

Editorial 30(1): Maintaining our Internet-based publishing infrastructure

After Editorial 29(4): "The last month' copy editing and formatting, a discussion of the editorial staff workload preceding the publication of a new issue of IIER, the topics for Editorial 30(1) should really mark a return to academic aspects of IIER's publishing. However, in the two months prior to IIER 30(1) publication, much time and effort had to be diverted into activities which can be described as "maintaining our Internet-based publishing infrastructure". The main components of IIER's "infrastructure" referred to here are the hosting of IIER's website, www.iier.org.au, and the provision of the email list, editor@iier.org.au. These are not *academic* aspects of IIER's publishing, but are *absolutely essential infrastructure* components.

Service suspended - waier.org.au and iier.org.au

Warning: Tedious technical detail follows. Skip to the last paragraph of this section if the detail is too tedious (though please do not forget my core purpose, documenting how much time and effort sometimes has to be diverted into "maintaining our Internet-based publishing infrastructure"). On Saturday 14 December 2019 I recorded a file note, the important (and least technical) lines in it being:

Attempted to update [iier-inf.html](http://www.iier.org.au/iier-inf.html) 14dec19. Although the directory listing under CuteFTP shows [iier-inf.html](http://www.iier.org.au/iier-inf.html) has been updated and CuteFTP "View" shows correct version, the version seen via <http://www.iier.org.au/iier-inf.html> with Safari is the old version.

As I usually do in these kinds of website hosting matters, I allowed Netregistry, IIER and WAIER's website provider, a few days to discover and fix without being "nagged" by customers. I thought it may be something to do with a Netregistry operation to "migrate" IIER and WAIER and other clients to a new *cPanel* host. However, Netregistry did not discover and fix, so early on Tuesday 17 December 2019 I submitted an online technical help query to Netregistry. My query generated an automated response from Netregistry, "#03710234: ftp upload to website but showing the old version of the website", which included the advice, "Our expected wait time is currently 24 hours." That seemed rather slow, so the next important entry in my file note was:

phone 1300 638 734, 17dec19, wait time about 70 mins, talk time about 20 mins, case number 03710234, Netregistry to ring back after migration team have investigated.

The "talk time about 20 mins" was unproductive, the hapless person I encountered on 1300 638 734 had to give up and refer me to a more senior person. There was no "ring back", but next day, Wednesday 18 December, "The Netregistry Team" tried to explain what was going on, in an email which included this text (shown as a screen picture):

Dear Atkinson Roger,

We are notifying you of a current suspension that has been made to the following service you hold with us.

Domain: waier.org.au

Service: CPANEL

Date and time of suspension: 18/12/2019 13:36:03

Reason for suspension: Website Hacked (Phishing)

We detected files hosted on your website that are being used for Phishing purposes. Phishing is the act of attempting to acquire information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity. It looks like a malicious user has hacked your website and modified some of its content to masquerade as a trustworthy entity in an attempt to send visitors to these modified files and acquire their sensitive details.

To lift the suspension we've placed on the service, you must reply to this email and inform us that you will;

1. Take immediate action to prevent the abuse from occurring.
2. Make changes to your website to protect it from getting compromised again.

To enable this to be understood, I need to explain that for some years iier.org.au has run as a "subdomain" of waier.org.au, because that was an economical method (no extra cost other than domain name registration) to create www.iier.org.au. Thus suspension of waier.org.au caused suspension also of iier.org.au. Sometime soon after this brusque advice, the *absolutely essential infrastructure* matter really hit. After "emptying cache" in my *Safari* web reader, my attempts to view the websites waier.org.au and iier.org.au were given a blunt message on screen:

Account Suspended

This Account has been suspended.

Contact your hosting provider for more information.

Yes, I *freaked out* (to international readers, I apologise for the resorting to idiomatic Australian English), this being my first encounter with such a message in over 20 years of communications with Internet service providers. So *freaked out* that I forgot to take a screen picture, but I did reply same day, to give the requested assurance about taking "immediate action", though not knowing what that action had to be. Then followed a long and frustrating wait until Tuesday 24 December 2019, when "Bernard" advised by email that "Your account has been un-suspended." My first login to the waier and iier sites to check out matters was on Wednesday 25 December, a rather inconvenient time. Apart from the brief technical details Bernard's email provided, it included this text, reproduced here because it contained advice that I acted upon:

We are happy to point you in the right direction, and give some basic advice. But there is a reasonable limit to support for hacked websites. That doesn't include us fixing the website for you, and while we do understand you are upset at being hacked, our responsibility is a secure hosting environment. The most important thing to take into account with hacking is prevention. You need to have the attitude of it's not a matter of 'if I get hacked', but rather 'when I get hacked'. Remember security almost always has a

trade off for convenience. Yes it's inconvenient having to manage security for your website, but you always have to keep in mind, if your site is down for days because it's been exploited, how much more inconvenient would that be?

If you've been hacked and you aren't a technical person. The best thing to do is reach out and get help. You may have to pay for that from website security companies, or any number of others doing the same work, but ultimately getting back online is going to be faster using guys who live and breathe this stuff. You may well be the 5th site they've fixed today.

The long delay I had encountered, and the remark about "the 5th site they've fixed today" made me wonder about the number of Netregistry clients also experiencing a "Website Hacked (Phishing)" problem. Was the IIER and WAIER experience unique or commonplace amongst Netregistry clients? So I acted immediately upon Netregistry's advice to "reach out and get help", by looking amongst Australian-based "website security companies". I can skip the details of this search (though very interesting insights were obtained), except to note that I very quickly reached conclusions on two key points. Firstly, as IIER's site has a full backup on my desktop *iMac* (and its external backup disk), IIER was well placed to consider the option of abandoning the Netregistry-hosted site and all of the 2698 IIER files it contained. This enabled (very fortunately) scope to migrate IIER's site to a new provider, without drawing upon the IIER files residing on the Netregistry-hosted site and possibly in need of "cleaning". Secondly, for various reasons pertaining to Netregistry's reputation amongst the 'commentariat' [1] on website hosting matters, that perhaps need not be explicitly elaborated here, it seemed prudent to migrate IIER to another provider, and also migrate IIER out of its connection to WAIER as a "sub-domain".

On Friday 27 December 2019 our new provider, CircleBC (<https://www.circlebc.com.au>), commissioned a new [iier.org.au](https://www.iier.org.au) site. Many thanks to David Debono at CircleBC who provided the new hosting account setup and very good "how to" advice. Over the weekend! That was phenomenal. Before the weekend 28-29 December concluded, I was able to complete my task list:

1. Upload IIER's 2698 website files to the CircleBC site. (This required learning how to use *cPanel* instead of *CuteFTP* for file upload - the upload time for 286.2 MB, including time needed for manual creation of each directory, was about 90 minutes).
2. Test view the new site, and make changes via *cPanel* to enable viewing by anyone.
3. Use my *cPanel* login to Netregistry, change the [iier.org.au](https://www.iier.org.au) domain name record, to direct IIER traffic to CircleBC's servers. (A nervous moment, haven't done that before!).
4. Use my *cPanel* login to Netregistry, to delete all IIER files from Netregistry. Delete the email list editor@iier.org.au from Netregistry. (Also a nervous moment, never before have I deleted so many files with so few keystrokes).
5. Create a replacement editor@iier.org.au list using *Mailman* at the CircleBC site. (Message "Test 1 from Roger 12.22 pm WA time" succeeded. *Yeah!*)

To conclude this section, the outline above indicates that much time and effort was expended during the Christmas-New Year period on restoring IIER's Internet-based publishing infrastructure and improving its reliability. The downtimes were about 11 days for www.iier.org.au and about 4 days for the editor@iier.org.au address. As to sustainability, some may suggest that instead of continuing on a 'DIY' (do it yourself) path as outlined above, IIER should engage a provider of a journal management system (such as *Open Journal Systems*, <https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/>). However, hosting costs may be about three times our current expenditure and therefore much time would be required for fund raising, so OJS or similar such as *Scholastica* (<https://scholasticahq.com>) are not currently under consideration. In our continuing search for new associate editors, we may add another criterion, "experience with website hosting activities desirable". As to www.waier.org.au, a site still hosted with Netregistry, WAIER Committee will work through the issues in the next few months, though arrangements will be independent of the iier.org.au solution.

Bounce action notifications

Late on Friday 24 January 2020, I checked my email. Disturbing what should have been a good night's sleep, the emails relating to IIER operations included *eight* "Bounce action notification" emails generated by the *Mailman* list server that distributes emails sent to editor@iier.org.au, out to IIER's associate editors. As list administrator I receive all "Bounce action notification" emails for editor@iier.org.au. It's tedious, very tedious. One part of the tedium is checking through such emails, just in case some action other than immediate deletion is needed. The screen picture below illustrates this tedious task (in this case, no action possible - the sender address was hacked or forged, and as to "Click here", that of course is a "never, ever, do that" action because it would connect to malware on a hacked website; note also DHL is not involved in such misuses of their name and logo).

From: "DHL_Express" <pamela.ghosal@gefco.fr>
Subject: [Editor] editor Your Shipment Has Arrived
Date: 24 January 2020 at 5:58:53 pm AWST
To: editor@iier.org.au

DHL Express

Dear editor,
Due to several cases of package misplacement we are experiencing recently,
It is now mandatory that we confirm delivery address from beneficiary before final delivery.

Kindly Re confirm your delivery address to ensure safe delivery.

[Click here to confirm your details now!](#)

Failure to verify address might lead to delay in scheduled delivery or loss of important package.

Regards,
2020 © DHL International GmbH. All rights reserved.

Here is another example of a "Bounce action notification" from the *Mailman* list server that distributes emails sent to editor@iier.org.au, made notable because Google, of all organisations, should be more acutely aware of the limitations of artificial intelligence programs that attempt to block "spam" or "junk email".

This message was created automatically by mail delivery software.

A message that you sent could not be delivered to one or more of its recipients. This is a permanent error. The following address(es) failed:

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[gmail address for IIER associate editor Dr Christine Glass]
host gmail-smtp-in.l.google.com [2404:6800:4003:c02::1b]
SMTP error from remote mail server after end of data:
550-5.7.1 [2400:b800:3:1::222 19] Our system has detected that this message
550-5.7.1 is likely suspicious due to the very low reputation of the sending
550-5.7.1 domain. To best protect our users from spam, the message has been
550-5.7.1 blocked. Please visit
550 5.7.1 https://support.google.com/mail/answer/188131 for more information.
h16si2166979pfq.145 - gsmt
Reporting-MTA: dns; se2.syd.hostingplatform.net.au
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These kinds of "Bounce action notifications" concerning @gmail.com addresses commenced on about 29 January 2020 (prior to that date, @gmail.com addresses were functioning without incident). The identity of the sending domain being blamed by Google Mail is not being stated in these bounce messages, but in this case and in my present mood I'll identify the sending domain as gmail.com, because the email was from a prospective author, address [xxx]@gmail.com. So, a "gotcha" moment (Google "What is gotcha?"), do we have an instance where gmail has labelled its own domain as having a "very low reputation"?

To be serious, at this stage I do not know whether the "very low reputation" domain is se2.syd.hostingplatform.net.au, which belongs to IIER's new provider of website hosting and email listserver, CircleBC (as described above), or whether iier.org.au is the "very low reputation" domain. So, time consuming further investigation is needed. Visiting <https://support.google.com/mail/answer/188131> is not helpful, the "more information" given there is in a genre unique to IT persons, the "it is your fault, not ours" genre. That web page, and a large number of FAQ pages it links to give no information about why, when and how gmail imposed upon editor@iier.org.au its "system" for ascertaining "likely suspicious due to the very low reputation of the sending domain".

The "very low reputation" for gmail.com, as I see it, is a matter of concern for IIER (as well as Google), because @gmail.com is the most frequently occurring email domain used by our prospective authors. In our 2019 all submissions file, @gmail.com occurred 270 times, far larger than the next most frequent, @yahoo.com with 80 occurrences. Also, since about 29 January 2020 we have encountered repeated instances of IIER associate editors with gmail addresses having a "message has been blocked" applied to emails via editor@iier.org.au, from other IIER associate editors who use @bigpond.com addresses, including rjatkison@bigpond.com. That is a serious impediment to associate editor teamwork.

How the heck does gmail identify an email as "likely suspicious due to the very low reputation of the sending domain"? Be explicit, what "sending domain" is gmail referring to? Do Google's gmail people really believe they can reliably identify "likely ... spam" by looking at the originating domain, or domains that relayed the email (such as iier.org.au)? Surely the question of what is spam and what is not can be assessed only by reading the body text of an email? To what extent are providers of email addresses, such as Google, resorting to such breaches of privacy?

So, very unfortunately, much time that should be devoted to advising authors, progressing IIER's review queues, and copy editing of accepted articles, has to be diverted to improving the reliability of editor@iier.org.au for associate editors and authors. Oh well, start using Google search to investigate Google's gmail. Start a tedious study of results from Google searches of the kind:

https://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&as_q=Is+gmail.com+a+domain+having+a+very+low+reputation

One more example of time wasting due to "Bounce action notification" (and then I will end this line of grumpiness). Recently one of our IIER associate editors, Associate Professor Judy MacCallum, referred to me a message from the Mailman list server for editor@iier.org.au:

Your membership in the mailing list Editor has been disabled due to excessive bounces The last bounce received from you was dated 29-Jan-2020. You will not get any more messages from this list until you re-enable your membership. You will receive 3 more reminders like this before your membership in the list is deleted.

To re-enable your membership [several remedial actions outlined, each involving a 40 character "confirm" string; not needed in this case because I intervened with a list administrator action].

A surprise and time waster for Judy, who did not know that bounces were occurring. Hopefully, this particular kind of time wasting for all parties will be curtailed by some tweaking of Mailman's "bounce processing" settings. I increased the setting for "The maximum member bounce score before the member's subscription is disabled" from 5.0 to 10.0. I decreased the setting for "The number of days after which a member's bounce information is discarded, if no new bounces have been received in the interim" from 7 to 3.

Mobile usability issues

Sometimes other parties try to tell IIER editorial staff what's important and what must be fixed in our publishing infrastructure. Below, a recent example from the Google Search Console team. However, *owing to time constraints*, we are unable to act upon their recommendation. Our readers will have to put up with reading via desktop computers, laptops and tablets like the *iPad*. To smart phone users trying to read academic research articles, sorry, we cannot please everyone.



Mobile Usability issues detected on <http://www.iier.org.au/>

To the owner of <http://www.iier.org.au/>:

Search Console has identified that your site is affected by 1 Mobile Usability issues:

Top Issues

The following issues were found on your site:

Content wider than screen

We recommend that you fix these issues when possible to enable the best experience and coverage in Google Search.

[Fix Mobile Usability issues](#)

OA Text's takeover bid for IIER

Very occasionally, some of the editorial correspondence crowding into the Inbox is given a quick reply before hitting "Delete". A recent case is quoted below.

From: "Perry Mahler" <perry.mahler@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: [Editor] Acquisition of Journal "Issues in Educational Research"
Date: 24 January 2020 at 8:58:47 pm AWST
To: <c.mcbeath@bigpond.com>
Cc: editor@iier.org.au

Dear Dr Clare McBeath,

We are OA Text, a renowned publishing house from London UK. Having established in 2014, we have seen good growth in publishing scientific journals. We have reached the journals publishing from 5 journals to 75 at the moment, included with a few acquired journals. Our readership is more than 1.5 Million users every year, and we are counting to increase it more in the coming months. As we are expanding, we are looking forward to exploring more opportunities in the publishing industry. In this timeline, we noticed a Journal with the title "Issues in Educational Research" published by you, and we feel this is the topic which we want to add to our catalog and serve the scientific community by disseminating the scientific knowledge in this field.

We are wondering to know a bit more about this journal as we have plans to acquire this journal and continue publishing.

Please let me know if you are the right person to contact as I have the interest to pursue this deal and would be glad to receive a positive response from you.

Thanks in advance for considering my mail and your reply.

Regards,
Perry Mahler
Business Development Manager - M & A
Open Access Text

As RA needed some relief from the many tediums described earlier in this Editorial, Perry received an all guns broadside.

From: Roger Atkinson <rjatkison@bigpond.com>
Subject: Re: [Editor] Acquisition of Journal "Issues in Educational Research"
Date: 25 January 2020 at 12:41:07 am AWST
To: Perry Mahler <perry.mahler@gmail.com>
Cc: Editor <editor@iier.org.au>

Hello Perry,

Thank you for your interest in "acquiring" IIER. However, after examining your "Article Publication Charges (APC)" page, <https://oatext.com/PublicationCharges.php>, and the archives pages for a sample of the numerous journals listed on that page, it is immediately and conclusively apparent that you are conducting a predatory journal operation on a large scale. Our response to you is emphatically negative.

For the extensive reporting about predatory journals and the problems they create, see: https://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&as_q=&as_epq=predatory+journal

You may be aware that "Open Access Text" is listed in <https://predatoryjournals.com/publishers/> and many other websites that name predatory publishers.

Dr Roger Atkinson
Associate Editor, IIER
<http://www.iier.org.au/>

Roger Atkinson
IIER Business and Website Manager

Endnote

1. For a sample of 'comentariat' postings concerning Netregistry, see:
<https://au.hostadvice.com/hosting-company/netregistry-reviews/>
<https://www.whotop.com/review/netregistry.com.au>
<https://au.trustpilot.com/review/www.netregistry.com.au>
<https://www.productreview.com.au/listings/netregistry-1>

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