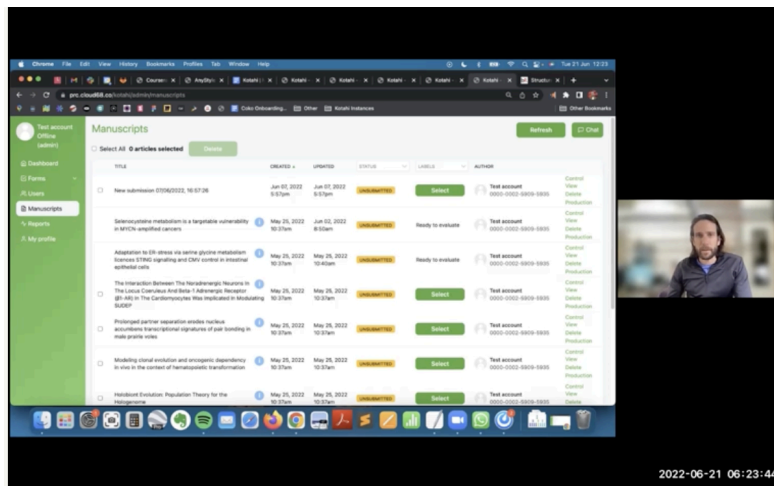
3. Very small suggestions might be squeezed into the list for updates

Questions from exploring trial instance

Dashboard

What are the default roles ... who can do what, assign what to whom, and what permissions does that give? Is this listed somewhere?

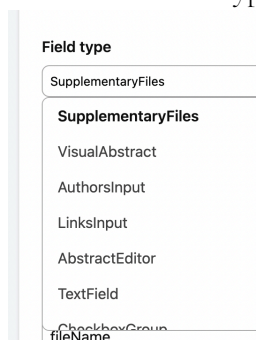
Manuscripts



1. How can I 'add manuscripts' here? This is only linked to pubmed and bioarxiv? Can we add other things like SSRN?
 - a. Where do I see/setup the (API) 'search query'?
2. What 'metadata' do preprint servers bring into this, and is there a place I can access a list of these items (a general question about preprint servers, not Kotahi-specific)

Forms:

3. How do I preview the forms I've created?
4. What do the 'Field types' mean?



5. How could I require a numeric/rating input? (The 'scales' mentioned in our last call)
6. Why 'hide from authors?' ... even things submitted by them? And what's the 'reviewers' preview'?

Include in reviewers' preview?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Hide from authors?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Update Field

7. Are there any functional differences between the 3 types of forms?

Submission

8. Can this be adjusted:

By submitting the manuscript, you agree to the following statements.

The corresponding author confirms that all co-authors are included, and that everyone listed as a co-author agrees to that role and all the following requirements and acknowledgements.

The submission represents original work and that sources are given proper attribution. The journal employs CrossCheck to compare submissions against a large and growing database of published scholarly content. If in the judgment of a senior editor a submission is genuinely suspected of plagiarism, it will be returned to the author(s) with a request for explanation.

The research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles.

There is a Data Accessibility Statement, containing information about the location of open data and materials, in the manuscript.

A conflict of interest statement is present in the manuscript, even if to state no conflicts of interest.

Submit your manuscript or [get back to your submission](#)

9. Could we disallow upload?

Workflow

10. Accessible only through the 'control' within manuscripts?
11. Can we adjust all of these things...

new submission 0/2/1/2024, 0:30:43 PM — Current version (1)

Workflow Manuscript text Metadata

Notifications

☒ New User daaronr@gmail.c David Reinstein notification Notify

Assign Editors

Assign Senior Editor... Assign Handling Editor...

Reviews

No reviews completed yet.

Manage Reviewers

Users

12. How to add

Some useful features...

Manuscripts

Refresh

Select All

2 articles selected

Delete

TITLE	CREATED	UPDATED	STATUS	LABELS	AUTHOR
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <div>Hspa13 Regulates Endoplasmic Reticulum and Cytosolic Proteostasis Through Modulation of Protein Translocation</div>	Jun 27, 2022 5:37pm	Jun 27, 2022 5:37pm	UNSUBMITTED		<div>Test account</div> <div>0000-0002-5909-5935</div> <div>Control View Delete Production</div>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <div>Whole exome sequencing in the diagnosis of liver diseases</div>	Jun 27, 2022 2:07pm	Jun 27, 2022 2:07pm	UNSUBMITTED		<div>Test account</div> <div>0000-0002-5909-5935</div> <div>Control View Delete Production</div>
<input type="checkbox"/> <div>SARS-CoV-2 evolution and evasion from multiple antibody treatments in a cancer patient</div>					<div>Test account</div> <div>0000-0002-5909-5935</div> <div>Control View Delete Production</div>
<input type="checkbox"/> <div>Single-base precision design of CRISPR-Cas13b enables systematic silencing of oncogenic fusions</div>					<div>Test account</div> <div>0000-0002-5909-5935</div> <div>Control View Delete Production</div>
<input type="checkbox"/> <div>LIRcentral: a manually curated online database of experimentally validated functional LIR-motifs</div>	Jun 27, 2022 2:07pm	Jun 27, 2022 2:07pm	UNSUBMITTED	Select	<div>Test account</div> <div>0000-0002-5909-5935</div> <div>Control View Delete Production</div>

Select All

2 articles selected

Delete

TITLE	CREATED	UPDATED	STATUS	LABELS	AUTHOR
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<input type="checkbox"/> <div>SARS-CoV-2</div>					<div>Test account</div> <div>0000-0002-5909-5935</div> <div>Control View Delete Production</div>

Email templates ... seem to offer very low-touch seamless interaction

Extra context and detail

Evaluation form(s)

[Coda academic version](#)

Claims, strength and characterization of evidence:

Do the authors do a good job of (i) stating their main questions and claims, (ii) providing strong evidence and powerful approaches to inform these, and (iii) correctly characterizing the nature of their evidence?

Lower bound 90% CI
(for "Claims, ...")

Midpoint rating
(for "Claims, ...")

Upper bound 90% CI
(for "Claims, ...")

Comments on "Claims..." rating (optional)

Methods: Justification, reasonableness, validity, robustness assessment

Are methods clearly justified and explained? Are methods and their underlying assumptions

[PubPub \(academic\) form](#) (requires signup)

Claims, strength and characterization of evidence:

Do the authors do a good job of (i) stating their main questions and claims, (ii) providing strong evidence and powerful approaches to inform these, and (iii) correctly characterizing the nature of their evidence?

Claims, strength and characterization of evidence

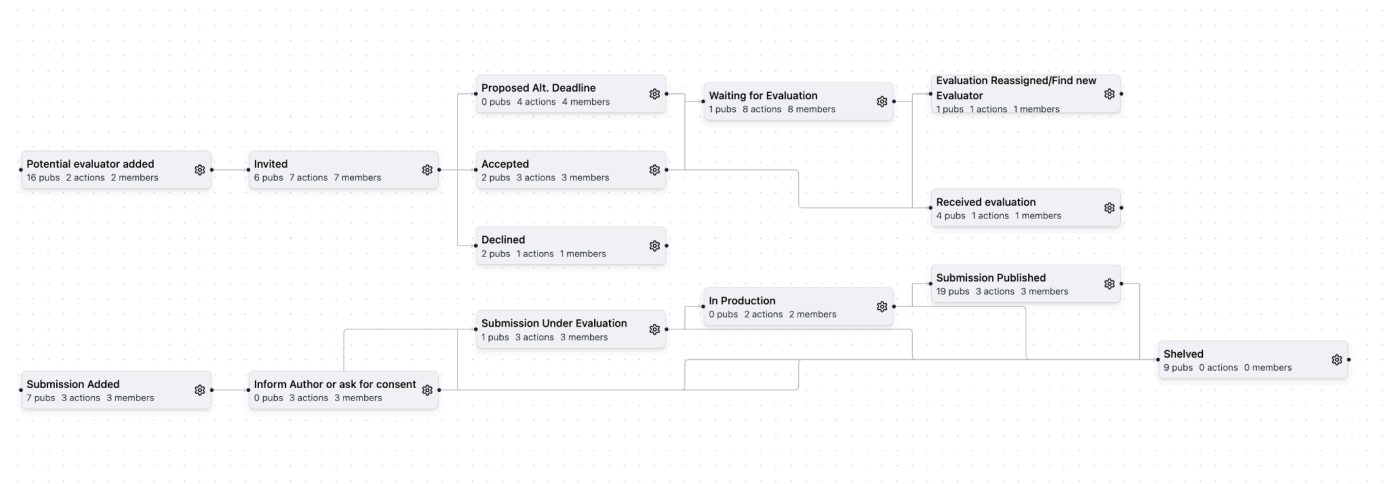
0

50

100

Comments: Claims, strength and characterization of evidence (optional)

Pubpub platform workflows



OLDER: requested ‘Evaluation management needs’ to PubPub – partly/mostly fulfilled

1. Reviewer management (emails, batching, etc.) (We call these ‘evaluators’)

I think this is pretty standard ...

1. The tool helps us find a list of potential reviewers (‘evaluators’) for a paper and vets COIs ... or we add to this list ourselves
2. We prepare an email template ... in general, allowing (evaluation managers) to customize it to the paper and for particular evaluators [spam and other issues]
3. The tool goes down the list in batches, inviting people ... until a minimum number ‘agree to evaluate’ (usually 2)
 - a. It asks them to select a deadline etc.
4. ... then funnels them into our system, shares content, shares ‘evaluation template’ (see below)
5. The tool sends reminders to evaluators, etc. If an evaluator is nonresponsive after a long period, it tells them we will drop them and look for another evaluator

... Expand to ‘process management’ ... including authors and even evaluation managers (guiding them through the process)

2. Tailoring an evaluation template (and ‘pub’ content)

We currently just share a Google doc ([here](#)), along with the detailed instructions [HERE](#). But we want to do better, to help automate our data collection (e.g., the evaluators’ rating numbers), make the instructions clearer to evaluators, ‘validate’ responses (e.g., lower bounds below upper bounds), and integrate this into the ‘editorial management’ and project management.

I raised this as an issue on the PubPub Github forum [HERE](#)

The template should...

1. Be easy for evaluators to access, without complicated logins
2. Enable validated numeric entry
3. Include some locked content explaining what we are asking
 - a. Some is same for all papers; see instructions [HERE](#)
 - b. Some is ‘instructions relevant for particular papers’
4. Let the evaluators inform us when they are done
5. Bonus stuff:
 - a. Visualization of confidence intervals (something like what Metaculus does [here](#))
 - b. The best implementation of this I’ve seen is https://beliefelicitation.github.io/interfaces/click_drag/ – can this be integrated in a meaningful way?
 - c. Calculation of ‘suggested averaging’ (see e.g., [here](#))

Some features of interest

- Yes: you can invite someone to edit a ‘pub’ without a login; or they can create an anonymous login pretty easily
- ?: Can you share a ‘pub’ with certain “locked content” (headers and tables) that they can fill in but not edit?
- ?: Can the ‘[belief elicitation](#)’ interface be embedded (as it can be in [Qualtrics](#) etc.)?
- Alternate route – a survey tool like [Qualtrics](#) that could pass the data and content to PubPub
- Revision management- PubPub publish releases look versioned so you could go to previous releases to recover anything deleted. However, it is not clear that drafts in between publishes keep a history that can be recovered.

Consider: Specific possibilities for quantitative data structures, survey chart widgets/embeds, etc.

3. Automating the ‘publishing the evaluations’ (and data) workflow

Once evaluations, author responses, and manager summary/discussion are done, there’s a lot left to do...

- Connections between the ‘pubs’
- Formatting,
- Correct references

- Checking the quant evaluation data and (ideally) entering it into a structured database
- Asking for DOIs,
- Etc.

We'd like to automate this because

1. It is time-consuming (taking 2-4 hours)
2. We want consistency, and it's easy to forget key steps

We discuss this in [PubPub work note-taking](#) and [Unjournal pubpub current process](#). We're seeing how the API (and tools for this) can help us with our current process. Some of this might become easier if we get evaluators to 'do their work on Pubpub' (see 'Tailoring an evaluation template'). However, it may take a while to develop this, some evaluators may not want to use that system, and even with this in place there may be further steps and the API may be helpful to automate and standardize things.

4. Tailoring an author-submission template

We could adapt the one we had made on Kotahi/Sciety, similar to our [Airtable form here](#)

5. [Evaluation-data specific things]

Structuring, sharing, visualizing and aggregating the ratings/predictions numbers given by evaluators

6. Other project/editorial-management elements

See our current workflow, mapped [HERE](#)

We should make clear processes and project management systems for this, involving our management team and staff/contractors, and 'evaluation managers'