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Getting published: a beginner's guide

With thanks to

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Handouts!

Hi – I'm Liz Mailer and I'm a learning advisor in Learning, Information and Student Services. I'm based in the library here at Lancaster. I'd like to introduce Prof Helen Leathard. I'm going to do a 15 min presentation, then Helen will contribute some of her accumulated wisdom from many years of getting published , then few minutes for questions or for anyone to chip in their experiences.

Presentation will focus on getting an article published in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. Other ways of getting published – conference papers, book reviews, articles in non-scholarly journals, on the web – blogs etc – but not enough time to cover everything.

I envisaged it as a simple guide for researchers who haven't yet been published

Straw poll - who has had an article published? How many?

Outline

- Why publish?
- What's stopping you?
- Choosing the right journal
- Journal impact factors
- Publication stages
- Reasons for rejection
- Top tips for success
- Open Access
- How can LISS help?

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Why publish?

- To add to the knowledge/evidence base

- To disseminate knowledge to the research community. To encourage discussion and debate within the professional community

- To raise your department's or the university's status and academic credibility – RAE/ REF (Research Excellence Framework)

- Self-promotion – advancing your career

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No point in doing research if it isn't published. Obligation to publish.

Altruistic reasons:

•To add to the knowledge base of your subject – particularly true if your research has some professional application. You are contributing to the evidence base which your colleagues will call on – direct benefit to users – patients, pupils – and evidence to support your own and others teaching

•Raising academic status and professional reputation.

•REF – be used to inform funding decisions from 2011. It will make much more use of quantitative measures of assessment, such as bibliometrics and grant income – bibliometrics - "determination of the numbers of citations to journal articles published by academics within institutions.

What's stopping you?

- Lack of confidence
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of public scrutiny
- No time
- Unsure whether you have the skills
- Lack of support
- Don't know where to start

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•You won't gain confidence or experience unless you do it. You've got to start somewhere.

•Something you will have to face. Most rejections come with constructive criticism and suggestions so see it as a learning experience.

•Start small and build up your confidence

•Find a mentor – your PhD supervisor or a more experienced colleague

•Little and often – book a regular writing hour in your diary and stick to it

•Read articles in a variety of resources and use your mentor/supervisor. A learning process

•Ask for advice from a more experienced colleague

May have to put up with lot of rejection and rewriting before finally accepted for publication. Reviewers may suggest a change of focus or just suggest minor changes. Don't take it personally – rejection is often not to do with the quality of the research or the written text. Tips later on how you can improve your chances of acceptance.

Which journal?

- Decide on a journal before you write the paper
- Very important that you choose the right journal
- What audience do I wish to reach?
- What is the turn around time between submission and publication?
- Level of academic credibility of the journal – impact factor

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•Which journal will determine style of writing and terminology – browse journals in library or online to identify most appropriate one to get your message to your target audience

•Journal determined by your topic obviously

•Audience – specialist/general. If your research is very UK-orientated maybe better submitting to a UK journal rather than one with a large international readership

Speed with which the journal responds can vary a lot. Time between submission – approx a year can be standard for many professional journals.

Be realistic. Don't aim too high.

BMJ has a rejection rate of over 90%

Journal impact factors

Number of article citations during the year
———————————————————————————————————
Total no. of articles in journal's previous 2 yrs.

- Journal Citation Reports from the Web of Knowledge (science and social science)

- Be realistic

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Lot of academic discussion around impact factors and their usefulness/reliability

More articles published in a journal that are cited in other journal articles the more prestigious the journal is.

Measures the level of credibility attached to the journal.

Everybody wants their research published in a prestigious journal.

Publishing in 'high impact' academic journals important for the RAE/REF (van Teijlinger and Hundely, 2002) – key means by which publications are assessed for submission in the REF. REF score impacts on how the dept and institution are viewed externally, by other academics, funding bodies etc.

The impact factor is the frequency with which an "average article" published in a journal during the two previous years has been cited during the JCR year. It is calculated by dividing the number of citations during the JCR year by the total number of articles in the journal's two previous years. ISI has to track a journal for 2 years before it can calculate its impact factor – prejudices new journals.

BMJ - 12.827

British Journal of General Practice 2.278

Journal Citation Reports – LISS eresources page.

There isn't an arts & humanities edition of JCR, because citation patterns in the arts & humanities are different.

Science Direct – can find out impact factor by going to ToC, or publishers websites

But harder to have articles accepted in journals with a high impact factor so you may want to aim lower to start with.

Starting by submitting to 'high impact' journals and then going down the hierarchy can lead to delays – rewriting accdg to journal's specific requirements and resubmitting (van t and Hundlay).

Journal immediacy indexes

The immediacy index is the average number of times an article is cited in the year it is published. It shows how fast articles are cited following their publication.

Publication stages

Submit paper

Acknowledgement

Editorial review

Peer review

Feedback from peer reviewers with recommendations

Revise paper and return to editor

Repeat as required

Publication!

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Electronic submission systems allow you to track progress

•May be required to submit pdf online

•Editorial rejection before peer-review – if not within scope or not high enough quality. Try and check with the editor before you submit to check the appropriateness of your proposed contribution.

•Peer review - What gives publication in a journal credibility. Other experts have read your work and deemed it acceptable – quality control. Anonymous. Rejection or invitation to resubmit after modification or accepted with minor revision. Should make detailed and constructive comments.

•Rejection: usually accompanied by clear guidance about why your paper wasn't suitable and advice on how to do it better next time – see it as free advice (Black et al.)

•If you're not happy with the referees comments or need clarification, you can negotiate with the editor

•Revise your paper – allow plenty of time

•Publication

•Find out the publication schedule of the journal and how long the peer review and /or editorial process takes so you know when it is most appropriate to submit your article. Humanities journals notorious for long delays between submission and publication.

• Info on the journal's website about their peer–review process – incl time-scale and decision-making process, manuscript preparation, ethics, stats guidelines
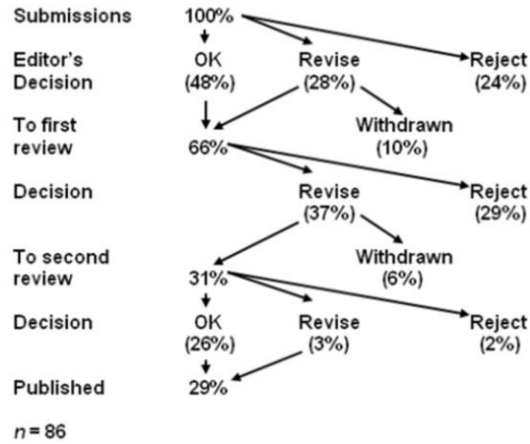
From **Know your enemy: what the peer review process entails** (Emerald: http://info.emeraldinsight.com/authors/guides/review.htm)

It may seem like a long hard journey. Attrition rate

Reasons for rejection

- "So what factor" - fails to communicate a sense of purpose and how it extends the boundaries of knowledge
- Material is inappropriate for the journal
- Work is fundamentally flawed
- Work is unintelligible

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Is the paper worth writing – the "so what factor". Will it change practice or at least stimulate a debate in the subject? Editors get loads of article submissions – needs to stand out.

The most important thing that a writer can do when thinking about writing is to write a **purpose statement**, covering:

What is the significance of the paper?

Why is it important and original?

Who will be interested?

What next: what are the implications for practice, what are the further research questions?

Top tips for success

- **Choose the right journal** – check its aims and scope
- Make sure your research is valid and original and is well-written
- Make sure your article is focussed and relevant to the subject coverage and audience
- Make it accessible to your readers and keep it interesting. Is the use of terminology appropriate to the readership?

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Won't guarantee success but will help you avoid most of the usual reasons for rejection

- Follow the journal's editorial guidelines, eg is it the right length? Are graphics in the right format? How do you submit it?
- Check spelling and grammar
- Citations correctly formatted – use Refworks
- Co-authoring
- Don't submit the same article to more than one journal at a time – it's unethical
- Get practical support – ask for help from someone who's been there

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•Editorial guidelines – v impt and v fussy. See journal or web. Elseviers at http://www.elsevier.com/framework_authors/pdfs/submission_checklist.pdf

•Refworks automatically formats references according to particular styles. Use it from the beginning.

•Co-authoring: Make sure you discuss this carefully before agreeing – eg how much work, whose name will be cited first

•Articles from 'respected' institutions…may be more readily accepted. Experiment where researchers submitted 12 published papers to the journals in which they had originally appeared, changing only the authors and instns. – 3 were recognised by the editors, 8 out of the remaining 9 were rejected. – van T and Hundlay

Open Access

- Some institutions and funding agencies mandate Open Access publication, eg NIH, The Wellcome Trust
- Directory of Open Access Journals
  www.doaj.org
- Some will publish articles for free; others operate an "author pays" model

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DOAJ – journals which are freely available with some quality control, reporting primary results of research

Eg Nineteenth Century Gender Studies

International Forestry Research

Open Access archiving

- Institutional repository
- Green journals that allow author self-archiving
- Gold – all journal contents are open access
- SHERPA RoMEO - http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/

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Research community very keen on Open Access – institutional repositories. Work funded by any of the UK Research Councils has to be made openly available as a mandatory part of the grant. Preserving research

Many publishers allow you archive the post refereed prepublication version (ie without the journal's typesetting) so make sure that you save a pdf prepublication version for submission.

Careful with copyright

Green – over 90% of journals (according to JISC survey 2004)

Gold – about 5% = cost-recovery model - author-institution pays journal peer-review and publication costs of each article (rather than user-institution)

Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access (SHERPA) project

ROMEO Archiving policy

Green can archive pre-print and post-print

Blue can archive post-print (ie final draft post-refereeing)

Yellow can archive pre-print (ie pre-refereeing)

White archiving not formally supported

How can LISS help?

- Finding and obtaining resources
- Finding information about journals
- Journal impact factors
- Advice on referencing and Refworks
- Institutional repository
- Further reading

Ask us!
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