

Developing Professional Skills Through an Editorial Internship with *Reflective Professional*

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1. Introduction

Reflective Professional is the annual academic journal of the iSchool of the Robert Gordon University, showcasing the research projects produced by the MSc Information and Library science students. Published each June, it provides a platform for emerging scholars to share their work with a wider academic and professional audience.

As part of this year’s editorial cycle, I undertook the role of Editorial Intern which allowed me the opportunity to engage with the full lifecycle of academic publishing, from manuscript submission to final publication. This position required me to contribute to the coordination and production of the journal while developing a deeper understanding of editorial processes and professional communication. My responsibilities included supporting the Editorial Team during key decision-making stages, liaising with selected authors, assisting with proofreading and formatting and learning to navigate the technical systems used for publication. The internship demanded both independent work and effective collaboration, particularly within virtual environments and provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen my organisational, communication and technical skills.

2. SMART Objectives

The internship focused on the development of three SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives, identifying areas of knowledge and experience to further develop as part of the practical experience. These guided my professional development and ensured that my contribution to *Reflective Professional* was both meaningful and aligned with the expectations of the role:

1. To develop teamwork and communication skills by participating in Editorial Team meetings and liaising with selected authors. To develop confidence in virtual communication in both individual and group settings.
2. To be able to perform editorial and proofreading work to a professional standard. To improve formatting, spelling, grammar and attention to detail. To strengthen independent working skills and enhance time-management abilities.
3. To become capable of uploading items for publication to the Open Journal System via training provided by the library. To gain confidence to tackle other technical challenges.

3. Skills Developed

Throughout my internship with *Reflective Professional*, I had the opportunity to develop a wide range of professional skills that are essential within academic publishing and the wider information sector. These included editing, quality control and adherence to copyright laws which are necessary for publishing work (Lefevre and Huwe, 2013).

Saunders (2015) groups skills sought by employers into three groups, technology, hard skills and soft skills. Soft skills are non-technical competencies which are people skills and personal qualities. They are essential to the performance of daily tasks including interacting with others. Hard skills represent technical abilities acquired through training education or experience (Zeynali-Tazehkandi, Nowkarizi and Budd, 2025). There are many hard and soft skills that were required as an editorial intern of *Reflective Professional*. Both sets of skills worked symbiotically with ethics and values at the core.

The following sections highlight the core knowledge and skills developed or further strengthened during the internship.

3.1 Technological Knowledge and Skills

Training to learn how to use the journal hosting service, Open Journal System (OJS), was provided by the RGU library, and it involved step by step instructions for managing a journal using the OJS. The training was effective as it was a practical demonstration of how to use the system to upload a submission. I was also given an opportunity at every stage to ask questions. I enjoyed the challenge and developing these practical skills through step-by-step instruction and I was able to subsequently apply these skills to uploading dissertations onto the system for publication.

3.2 Communication

Communication whether spoken, written, nonverbal or visual is one of the most important skills required in all areas of Library and Information Science (LIS) (Zeynali-Tazehkandi, Nowkarizi and Budd, 2025). Communication can also have a positive impact on how a group works together (McKinney and Cook, 2018). Participation in online editorial team meetings with the Editors in Chief was the primary communication within the group. The meetings took place regularly during the project using Microsoft Teams. In these meetings, we discussed articles for the journal, tasks to do and there were plenty of opportunities for me to ask questions. Preparation was effective and something I will carry forward with me. The small group also suited me. Overall, I feel I have gained a vital skill as I was able to build my confidence with regards to communicating online.

3.3 Teamwork

Working in teams is a key aspect of all types of librarianship (Mandel, Moen and Karno, 2020) and a crucial skill for students to be successful in the field (Henricks and Henricks-Lepp, 2014). Collaborative projects help to develop relationship building skills that are professionally rewarding (Mandel, 2020). Reported benefits of teamwork include learning from others, developing ongoing relationships and generating new ideas (Roy & Williams, 2014; McKinney & Cook, 2018). Scheduled meetings and clear and regular communication positively affect the team experience (McKinney & Cook, 2018). Employers actively seek graduates that can work well with others (Volet and Mansfield, 2006). Teamwork was an essential component of the editorial work. This included discussions, fulfilling tasks, asking for advice and keeping everyone up to date.

3.4 Editing and Proofreading Journal Articles

One of the learning objectives of the Editorial Intern position was to provide editorial and proofreading work to journal articles prior to publication. This was to be done to a professional standard using the journal style guide, which provides author guidelines including formatting, language, tone and punctuation. I formatted each dissertation to be in line with the journal style guides, and I checked for any grammar or spelling changes that needed to be made. As I had no prior experience of proofreading and editing, I enrolled in a basic proofreading and copy-editing techniques short course, which provided a great basis for me to start the editing and proofreading process. The course gave descriptions of what copyediting and proofreading entailed as well as the workflow. I picked up lots of useful tips from the module including creating my own personal style sheet as a journal style guide often won't include everything. I enjoyed the task. I built a process and enjoyed how methodical it was. I will be able to apply these skills to my own research project and future assignments.

3.5 Knowledge of Copyright Requirements

Information governance and compliance is one of the professional expertise outlined by the CILIP PKSB. This refers to adhering to policies and regulations regarding to processes and procedures of information use (CIPLIP PKSB). There are many components to this, but most relevant to this project

was knowledge of copyright, intellectual property and licensing. Librarians can be seen as sources of advice on copyright matters (Morrison and Secker, 2017). Copyright literacy is a skill that allows LIS professionals to support and educate communities. Knowledge of copyright requirements was necessary as part of this internship.

The content of Reflective Professional journal is licensed under a Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0 Licence. A license agreement was also required by participants in the journal. Undertaking the Digital Libraries module of the MSc Information and Library Studies was helpful for understanding copyright and open access including Creative Commons Licenses. Additionally, the Creative Commons website (creativecommons.org) was very informative as it breaks down information in an easy-to-understand way. I also found a useful LibGuide on Creative commons which helped summarise the information (Monmouth University, 2026).

It was rewarding to be involved in a project that advocates the ethical use of information and supports open access. Copyright will continue to be a part of my academic and career journey in the future, and this experience has provided me with resources that I will continually refer to.

4. Conclusion

The Editorial Intern role with *Reflective Professional* provided an introduction to the practices, responsibilities and professional standards involved in academic publishing. Working across multiple stages of the editorial workflow offered valuable insight into the coordination, communication and technical processes required to produce a scholarly journal. The internship also created meaningful opportunities to apply and extend a range of professional skills, from technological competence with the Open Journal System to effective virtual communication, collaborative teamwork editorial precision and an informed understanding of copyright and open-access licensing.

These experiences supported the achievement of the SMART objectives set at the outset of the project and contributed to significant personal and professional development. The skills gained, particularly in editing, digital communication and the ethical management of information, are directly transferable to future academic work and to professional roles within the information and library sector. The internship offered both practical capabilities and a deeper appreciation of the values underpinning scholarly communication.

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