



## Editorial: Hosting a scholarly journal to promote the digital library at Cambodia's higher education institutions (HEIs)

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Although scholarly journals have a long history, they are a new phenomenon in Cambodia. Recently, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has shown solid effort and commitment to promoting scholarly journals. As a result, the Department of Scientific Research of the MoEYS launched the Guidelines on the Establishment, Management, and Development of Scholarly Journals on August 2022. It is the first comprehensive guideline ever developed in Cambodia. This document mainly helps build capacity and support the HEIs to effectively establish and operate journal publication which meets national, regional, and international standards (MoEYS, 2022). Moreover, one of the eight key strategies in the Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030 is “to ensure that university staff and students, especially postgraduate students,

contribute to improving the research and development culture in Cambodia to serve national development needs”. Moreover, scientific research publishing is considered a crucial aspect of advancing the RGC's Industry 4.0 Policy (RUPP, 2020). Scholarly journals are not new to the world; they have existed for over three centuries. In the 17th century, a small group of scientists initiated scholarly societies when they gathered in person to share results. The meetings resulted in the establishment of the Royal Society in 1660 and the French Academy of Sciences in 1666. Their primary purpose was to disseminate a scientific news<sup>1</sup>. Someone in the meetings asserted “Hey, maybe we should write this stuff down, get it printed up and share it with the folks who can't make it today” (Swoger, 2012). Although there is some disagreement about the origins of scholarly articles based on discipline, the first two scientific journals appeared in 1655: France's Journal des sçavans, and France's Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society (Vrasides, 2000). Scholarly articles have developed in different stages, but recent journals are modelled on those produced for nineteenth-century Germany's new professional history. Universities published scholarly articles, involving academic editors and consultants, And, began applying standard forms and styles of binding, type-setting, and publishing at regular intervals

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<sup>1</sup>See details at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/publishing/Scholarly-journals>.

(McDermott, 1994). Although scholarly journals have been established for over three centuries, the peer-review process remained under-developed (Debate 2006). The early stage of journals did not commonly apply the peer-review process, but more recently, most scientific and scholarly journals involve some level of peer review. Schaffner (1994) identified five distinct, though somewhat overlapping, roles journals play in scholarly communities: building a collective knowledge base, communicating information, validating the quality of research, distributing rewards, and making scientific communities.

In Cambodia, the first peer-reviewed scientific journal was launched in 2008 by Fauna & Flora International and the RUPP. The Cambodian Journal of Natural History (ISSN 2226-969X) was hosted at RUPP as part of the university's Capacity Building Project. The journal aims to support researchers in disseminating their findings and improving their scientific writing in conservation, management, and biodiversity<sup>2</sup>. Today, there is no specific record of how many scholarly journals are hosted by Cambodia's HEIs. There may be dozens that have been established by universities, or groups of researchers.

RUPP is one of the few public universities in Cambodia that possesses the capacity to produce quality research output. The RUPP Strategic Plan (2019-2023) focuses on academic and applied research across STEM, social sciences, and humanities disciplines. This plan includes the mission of being a place where researchers can access resources and form teams to develop evidence-based research. This is evident through the citation of RUPP affiliates in relevant databases and our involvement in developing cross-institutional research centers across various fields. To achieve its vision of Policy on Research Development and Innovation (2020-2024), RUPP has promoted research-related activities. In 2017, RUPP introduced a pilot program for 'university research grants'. This initiative allocates university research grants to motivate researchers to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals. RUPP has also developed various in-house, peer-reviewed journals to enable researchers and information sharing. As part of establishing a research culture,

RUPP now hosts journals, including: the 'Cambodia Journal of Basic and Applied Research (CJBAR)'; the 'Cambodian Journal of Natural History'; the 'Cambodian Review of Language Learning & Teaching'; and, the 'Cambodia Review of EFL Research'. Since 2019, CJBAR has been considered one of the primary scholarly journals of the RUPP. CJBAR is a bilingual Journal where an author may decide to publish their manuscript either in English or Khmer. However, all manuscripts published in CJBAR must have both English and Khmer abstracts. CJBAR is an academic, policy, and practice-oriented Journal covering all areas such as mathematics, science, technology, engineering, environment, social sciences, humanities, education, development studies, and languages (Table 1).

Academic or applied research manuscripts from within Cambodia may be submitted, as well as, manuscripts from outside Cambodia if they contribute to the social, economic, or environmental development of Cambodia, ASEAN, or the Greater Mekong Subregion. The Journal welcomes manuscripts from any discipline, related to theories, concepts, innovations, new technologies, or best practices. However, the Journal reserves the right to prioritize research topics aligned with the courses offered at RUPP. All manuscripts considered for publication will undergo a process of double-blind peer review by independent expert referees. An internal evaluation will occur before the peer-review process. The editor will inform the author whether the manuscript has been accepted or rejected within one month of completing the peer-review process.

The Journal publishes two issues per annum: Issue 1: January-June and Issue 2: July-December. The preparation and printing of the Journal are generously supported by the Research Office of the University, who also provided technical support in hosting, editing, and publishing the CJBAR. According to Research Gate, scholarly articles published by the Cambodia Journal of Basic and Applied Research have reached readers in 57 countries. There a total of 3231 readers (as of October 2022), and more than one-fifth of the total readers (22.5%) were from Cambodia, while the rest were based in other

<sup>2</sup> See detail at <https://www.fauna-flora.org/publications/cambodian-journal-natural-history/> 15

countries. The proportion of readers of the scholarly articles published by the Cambodia Journal of Basic and Applied Research from the United States of America was (16.3%), India (8.4%), the Philippines (6.6%), Thailand (5.5%), Japan (4.5%) and Indonesia (4.1%). The rest of the world reached a smaller share of less than 3 percent of the total readers (Fig. 1). The main purpose of the

contributions at the national, regional, and global levels to support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The institution wishes to promote Cambodia’s national cultural and natural heritage by providing high-quality research and innovation that actively engages society. In that regard, scholarly journals have played a vital role in developing a collective knowledge base, and in

Table 1. Manuscripts to be Accepted

<b>Natural Science, Mathematics, Science, Engineering, and Technology</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original/research paper (4,000-6,000 words, including references)</li> <li>• Short communication/policy paper (3,000-4,000 words, including references)</li> <li>• News (&lt;1000 words)</li> </ul>
Humanities, Social Science, Development Studies, Education, and Languages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original/research paper (6,000-10,000 words, including references)</li> <li>• Short communication/policy paper (3,000-4,000 words, including references)</li> <li>• News (&lt;1000 words)</li> </ul>

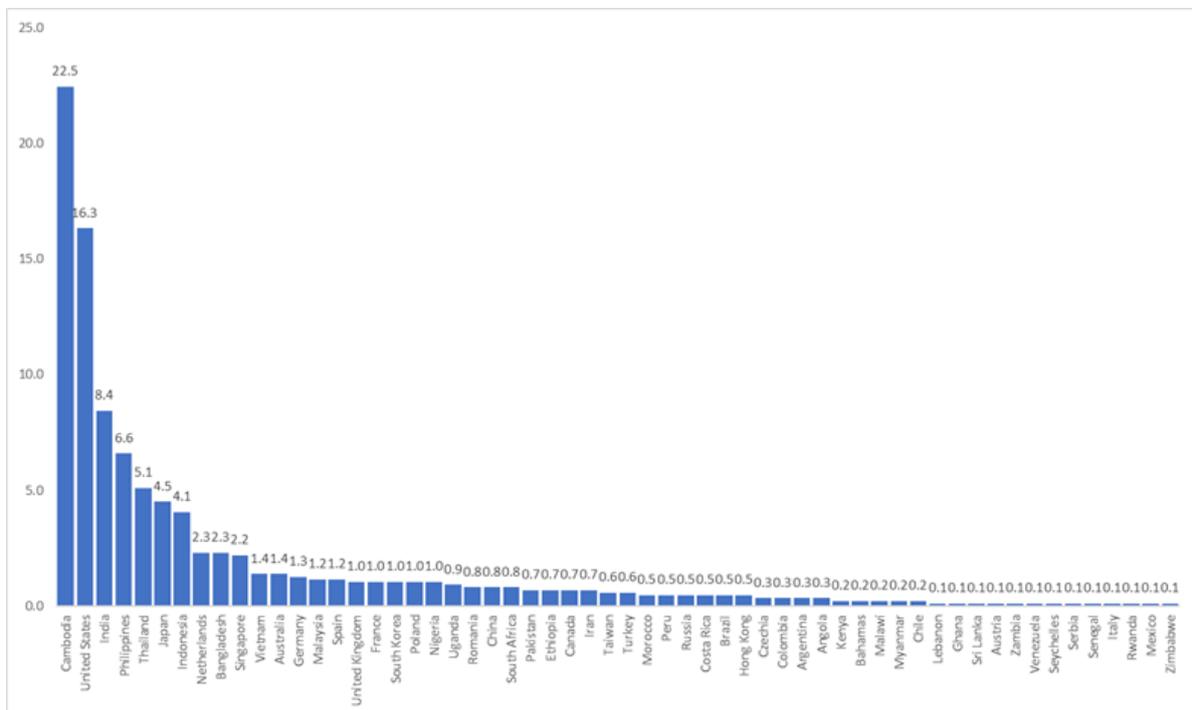
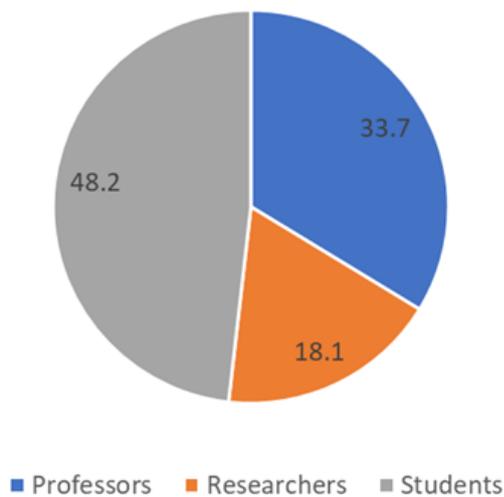


Fig. 1. Number of total readers by country as 2 October 2022

the operating the CJBAR is to promote research through publication, and the journal has been disseminated widely both within and outside Cambodia. The latest records by Research Gate, illustrated in Fig. 2, show that almost half of the readers of scholarly articles published at Cambodia Journal of Basic and Applied Research were students (48.2%). The scholarly articles were also accessed by professors (33.7%) and researchers (18.1%). RUPP is currently working towards

contributing to an archive of knowledge. To those ends, the university’s journals collect the most comprehensive, up-to-date, and authoritative information in the specific field of study. In doing so, the journals contribute to producing the accurate and high-quality research results which are essential to the public good. Table 2 describes the percentage of reads by discipline for the last eight weeks, based on Research Gate as of 04 October 2022. The outcome from Research Gate

confirms that CJBAR has reached professors, researchers, students, practitioners, planners, and policymakers in diverse disciplines.



**Fig. 2.** Types of readers for the eight weeks prior to 4 October 2022

The publication of scholarly articles through hosting scholarly journals is one of the activities which supports the implementation of the Policy on Research Development and Innovation (2020-2024). The policy has a vision that “RUPP is Cambodia’s leading university in applied and academic research”. One of the ten strategies in the policy focuses on “the publication and dissemination of research output”. Related activities include: (1) hosting interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journals that share research output nationally, regionally, and globally through online and printed journals; (2) encouraging research staff from RUPP faculties to publish research in national, regional, and international journals evaluated with high rankings in citation indices; (3) promoting the use of RUPP research output in planning and policy development; and, (4) organizing an annual forum where evidence-based research is embedded in developing policies and other practical applications. Promotion of RUPP research output will occur via the incorporation of this research into university curricula, public lectures, and the design of development projects to take advantage of the creativity and innovation of RUPP researchers. Published research will be made accessible to all staff and students through the university library and research office.

Moreover, hosting scholarly journal is one of the tasks of the universities to meet criteria

**Table 2.** Reads by discipline for the eight weeks prior to 4 October 2022

Discipline read	%	Discipline read	%
Educational Assessment	4.5	Special Education	0.9
Organizational Psychology	3.6	Secondary Education	0.9
Teacher Education	3.2	Psycholinguistics	0.9
Geography	3.2	International Relations	0.9
Qualitative Social Research	3.2	Algorithms	0.9
Zoology	2.7	Economic Geography	0.9
Educational Leadership	2.7	Sociolinguistics	0.9
Quantitative Social Research	2.7	Curriculum Theory	0.9
Language Education	2.7	Higher Education	0.5
Social Policy	2.7	Social Psychology	0.5
Marine Biology	2.7	Artificial Neural Network	0.5
Ecology	2.7	Sport Psychology	0.5
Behavioral Science	2.3	Forestry	0.5
Primary Education	2.3	Psychophysics	0.5
Educational Management	2.3	Remote Sensing	0.5
Business Administration	2.3	Physiotherapy	0.5
Human Resources	1.8	Race, Ethnicity and Politics	0.5
Positive Psychology	1.8	Adult Education	0.5
Geomorphology	1.8	Public Law	0.5
Meteorology	1.8	Criminal Law	0.5
Teaching Methods	1.8	Marketing	0.5
Education	1.8	Foreign Policy	0.5
Climatology	1.8	Clinical Immunology	0.5
English Literature	1.8	Educational Technology	0.5
Linguistics	1.8	Epidemiology	0.5
Didactics	1.8	Analysis	0.5
Applied Mathematics	1.8	Public Health	0.5
Science Education	1.4	Rehabilitation Medicine	0.5
Organizational Studies	1.4	Political Economy	0.5
Psychometrics	1.4	Information Systems (Business Informatics)	0.5
Clinical Psychology	1.4	Interlinguistic	0.5
Abnormal Psychology	1.4	Computer and Society	0.5
Semantics	0.9	Sports Medicine	0.5
International Economics	0.9	Ecological Engineering	0.5
Geoinformatics (GIS)	0.9	Environmental Engineering	0.5
Microbiology	0.9	Geochemistry	0.5
Software Engineering	0.9	Biosystems Engineering	0.5
Special Education	0.9	Geology	0.5
Algorithms	0.9	Environmental Science	0.5
Microbiology	0.9	Supply chain management	0.5
Software Engineering	0.9		

required by world university rankings. Despite this, if RUPP, as the leading research institution in the country, intends to be included in world university rankings, significant investment in the research capacity of the institution is required. If this were to be achieved, it would provide a clear indication that Cambodia has developed an improved ability to generate local knowledge and innovation within the country. It would also demonstrate that the nation is better equipped to independently address the challenges faced in improving socio-economic development outcomes.

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