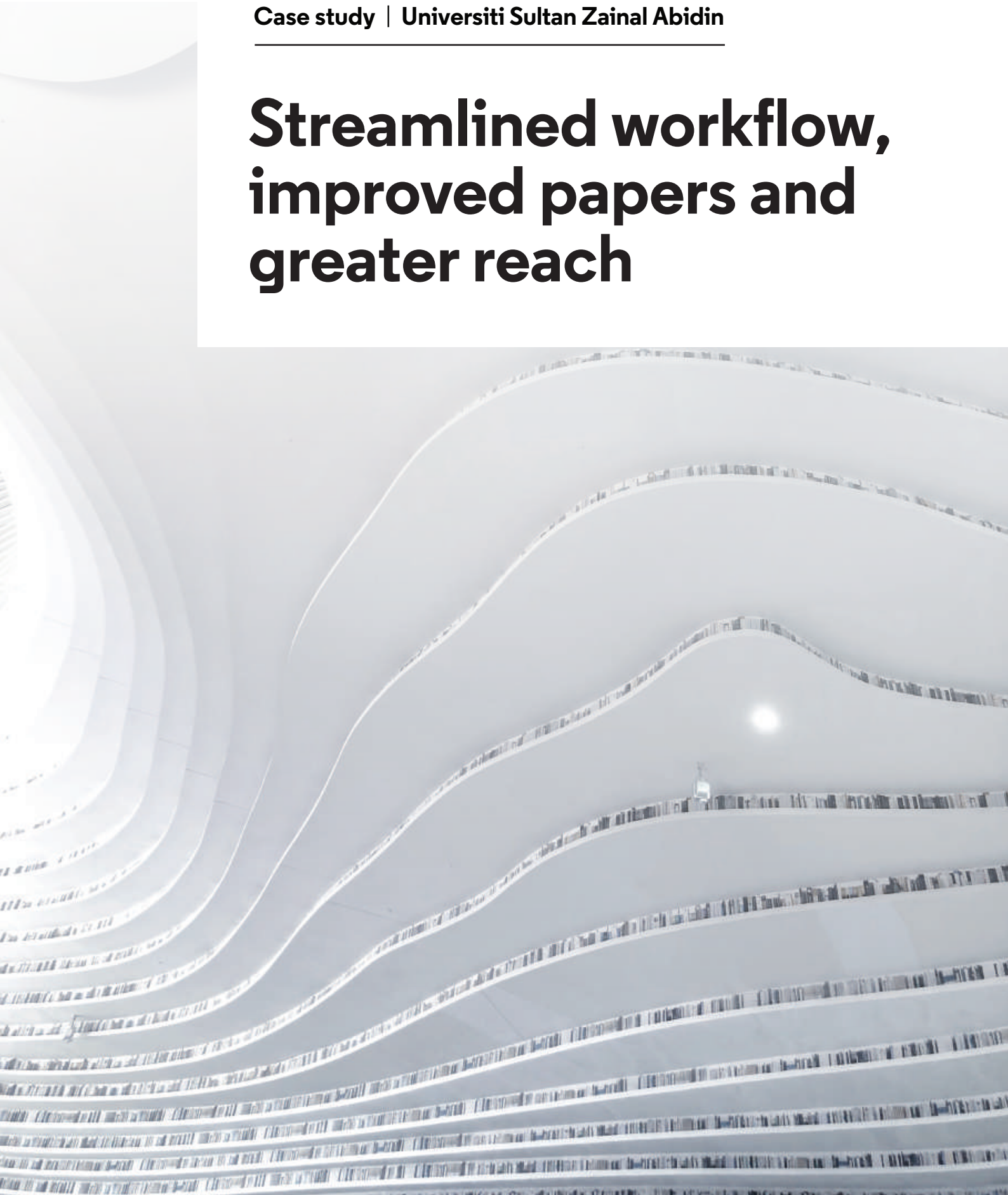


Case study | Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

Streamlined workflow, improved papers and greater reach





Dr. Radzuwan Ab Rashid

Dr. Radzuwan Ab Rashid is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Languages and Communication at the Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia. He has a PhD in Education from the University of Nottingham, UK, and did postdoctoral research at the University of Leeds on applied linguistics in educational contexts. Dr. Radzuwan is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS).

Managing authors and the publishing process

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), in the state of Terengganu, Malaysia, has 10 different faculties spread across four campuses. It was first set up as an Islamic educational college in 1980. The first campus was established in 1983 and was upgraded into a full-fledged university in 2005. The current name was adopted in May 2010. UniSZA remains a public university focused on teaching, rather than research.

UniSZA publishes the Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS). Nusantara is an Indonesian and Malay word which refers to a maritime Southeast Asia. Twice a year, JONUS publishes around 20 papers on social and cultural aspects of human behavior in the Nusantara region.

“In our journal, we accept any papers from any country as long as the topics are related to the Nusantara region,” says Dr. Radzuwan Ab Rashid.

“It was very taxing managing papers when we were using OJS. With ScholarOne Manuscripts, it is very, very easy.”

- Dr. Radzuwan Ab Rashid

Associate Professor in the Faculty of Languages



Streamlining publication

JONUS started its first issue in 2016. Before its adoption of ScholarOne Manuscripts two years ago, the journal was managed by Open Journal Systems (OJS), which made the communication with authors and reviewers a slower and more complex process.

Radzuwan recalls that he spent so many hours reading manuscripts, line by line, even after receiving feedback from reviewers, to ensure the quality of submissions. The process was very time-consuming and required that a lot of attention be paid both to the submissions and the feedback from reviewers.

One solution was provided by the integration of ScholarOne Manuscripts with OJS that helps streamline the publication process, the management of authors and reviewers and helps journals like JONUS improve the quality of reviews and, in turn, of individual papers.

“The ScholarOne submission system is very useful for me as a user to submit papers and it is also very useful from an editorial board perspective,” says Radzuwan. “Definitely, the management has become much easier.”

OJS is open-source software, so supporting and understanding of all features available as well as updates proved to be an issue. Staff at JONUS would do most of the management manually, regardless of the capabilities of the software. One key difference with ScholarOne Manuscripts is ongoing support and upgrades.

OJS created several other hurdles for the journal.

One was a lack of clarity as to whether authors and reviewers received emails, or if emails from the OJS system went to spam folders or email addresses no longer in active. ScholarOne Manuscripts solved these problems.

Another challenge from using OJS were frequent crashes, particularly during the submission process for new papers. These crashes often discouraged authors who ended up sending papers by email. ScholarOne Manuscripts is much more stable.

Finding efficiencies

JONUS adopted ScholarOne Manuscripts after a custom module made it possible to integrate with OJS, an open-source software that the journal had been using. ScholarOne Manuscripts made the publishing process more efficient and improved the quality of publications by streamlining communications with authors and reviewers and attracting more of both from further afield.

“When we were using OJS, we really had a problem getting good reviewers. OJS only had a section where papers could be submitted and we assigned reviewers, but we needed to search for the reviewers manually, and read their emails and all those kinds of things,” says Radzuwan.

“It was very taxing managing papers when we were using OJS. With ScholarOne Manuscripts, it is very, very easy,” says Radzuwan. “If you ask me whether it is good to combine OJS and ScholarOne? Yes, it is good because ScholarOne makes the management of the papers more effective.”

At a practical level, ScholarOne Manuscripts’ superior manuscript management capabilities can seamlessly integrate with the hosting and production capabilities that OJS provide.

At the same time, ScholarOne Manuscripts’ email templates are cleaner and easier to navigate, more reliably generating responses from authors and reviewers.

Additional benefits

One particularly useful aspect of using ScholarOne Manuscripts is the universe of world class reviewers it opens up. Authors in Malaysia often expect less stringent peer review processes when submitting to local journals, but the journals themselves benefit from maintaining the higher levels of integrity and quality that ScholarOne Manuscripts reviewers can facilitate.

“When they send us a review, sometimes we receive between two and three pages of comments, which are very good and help improve the quality of papers,” says Radzuwan. “I think many, many authors are surprised when they receive the review or when we deliver the comments from reviewers.”

The result is finished papers with much greater economic rigor.

“The papers have improved a lot compared to the days when we used OJS,” says Radzuwan.

“Using ScholarOne reduces 70 percent of the burden of managing the journal compared to using OJS.”

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Publishing better papers that are more thoroughly reviewed and edited in turn elevates the quality of the journal as a whole. Simultaneously, the process of reaching out to top reviewers around the world spreads the word about the journal and the research it presents, giving it greater academic weight and influence.

Since it started using ScholarOne Manuscripts, JUNUS has received papers from a range of sources that were not common before, including from universities in Southeast Asia, mainland China and Taiwan. In recent months, the journal started receiving submissions from Pakistan. The fact that the reviewers hail around the world, including Europe or North America, gives the journal greater visibility.

“Reaching out to reviewers recommended by Web of Science Reviewer Locator on the ScholarOne Manuscripts platform helps to sensitize them that there is a journal on social sciences and Nusantara. And then, maybe, they send us a paper,” says Radzuwan.

Another noticeable change is the number of citations. Radzuwan says JUNUS papers have been cited more than 120 times since the journal began using ScholarOne Manuscripts.

“Using ScholarOne Manuscripts reduces 70 percent of the burden of managing the journal compared to using OJS,” says Radzuwan. “I’ve been telling people that, if your university has a budget, you should go for ScholarOne.”



Using ScholarOne Manuscripts, the Journal of Nusantara Studies managed to:

- Streamline its management and reduce the amount of work required to review and publish papers.
- Assure authors about the quality and reliability of the journal.
- Reach out to higher quality reviewers from around the world, enhancing the journal's reputation amongst its global reviewer base.
- Educate editors about the elements that make high quality papers and authors on how to enhance the quality of their research-based writing.
- Ease the reviewer management process, while increasing the journal's reach and reputation.

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