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JOURNAL ARTICLE  
VERSIONS: REVIEW OF  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
AND PROJECTS

NFAIS BEST PRACTICES  
FOR PUBLISHING  
JOURNAL ARTICLES

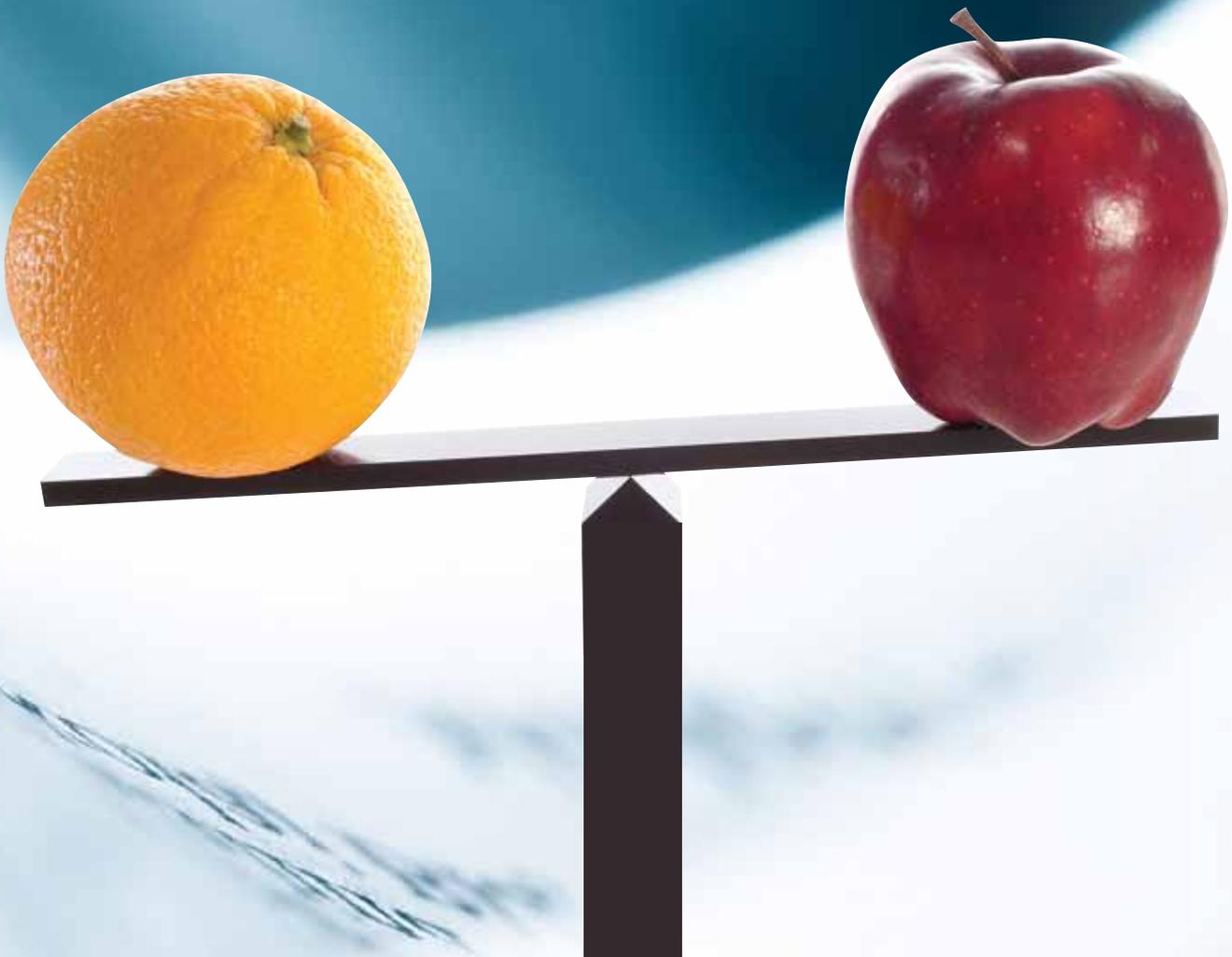
THE INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD TEXT  
CODE (ISTC)

THE INFORMATION BOMB  
AND ACTIVITY STREAMS

CATHERINE JONES AND T SCOTT PLUTCHAK

# JOURNAL ARTICLE VERSIONS:

Review of recommendations/projects



A journal article has always had more than one version as it goes through the process of an author committing it to paper, submitting it to a journal, being edited, and then published. The changes in technology such as word processing and the internet have made these different versions more visible to the wider community beyond the author and publisher.

As these versions become more prevalent, the ability to distinguish and identify the differences becomes harder. In a print world, a pre-print would have been labeled as such and would have had some information about the journal it was submitted to in it. This is not so true in the digital age. At the same time, the differences in nomenclature between and within the stakeholder groups have led to confusion for the wider public—for example, what does the term “post-print” really mean?

In an attempt to bring clarity and explicit understanding to scholarly works nomenclature, there have been several different projects in the last couple of years to explore the subject and to produce some recommendations. These are described and compared below.

**Journal Article Versions (JAV)**

The NISO/ALPSP working group on Journal Article Versions was formed in 2005 and the recommendations were published in April 2008. The group consisted of representatives from a number of publishers and libraries. (Both of the present authors served as members of the Technical Working Group). The charge was to propose a suggested naming convention for journal articles that could be incorporated into the metadata.

The group decided to take an approach based on the workflow and thus the format of the version is not considered. The stages named should be able to be easily identified, although some of them refer to an iterative process. There was a conscious decision to remain at a high level which is applicable to many stakeholders rather than to go into great detail.

The group developed use cases to explore the potential issues around journal article versions and following from this work developed a terminology set:

➔ **Author’s Original** – A version of a journal article that is considered by the author to be of sufficient quality to be submitted for review by a second party. This review may be prior to any formal review for publication. The author accepts full responsibility for the article. It may have a version number or datestamp. Content and layout is as set out by the author.

➔ **Submitted Manuscript Under Review** – A journal article that is under formal review by a recognized publishing entity that will ultimately pass judgment on whether the article will be accepted for publication. It may have a version number or date stamp. Content and layout follow publisher’s submission requirements.

➔ **Accepted Manuscript** – The version of a journal article that has been accepted for publication in a journal. A second party (the “publisher”: see “Version of Record” below for definition) takes responsibility for the article. Content and layout is as submitted by the author.

➔ **Proof** – A version of a journal article that is created as part of the publication process. This includes the copy-edited manuscript, galley proofs (i.e., a typeset version that has not been made up into pages), page proofs, and revised proofs. Some of these versions may remain essentially internal process versions, but others are commonly released from the internal environment (e.g., proofs are sent to authors) and may thus become public, even though they are not authorized to be so. Content has been changed from Accepted Manuscript; layout is the publisher’s.

➔ **Version of Record** – A version of a journal article that has been made available by any organization that acts as a publisher by declaring the article “fit for publication.” This includes any “early release” articles that are formally identified as being published.

➔ **Corrected Version of Record** – A version of the Version of Record of a journal article that has been amended in some way to correct errors.

➔ **Enhanced Version of Record** – A version of the Version of Record of a journal article that has been updated or provides additional information.

**VERSIONS**

The VERSIONS Project was a JISC funded project whose charge was to undertake a user requirements study and investigate the need for standards for versions of eprints. It ran from 2005-2007 and was led by the London School of Economics and Political Science in association with the Nereus consortium of European Research Libraries in Economics.

The project developed twelve scenarios exploring the areas around the reader’s point of view, such as location of versions of scholarly works and choosing versions to use; and around the author’s point of view, such as labeling of important versions, understanding of copyright statements, and coordinating the act of writing a work with others.

The project surveyed users in a target group of economics and most respondents came from this area. The key findings were that 59% of the respondents produce four or more different types of research output from a typical project; researchers tend to keep copies of journal articles at

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significant points in the publishing process. Respondents felt it was important to be able to identify which version was the published one, versioning sequence (is this one older or newer than that one), and standardization on the date of completion. The project also interviewed experts in the field and the top three versioning issues to be addressed were: ease in locating and identifying published versions, trust in the version at hand, and being clear about the difference between multiple versions. The VERSIONS team suggested some solutions and the top three were: standard indicator to show this is the latest version, linking to the published version from others, and standard taxonomy for the scholarly work life cycle.

From these surveys, the project team developed a VERSIONS Toolkit. This outlined the VERSIONS terminology and also provided some guidance to users on the general issue of versioning. Terminology suggested was:

- ➔ **Draft** – An early version circulated as work in progress.
- ➔ **Submitted version** – The version submitted to the journal for publication.
- ➔ **Accepted version** – The author-created version that incorporates referee comments and is the version accepted for publication.
- ➔ **Published version** – The publisher-created published version.
- ➔ **Updated version** – A version updated since publication.

It is clear from the description of the terms, taken directly from the Toolkit, that the process is described from the author's point of view with the versions only describing ones where the author has made the changes rather than when the publisher has made them. The author may also have versions that were generated by publisher processes such as copy-editing, etc.

The work on the VERSIONS taxonomy has been taken up by the UK repository community and is being used in the eprints software to be able to define the terms used for scholarly works within the software.



**VERSIONS survey respondents felt it was important to be able to identify which version was the published one, versioning sequence, and standardization on the date of completion. The top three suggested solutions by the team were: standard indicator, linking to the published version from others, and standard taxonomy for the scholarly work life cycle.**

## NFAIS Best Practices for Publishing Journal Articles

The National Federation of Advanced Information Services (NFAIS™) approaches the questions of version control from a slightly different context. The burgeoning practice of releasing journal articles on a case-by-case basis, often with the intention of replacing them with a final version at a later date, led to the creation of an NFAIS Working Group in late 2007 to establish best practices for publishing such articles, as well as for abstracting and indexing them. Their report was released in February of 2009. [See the article on page 12 for more on this report.]

Much of the NFAIS report focuses on such things as identification of specific citation elements that need to be included, clearly indicating changes that occur over time. Section 3 of the report explicitly addresses “Version Management.”

Rather than recommending specific terminology to use in identifying different versions, this section of the report addresses the substantive concerns that need to be addressed when determining variations among articles. Considerable attention is paid to the issues presented when dealing with corrections, retractions, or replacements/removals of articles, all of which need to be carefully tracked in order to maintain the integrity of the scholarly record.

## Version Identification Framework (VIF)

The Version Identification Framework (VIF) project was a JISC funded project which ran from 2007–2008 with a charge to produce a framework for identifying versions of digital objects in general. The project team was made up of staff from London School of Economics, Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), and University of Leeds. The project identified five key pieces of versioning information needed to distinguish between versions:

- ➔ **Defined dates** – Not only a date, but an explicit statement of what the date represents, for example, it could be the completion date after which the item was submitted to a journal.
- ➔ **Identifiers** – Assigned during the process, for example a DOI or a repository handle.
- ➔ **Version numbering** – Explicit information on the version contained either within the digital object or as part of the filename.
- ➔ **Version labels or taxonomies** – This is where the JAV or VERSIONS work could be used. At the time of writing the VIF team acknowledged that there wasn't a well adopted standard for scholarly works terminology.
- ➔ **Text description** – Provided by the author, it is often the best way of identifying how a particular version differs from another.

The VIF project recommended that this type of versioning information be embedded within the digital object and suggested using techniques such as file properties, coversheets, filenames, and watermarks to achieve this.

TABLE 1: Comparison of JAV and VERSIONS terminology

JAV	vs.	VERSIONS
Author's Original	➔	Draft
Submitted Manuscript Under Review	➔	Submitted Version
Accepted Manuscript	➔	Accepted Version
Proof	➔	–
Version of Record	➔	Published Version
Corrected Version of Record	➔	Updated Version
Enhanced Version of Record	➔	

Both projects have attempted to find more neutral terms without a lot of pre-existing “baggage.” There are clear definitions and the differences in terms, name, and number can be ascribed to the context of the project and the authors involved.

### Comparison of Terminology

Neither the NFAIS or VIF projects make specific recommendations for versioning terminology, although the issues that they raise are compatible with both the NISO JAV and JISC VERSIONS recommendations. Table 1 compares the terminology recommended by those two. Both projects have attempted to find more neutral terms without a lot of pre-existing “baggage.” There are clear definitions and the differences in terms, name, and number can be ascribed to the context of the project and the authors involved. NISO JAV was working in a context of journal publishing while the VERSIONS project was working in the context of Institutional Repositories.

Because of this difference in context, the JAV group felt that it was important to identify what constitutes the Version of Record. Where the VERSIONS project recommends simply indicating that an item has been published, the JAV group felt that this was too ambiguous a term, since “publishing” now occurs in so many contexts. Identifying Version of Record indicates that this is the official version that a publishing entity is taking responsibility for.

Similarly, identifying the Proof was deemed important, since some publishers may consider their “early release” articles to be Proof versions, while others will determine that the “early release” article is, indeed, the Version of Record.

Finally, the JAV group recognized that future changes to a published Version of Record may be qualitatively

of two different kinds—those changes that simply make corrections that might otherwise have been caught during the prepublication process, and those changes that include additional or new data that present more substantive changes to the original Version of Record.

In any case, it is important to move away from the use of terms such as pre-print and post-print which have such ambiguous definitions in the digital world and may mean substantively different things to different communities.

### Conclusions

In a world of instantly accessible multiple versions, it is important for readers to easily identify what they have retrieved and for them to then make their own decisions of whether the retrieved version is fit for their purpose. It is not up to the authors, publishers, or institutional repository managers to make this decision for the reader but instead they need to ensure the versions are clearly sign-posted.

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## RELEVANT LINKS



Journal Article Versions (JAV) Recommended Practice  
[www.niso.org/publications/rp/RP-8-2008.pdf](http://www.niso.org/publications/rp/RP-8-2008.pdf)

JAV Working Group Workroom  
[www.niso.org/workrooms/jav](http://www.niso.org/workrooms/jav)

Learned Publishing article on JAV project (by Cliff Morgan)  
<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/alpsp/lp/2008/00000021/00000004/art00003>

VERSIONS Report  
[www.lse.ac.uk/library/versions/](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/versions/)

NFAIS Best Practices for Publishing Journal Articles  
[www.nfaiss.org/Best\\_Practices\\_Final\\_Public.pdf](http://www.nfaiss.org/Best_Practices_Final_Public.pdf)

Version Identification Framework  
[www.lse.ac.uk/library/vif/](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/vif/)