

# Publishers, Authors, what's stopping you all from just using HTML

Dorothea Salo says [OA publishers: just use HTML!](#).

And of course, you know, I agree. Ironically, [one of the papers she's picking on](#) is on is all about publishing theses in HTML and I co-wrote it.

But as she says, it's not that simple. It's really, really not simple. Most authors are not equipped to make HTML, because most of them use word processors and the word processors produce rubbish HTML. I have discussed just how not simple it is many times before, and particularly in my paper for Serials Review, [Towards Scholarly HTML](#) (doi:10.1016/j.serrev.2009.05.001).

My team has demonstrated many times that it is possible to produce templates for academic documents that can be reliably machine-processed into HTML (and PDF with all the problems that Dorothea points out if people don't know how to tweak the typesetting). I have talked with journal editors, and with the PKP team, who make the OJS system which powers JoDI about which Dorothea is commenting. But we're still not making any traction. For example, Dorothea knows about our work and didn't suggest that people look to ICE as a potential solution. I can see that we're not doing enough and we're not providing what people need.

So what should we do to make it easy for OA publishers and their contributing authors to 'just use HTML'? Any ideas?

Would it help if we set up an open site where you could download a template, type up a paper and have it turn into HTML automatically? Is it time to move to online editing and sort out tools for diagramming and referencing and the rest of it in-browser?

My operators are standing by to moderate your comments.

Now, a bit more about the specifics of this case. Dorothea criticises the PDFs:

I'm sorry, authors. I know you tried, but those PDFs are terrible-looking. Times New Roman, really? (The one in Arial is the worst, though.) Could we discuss your line-height and why it's not tall enough? Line-length, and why it's too long?

As one of the authors, I have to protest. I didn't try to make PDF! Jim Downing and I submitted HTML as per the [author guidelines](#):

The journal is available over the World Wide Web so the **preferred presentation format is HTML**, and we strongly recommend submission in this form. We wish to be flexible to assist authors, however, so we will accept manuscripts in other Web-viewable formats, such as PDF. Where a non-html paper is submitted the author's final, refereed and accepted copy will be presented unedited, supplemented with an edited html 'front page' version. [I added the emphasis]

I'll follow this up with the editors and see if we can sort it out.

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