

AI-Assisted Editorial Decision Making in Open Journal Systems (OJS): A Framework for Manuscript Scope Analysis and Reviewer Recommendation

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Abstract

The increasing volume of manuscript submissions has created significant challenges for editorial boards in maintaining efficient and consistent editorial workflows. Initial manuscript screening, assessment of manuscript relevance to the journal scope, and identification of appropriate reviewers are among the most time-consuming tasks in academic publishing. Although Open Journal Systems (OJS) provides a comprehensive platform for managing editorial processes, these tasks are still performed primarily through manual evaluation.

This study presents an AI-assisted editorial support framework designed for Open Journal Systems (OJS). The proposed approach applies natural language processing techniques to analyze manuscript titles, abstracts, keywords, and reviewer expertise profiles. Textual information is transformed into numerical representations using the Term Frequency–Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) vectorization method, while cosine similarity is employed to measure

semantic relevance between submitted manuscripts, journal scope descriptions, and reviewer expertise. Based on these similarity scores, the system recommends the most relevant journal scope categories and suitable reviewers for each submitted manuscript.

The proposed framework is implemented as a Python-based prototype and demonstrates the feasibility of integrating artificial intelligence into editorial workflows without replacing the role of the editor. Instead, the system functions as an intelligent decision-support tool that provides transparent and consistent recommendations during the initial manuscript screening process. The proposed approach has the potential to reduce editorial workload, improve reviewer assignment, and enhance the overall efficiency of manuscript management within Open Journal Systems.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Open Journal Systems (OJS), Natural Language Processing, TF-IDF, Cosine Similarity, Manuscript Scope Analysis, Reviewer Recommendation.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most influential technologies in contemporary science and engineering, significantly transforming numerous domains, including healthcare, education, finance, manufacturing, and scientific publishing. Recent advances in natural language processing (NLP), information retrieval, and intelligent text analysis have created new opportunities for automating knowledge-intensive tasks that traditionally required substantial human expertise. These developments have also influenced academic publishing, where AI technologies are increasingly being investigated as tools for supporting editorial workflows, improving manuscript processing, and enhancing the overall efficiency of scholarly communication (LeCun et al., 2015; OpenAI, 2023).

The continuous growth in scientific research has led to a rapid increase in manuscript submissions received by academic journals. As a consequence, editorial boards face growing workloads associated with the initial screening of submitted manuscripts, evaluation of their

relevance to the journal's aims and scope, identification of qualified reviewers, and coordination of the peer-review process. Although editorial management platforms have significantly improved the organization of publishing activities, many critical decisions still rely on manual assessment by editors. This process is often time-consuming, may introduce inconsistencies, and becomes increasingly difficult as submission volumes continue to grow (Smith, 2006; Minciună & Țurcan, 2025).

Among the available editorial management platforms, Open Journal Systems (OJS) has become one of the most widely adopted open-source solutions for managing scholarly journals. Developed by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), OJS provides an integrated environment supporting manuscript submission, editorial workflow management, peer review, copyediting, production, and publication. Its flexibility, accessibility, and extensive international adoption have made it a preferred platform for universities, research institutions, and independent publishers. Nevertheless, despite its comprehensive workflow management capabilities, OJS currently provides limited intelligent support for evaluating manuscript relevance to journal scope or recommending appropriate reviewers during the initial editorial screening process (Willinsky, 2005; Edgar & Willinsky, 2010; Tabatadze, 2024).

The initial editorial assessment represents one of the most important stages of scholarly publishing. Before a manuscript enters the peer-review process, editors must determine whether its topic corresponds to the journal's thematic scope and whether the manuscript should proceed to external review. Subsequently, appropriate reviewers must be selected based on their research expertise and scientific interests. These activities require careful analysis of manuscript content and reviewer profiles and are largely dependent on editorial experience. Consequently, the development of intelligent support systems capable of analyzing textual similarity between manuscripts, journal scope descriptions, and reviewer expertise has become an important research direction in academic publishing.

Recent advances in natural language processing and information retrieval provide effective methods for addressing these challenges. Techniques such as Term Frequency–Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) enable textual documents to be transformed into numerical vector representations, while cosine similarity offers an interpretable measure for estimating semantic similarity between textual documents. These approaches have been successfully applied in numerous text classification and document retrieval tasks and provide a transparent foundation for supporting editorial recommendations without replacing human decision-making (Manning et al., 2008; Jurafsky & Martin, 2009; Sebastiani, 2002; Kowsari et al., 2019).

This study proposes an AI-assisted editorial support framework for Open Journal Systems (OJS) that focuses on two essential tasks of the initial editorial workflow: manuscript scope analysis and reviewer recommendation. The proposed framework applies TF-IDF vectorization and cosine similarity to analyze manuscript titles, abstracts, keywords, journal scope descriptions, and reviewer expertise profiles. Rather than replacing editorial judgment, the proposed system functions as an intelligent decision-support tool that provides transparent recommendations during manuscript screening and reviewer selection. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the editorial workflow in Open Journal Systems and discusses its current challenges. Section 3 presents the proposed AI-assisted framework and describes its architecture and implementation. Section 4 demonstrates the experimental results obtained using the developed prototype, while the final section summarizes the main findings and outlines directions for future research.

1. Editorial Workflow in Open Journal Systems

1.1. Traditional Editorial Workflow

The editorial workflow of an academic journal consists of a sequence of interconnected stages designed to ensure the quality, integrity, and transparency of scholarly publishing. Modern

journal management systems provide structured environments that facilitate communication among authors, editors, reviewers, and publishers throughout the publication process. Among these systems, Open Journal Systems (OJS) has become one of the most widely adopted open-source platforms for managing scholarly journals due to its flexibility, scalability, and comprehensive support for editorial activities (Willinsky, 2005; Edgar & Willinsky, 2010).

The editorial process begins with manuscript submission, during which authors upload their manuscripts together with essential metadata, including the title, abstract, keywords, author information, and subject classification. These metadata provide the initial descriptive information required for editorial management and subsequent manuscript evaluation. Once the submission is completed, the manuscript enters the editorial workflow and becomes available for assessment by the editorial office.

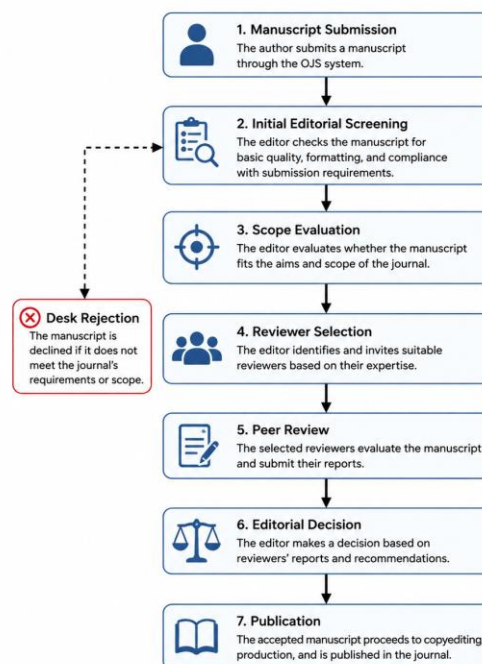
The first stage of editorial evaluation is the initial screening, where editors verify whether the submitted manuscript satisfies the journal's formal requirements and falls within the journal's thematic scope. During this stage, editors assess manuscript completeness, compliance with submission guidelines, and relevance to the journal's research areas. Manuscripts that do not correspond to the aims and scope of the journal are typically rejected before entering the peer-review process, thereby reducing unnecessary workload for reviewers and improving the overall efficiency of editorial management (Smith, 2006; Tabatadze, 2024).

Manuscripts that successfully pass the initial screening proceed to the reviewer selection stage. Selecting appropriate reviewers is one of the most important responsibilities of editors because the quality, fairness, and scientific reliability of peer review largely depend on reviewer expertise. Editors are therefore required to identify reviewers whose research interests and scientific experience closely correspond to the subject of the submitted manuscript. This process commonly involves manual examination of reviewer profiles, publication records, and areas of expertise, making reviewer assignment both time-consuming and dependent on editorial experience (Minciună & Țurcan, 2025).

After reviewers are assigned, the manuscript enters the peer-review stage, where independent experts evaluate its originality, methodological quality, scientific contribution, and overall suitability for publication. Reviewer reports and recommendations support the editor in making the final editorial decision, which may result in manuscript acceptance, requests for revision, or rejection. Throughout the entire editorial workflow, responsibility for the final decision remains exclusively with the editor.

Although Open Journal Systems effectively supports the administrative management of editorial workflows, the platform currently provides limited intelligent assistance during the initial manuscript screening and reviewer selection stages. These activities continue to rely primarily on manual analysis of manuscript content and reviewer expertise. As submission volumes continue to increase across academic journals, there is a growing need for intelligent support systems capable of assisting editors in these early stages of the editorial workflow. This need provides the foundation for the AI-assisted framework proposed in this study (Tabatadze, 2024).

Figure 1. *Traditional Editorial Workflow in Open Journal Systems*



1.2. Challenges of Traditional Editorial Workflow

The continuous expansion of scientific research has led to a substantial increase in the number of manuscripts submitted to academic journals worldwide. While this growth reflects the dynamic development of global research communities, it also places considerable pressure on editorial boards responsible for managing increasingly complex publication workflows. Editors are expected to process submissions efficiently while maintaining high standards of scientific quality, transparency, fairness, and consistency throughout the editorial process. Consequently, the growing volume of manuscript submissions has become one of the major challenges facing contemporary scholarly publishing (Smith, 2006; Minciună & Țurcan, 2025).

One of the primary challenges in the editorial workflow is the initial assessment of a manuscript's relevance to the journal's aims and scope. Before initiating the peer-review process, editors must determine whether the research topic, objectives, methodology, and expected contribution correspond to the thematic areas covered by the journal. Manuscripts that clearly fall outside the journal's scope are generally rejected during the initial editorial screening, thereby reducing unnecessary reviewer workload and improving the efficiency of the editorial process. However, assessing thematic relevance requires careful examination of manuscript titles, abstracts, keywords, and subject classifications, making this stage both time-consuming and highly dependent on editorial expertise (Willinsky, 2005; Tabatadze, 2024b).

Another significant challenge is the identification of appropriate reviewers. The effectiveness of peer review depends largely on assigning manuscripts to experts whose scientific background and research interests closely correspond to the submitted work. In practice, editors often examine reviewer databases, publication records, institutional profiles, and declared areas of expertise to identify suitable reviewers. As reviewer databases continue to expand and scientific disciplines become increasingly specialized and interdisciplinary, selecting the most appropriate reviewers becomes progressively more difficult. Furthermore, reviewer availability, previous review assignments, workload, and potential conflicts of interest introduce additional

complexity into the reviewer selection process (Edgar & Willinsky, 2010; Minciună & Țurcan, 2025).

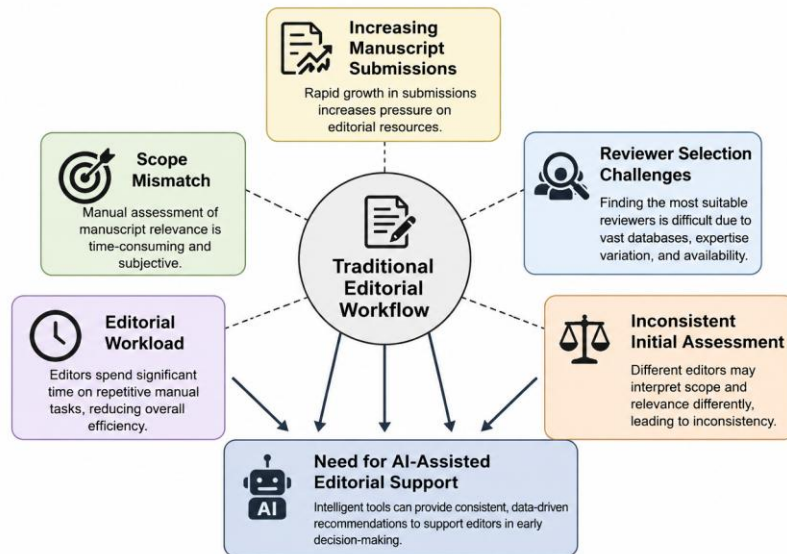
Maintaining consistency during the initial editorial assessment represents another important challenge. Different editors may evaluate manuscript relevance, reviewer suitability, and journal scope differently depending on their disciplinary knowledge, professional experience, and interpretation of editorial policies. Although editorial guidelines establish general evaluation criteria, professional judgment remains an essential component of the editorial process. Consequently, manuscripts with similar characteristics may receive different initial assessments, highlighting the need for more transparent and consistently applied decision-support mechanisms.

Recent advances in natural language processing and information retrieval provide practical opportunities for supporting editors during the early stages of manuscript evaluation. Text-based analytical methods enable the comparison of manuscript content with journal scope descriptions and reviewer expertise profiles, providing valuable evidence for editorial decision support. Techniques such as TF-IDF vectorization and cosine similarity have demonstrated their effectiveness in document representation, text comparison, and information retrieval applications, making them well suited for supporting manuscript scope evaluation and reviewer recommendation (Manning et al., 2008; Jurafsky & Martin, 2009; Sebastiani, 2002; Kowsari et al., 2019).

The challenges discussed above demonstrate the growing need for intelligent editorial support tools capable of assisting editors during the initial stages of manuscript processing. Rather than replacing editorial judgment, such systems are intended to provide transparent, data-informed recommendations that support scope evaluation and reviewer selection while preserving the editor's responsibility for all editorial decisions. Motivated by these challenges, the following section presents the proposed AI-assisted editorial framework for Open Journal

Systems (OJS), which applies natural language processing techniques together with TF-IDF vectorization and cosine similarity analysis to support the initial editorial workflow.

Figure 2. *Challenges of Traditional Editorial Workflow*



2. Proposed AI-Assisted Editorial Framework

2.1. Overall Framework

The AI-assisted editorial framework proposed in this study is designed to support editors during the initial stages of the editorial workflow in Open Journal Systems (OJS). Unlike conventional editorial management systems, which primarily facilitate workflow administration, the proposed framework integrates manuscript scope analysis and reviewer recommendation into a unified AI-assisted decision-support process. Rather than replacing human judgment, the framework provides intelligent recommendations that assist editors in evaluating manuscript relevance to the journal's scope and identifying reviewers whose expertise closely matches the submitted research. Its primary objective is to improve the efficiency, consistency, and

transparency of the editorial process while preserving the editor's full responsibility for all editorial decisions.

The proposed framework consists of several interconnected components responsible for processing information extracted from submitted manuscripts, journal scope descriptions, and reviewer expertise profiles. The primary input includes manuscript titles, abstracts, keywords, journal scope descriptions, and reviewer research interests. Before similarity analysis, the collected textual information undergoes a sequence of natural language processing procedures, including preprocessing and feature extraction, and is subsequently transformed into numerical vector representations suitable for computational analysis.

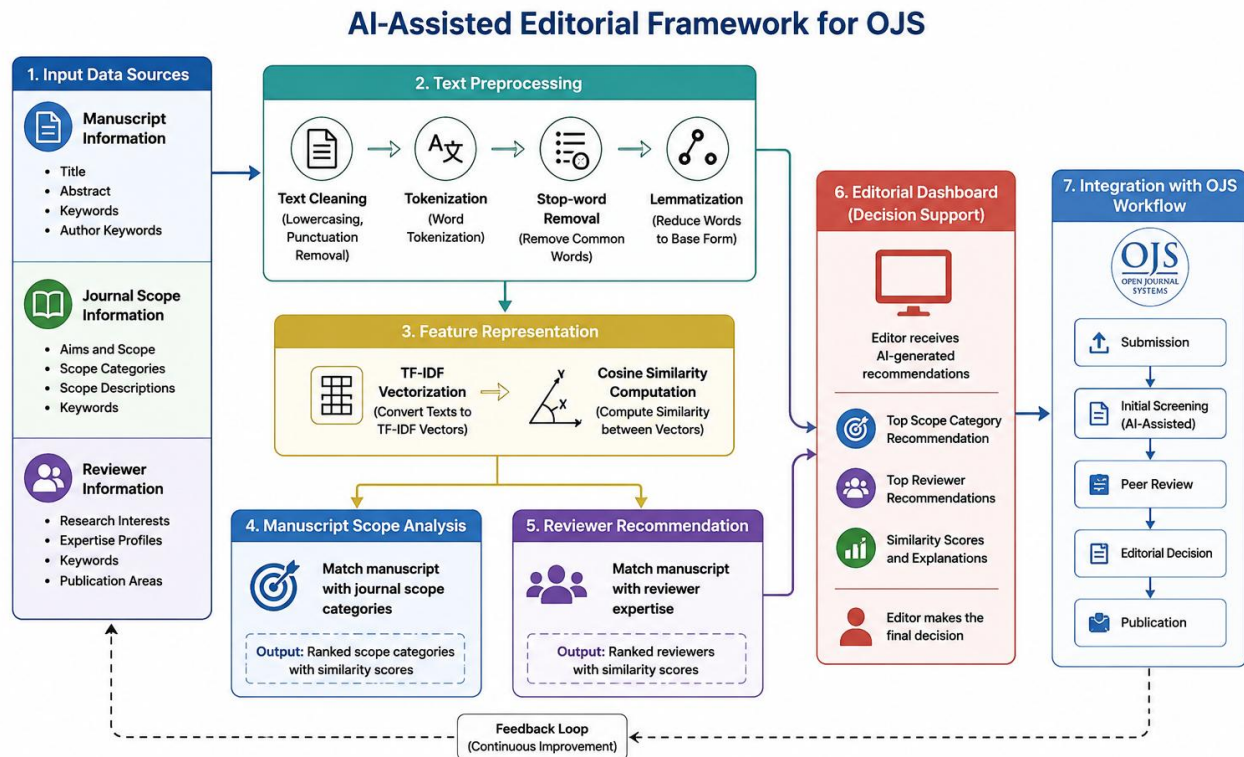
To represent textual documents numerically, the framework applies the Term Frequency–Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) vectorization technique. Semantic similarity between manuscripts, journal scope descriptions, and reviewer expertise profiles is then calculated using cosine similarity. The resulting similarity scores indicate how closely a submitted manuscript corresponds to the journal's thematic areas and how well individual reviewers match the manuscript based on their research expertise.

Based on the calculated similarity scores, the framework produces two complementary outputs. The first identifies the journal scope category that best corresponds to the submitted manuscript, supporting editors during the initial screening stage. The second ranks potential reviewers according to the similarity between manuscript content and reviewer expertise profiles. These outputs provide interpretable decision-support information that assists editors in making consistent and informed decisions while preserving full editorial control over manuscript evaluation and reviewer assignment.

The proposed framework has been implemented as a Python-based prototype using widely adopted natural language processing and machine learning libraries. The implementation demonstrates that AI-based decision-support techniques can be integrated into existing Open Journal Systems without modifying the core architecture of the platform. Consequently, the

framework can function as an auxiliary intelligent module that complements the existing editorial workflow and enhances the efficiency of manuscript processing.

Figure 3. *Architecture of the Proposed AI-Assisted Editorial Framework.*



2.2. Dataset and Text Processing

The proposed AI-assisted framework operates on three categories of textual data: submitted manuscripts, journal scope descriptions, and reviewer expertise profiles. These datasets provide the information required to support manuscript scope analysis and reviewer recommendation during the initial stages of the editorial workflow.

To evaluate the proposed framework, an editorial dataset was constructed combining actual and simulated records. The dataset consists of 100 manuscript records, of which 17 correspond to actual submitted manuscripts and the remaining 83 are simulated; 11 journal scope categories, all based on the actual thematic areas covered by the journal; and 18 reviewer profiles, of which 7 correspond to actual reviewers and the remaining 11 are simulated. The manuscript

dataset includes titles, abstracts, and author-provided keywords representing submitted research papers. The journal scope dataset contains thematic descriptions defining the research areas covered by the journal, while reviewer profiles describe research interests, scientific expertise, and representative keywords used for reviewer matching.

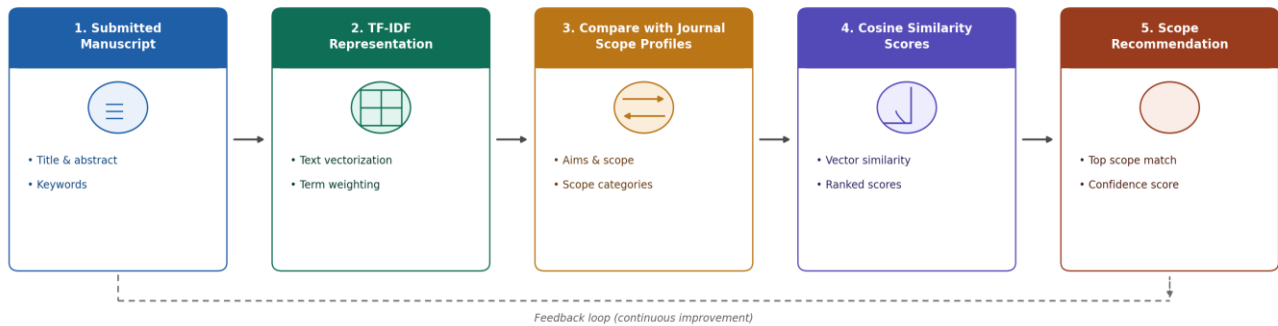
The real editorial data used in this study were obtained from the editorial database of the Computational and Applied Science Journal (CAS Journal). All real records were anonymized prior to analysis, and additional simulated records were incorporated to create a combined experimental dataset.

Before similarity analysis, all textual data undergo a preprocessing stage designed to improve the consistency and quality of document representation. The preprocessing pipeline includes text normalization, conversion to lowercase, tokenization, removal of punctuation and common stop words, and whitespace normalization. These procedures reduce textual noise and prepare the documents for numerical feature extraction.

Following preprocessing, the cleaned textual information is transformed into numerical representations that serve as the basis for manuscript scope evaluation and reviewer recommendation. The characteristics of the experimental dataset are summarized in Table 1, while the preprocessing workflow is presented in Figure 4.

Table 1. *Summary of the Experimental Dataset*

Dataset	Number of Records	Description
Manuscripts	100	17 actual and 83 simulated manuscript titles, abstracts, and keywords
Journal Scope Categories	11	Actual research areas and scope descriptions
Reviewer Profiles	18	7 actual and 11 simulated reviewer expertise profiles and research interests

Figure 4. *Text Processing Pipeline*

2.3. Manuscript Scope Analysis

The primary objective of manuscript scope analysis is to determine the degree of correspondence between a submitted manuscript and the thematic areas covered by the journal. This stage supports editors during the initial screening process by providing an objective similarity measure based on the textual content of the manuscript and the journal's scope descriptions.

Following text preprocessing, all manuscript abstracts, journal scope descriptions, and keywords are transformed into numerical feature vectors using the Term Frequency–Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) representation. TF-IDF assigns weights to terms according to their importance within a document while reducing the influence of frequently occurring words that contribute little semantic information (Manning et al., 2008).

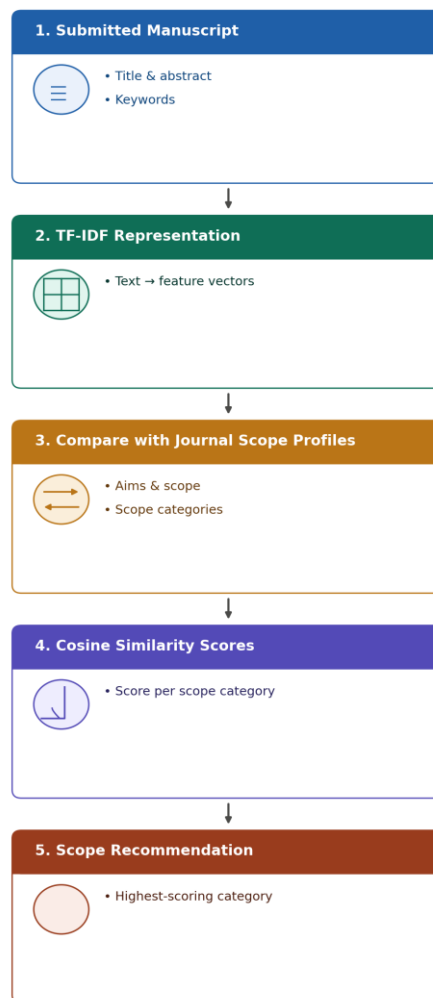
After vectorization, the similarity between the submitted manuscript and each journal scope category is calculated using cosine similarity. This metric evaluates the angular similarity between two feature vectors and produces a similarity score ranging from 0 to 1, where larger values indicate stronger semantic correspondence (Jurafsky & Martin, 2009; Sebastiani, 2002).

For each submitted manuscript, similarity scores are calculated against all journal scope categories. The category with the highest similarity score is identified as the most appropriate

thematic area for the manuscript. These results provide editors with quantitative evidence supporting the initial scope evaluation while preserving editorial discretion in the final decision.

The manuscript scope analysis process implemented in the proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Manuscript Scope Analysis Process*



2.4. Reviewer Recommendation

The reviewer recommendation module is designed to assist editors in identifying reviewers whose expertise most closely corresponds to the subject and content of a submitted

manuscript. Appropriate reviewer selection is essential for maintaining the quality, relevance, and reliability of the peer-review process.

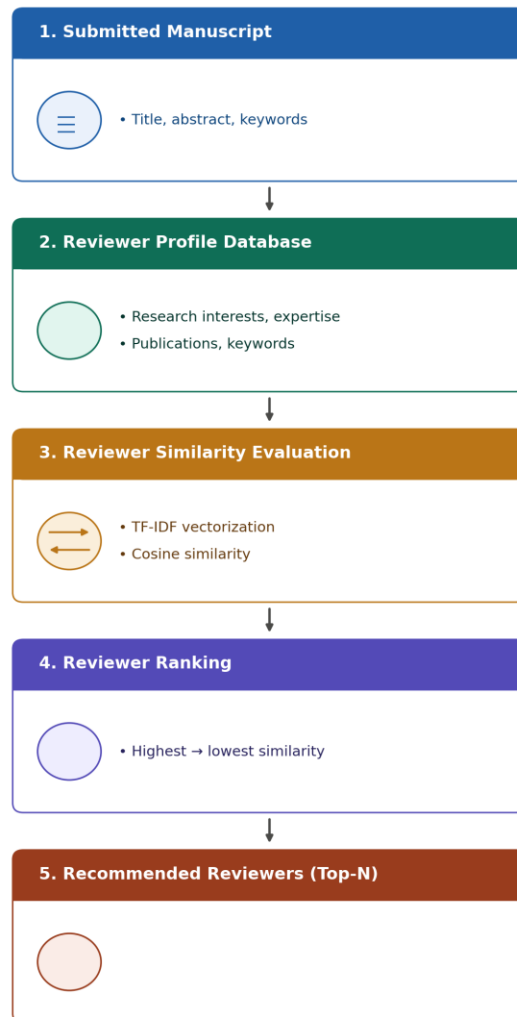
Within the proposed framework, each reviewer is represented by a textual profile containing primary and secondary areas of expertise, research interests, and expertise-related keywords. Reviewer profiles undergo the same preprocessing and vectorization procedures applied to manuscript data, ensuring a consistent numerical representation of both manuscripts and reviewer expertise.

After TF-IDF vectorization, cosine similarity is calculated between the manuscript vector and each reviewer profile vector. The resulting similarity scores indicate the degree of correspondence between the manuscript content and the reviewer's expertise. Reviewers are then ranked in descending order according to these scores, enabling the system to recommend the most relevant candidates for the submitted manuscript.

The recommendation process is based primarily on thematic similarity and is intended to support, rather than replace, editorial judgment. Before assigning a reviewer, editors must also consider additional factors that are not captured by textual similarity alone, including reviewer availability, workload, previous assignments, institutional affiliation, and potential conflicts of interest. Therefore, the generated ranking should be interpreted as decision-support information rather than as an automatic reviewer assignment.

By narrowing the initial pool of potential reviewers, the proposed module can reduce the time required for reviewer identification and improve the consistency of reviewer selection. Final responsibility for reviewer invitation and assignment remains entirely with the editor.

The reviewer recommendation process is illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. *Reviewer Recommendation Process*

2.5. Framework Demonstration

To demonstrate the practical applicability of the proposed framework, a Python-based prototype was developed that integrates manuscript scope analysis and reviewer recommendation into a single decision-support workflow. The prototype accepts manuscript metadata, including the title, abstract, and keywords, and processes the submitted text using the methodology described in the previous sections.

During execution, the system first determines the journal scope category that best corresponds to the submitted manuscript by calculating similarity scores between the manuscript

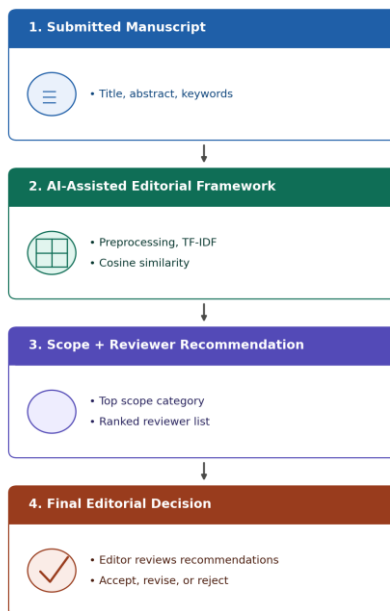
and predefined journal research areas. Subsequently, the same manuscript is compared with reviewer expertise profiles, producing a ranked list of potential reviewers according to thematic similarity.

The generated recommendations are intended to assist editors during the initial editorial assessment by providing objective and interpretable similarity scores. Rather than replacing editorial expertise, the framework supports decision-making by reducing the time required for manuscript screening and reviewer identification while improving the consistency of the editorial workflow.

The prototype demonstrates that artificial intelligence techniques based on natural language processing and information retrieval can be effectively integrated into Open Journal Systems as an auxiliary decision-support component without modifying the existing editorial process.

An example of the proposed framework and its generated recommendations is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. *Framework Demonstration*



Conclusion

The increasing volume of manuscript submissions has intensified the workload of editorial boards and created a growing need for reliable tools that can support the initial stages of manuscript evaluation. This study proposed an AI-assisted editorial framework for Open Journal Systems (OJS) that combines manuscript scope analysis and reviewer recommendation within a unified decision-support process.

The framework applies natural language processing techniques, TF-IDF vectorization, and cosine similarity to compare manuscript content with journal scope descriptions and reviewer expertise profiles. As a result, it generates similarity-based recommendations that can assist editors in assessing the thematic relevance of submitted manuscripts and identifying reviewers whose expertise most closely corresponds to the research topic.

The main contribution of the study is the integration of these two editorial tasks into a single, transparent framework designed to complement the existing OJS workflow. The proposed approach does not replace editorial judgment or automate final decisions. Instead, it provides interpretable support during manuscript screening and reviewer selection, while responsibility for all editorial decisions remains with the editor.

The Python-based prototype and the combined dataset of actual and simulated editorial records demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed approach. However, the current framework is limited to text-based similarity analysis and does not automatically consider reviewer availability, workload, institutional relationships, previous performance, or conflicts of interest. These factors must continue to be evaluated by the editorial team.

Future research will focus on testing the framework using real editorial data, expanding reviewer-profile information, and comparing TF-IDF-based similarity with more advanced semantic representation methods. Further development may also include implementation of the framework as an OJS-compatible module and evaluation of its effect on processing time, recommendation quality, and editorial consistency.

Overall, the proposed framework provides a practical foundation for introducing AI-assisted decision support into Open Journal Systems. It demonstrates how transparent text-analysis methods can contribute to more efficient and consistent editorial workflows while maintaining human oversight throughout the scholarly publishing process.

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