PUBLISHING KNOW-HOW: WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE

Workshop by Dr Claire Aitchison

1. Why publish?

For academics and research scholars across all disciplines there is an increasing expectation to publish (McGrail, Rickard & Jones 2006, Aitchison, Kamler, Lee, 2010).

What publishing can do for you:

- Disseminate your research
- Contribute to your profession/community
- ‘Mark your territory’
- Build your public profile
- Advance your learning/thinking/research/thesis
- Build your career path
- May have financial benefits
- Personal satisfaction

Getting your work published is a time-consuming job and there are no guarantees of success. If you decide to publish it will be to your advantage to make some calculated decisions about what, when and where to publish – and how. It is also important to discuss your hopes, plans with your supervisor(s)/colleagues / perhaps even your family!

What are your publication ambitions?

2. When to publish?

It isn’t always easy to know when you are ready to publish. Being ‘ready’ to publish is an outcome of a number of factors including your own personal goals, workload and circumstances (eg do you have time?), the kind of doctoral research you are doing (eg traditional, thesis by publication, professional doctorate) the progress of your research (eg do you have data?), the development of your thinking (do you have something to say?). There may also be disciplinary and workplace considerations: for example it is common in some laboratory-based team orientated science research, for doctoral students to publish with other team members and/or including supervisors, while for many humanities students there is no such tradition. Some workplaces are more publication-friendly than others.

It is important to weigh up your desire to publish against some of these practical matters and then to plan publishing as part of your candidature.

Publishing from your thesis is best considered and discussed with your supervisor in the first year. Planning what to publish and when, should take into account ways to benefit your thesis writing rather than detract from it. Consider how writing for publication can fit into current/proposed thesis components, existing workloads and commitments minimising duplication and overload, and dovetailing writing tasks (e.g. bringing together conference papers, journals and chapters). Plan specific publishing activities across your candidature.
and after submission. Many students find that working towards a Conference presentation is a good strategy for producing a publishable paper. Some conferences will publish proceedings and you should consider if this is suitable for your work or if you would be better polishing the manuscript for publication elsewhere.

3. What to publish?

If you are publishing from your doctoral research during your candidature you will be able to produce articles that reflect the progress of your research/thinking at a particular point in time during the research. It will be different if you are publishing after the completion of the research. There are implications for you and your publication schedule arising from both scenarios.

At the end of the day however, any editor of any type of publication will be looking for something that will interest their readership. Their objective is to maximise reputation and sales and/or circulation. They will always be interested in something that is topical or new, or something seen in a new light (ie a contribution to knowledge) that has relevance beyond the specific person, place or country.

4. Where to publish?

There are endless opportunities for getting your work into the public domain, from small, local and specific publications such as community broadsheets or newspapers, through to high ranking scholarly journals and books. In the academic world there has been a major focus on scholarly journals, often ranked or evaluated in some way– but these traditional outlets are under increasing scrutiny, being challenged by ‘free’ alternatives, as well as social media outlets. In deciding where to publish consider; your purpose (who do you want to communicate with, and why?), your timeframe (do you want to be in press within weeks or years?), what you have to say, and who will be interested in it. You may also have to consider the ranking of a journal measured as an impact factor (ie the average number of citations to articles published), or impact per publication measures (IPP, eg Scopus) or by ‘Altmetrics’ measures (ie more complex rankings based on a variety of measures such as mentions of scholarly articles gathered from across the web).

Scholarly journals
These days there is a great focus on ranking the ‘quality’ of academic publication outlets. Students often wonder if it is preferable to target a high ranking journal or a lower ranked outlet? The ranking of the journal may/may not be important to you or your institution, however be aware that it is significantly harder to have work accepted in high ranking journals and they often have longer waiting times to publication.

Open Access Journals (OA)
There are hundreds of Open Access Journals. See DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals)
  - Recognition, reputation and circulation varies widely.
  - Journals may be independent or subsidised (eg by institutions or scholarly communities), may be fee-based (ie author pays a publication fee) or free.
  - Most employ traditional forms of double-blind peer review practices and publish regularly.
• There is considerable innovation regarding style, access to additional data sets, and or additional information through various forms such as video, twitter, podcast etc. Examples of innovation in OA include: the interdisciplinary journal *PLOS ONE* (Public Library of Science) which publishes hundreds of studies a year as soon as they are judged to be ‘technically sound’ with options for follow-up assessment/ re-assessment (Lucas & Willinsky, 2010) and, *M/C Journal* with its theme-based issues and options for immediate reader response.

**DISCUSSION: Finding the right journal for your work:**

1. What are the important journals in your area?
2. Do you know the audience for this/these journal(s)? Is the journal local or international? Do you know how well regarded the journal is? How does it rate?
3. What are the current conversations (ie what’s a hot topic?) in this journal? How long has this been an important issue amongst the readership? How often is the journal published?
4. Do you know the acceptance rate and turn around times?
5. What do you know (or where can you find out) about the scope and aims of the journal, membership of the editorial board, refereeing practices, submission and author instructions such as word limit, font, referencing style?

**Getting your submission accepted**

Among other things, a successful article will:

- Subscribe to editorial stipulations
- Address the themes and issues of concern to the journal and its readers (ie matches aims and scope of the journal)
- Engage in the current conversations of the field
- Be well written and credible, eg use of evidence
- Make reference to ‘whobodies’ in the field
- Be interesting
- Match the discourse of that community of scholars

Some journals have an explicit research focus, others are more industry/practitioner-orientated, others focus on teaching and learning. You need to ensure the right match between what you have to offer, and what they are looking for. Journals with a strong research focus will expect more rigorous attention to methodology/methods/ research design including, for example, sample size, data collection and analysis, reliability, relationship to existing research, ‘the gap’, and the generalisability and applicability of the findings. Such journal articles also commonly subscribe to a formal, stipulated structure even so far as to state content and word count for different sections. Other kinds of journals may be less formal and more suited to small-scale studies, theoretical discussions, opinion pieces or practice-based work. You need to submit manuscripts that meet these expectations.

**Target the journal, then write to it**
6. **How to publish?**

*Solo authorship or co-authorship?* Be prepared to consider issues such as division of labour, the ethics and logistics of sharing data, time and texts, author order, who you wish to be publishing with, and so on (A good site re author order issues: [www.authororder.com](http://www.authororder.com)).

**Minimise workload and maximise benefit** Make a plan early on as to how you can best dovetail existing obligations with writing for publication.

Arrange your thesis/research to maximise publication opportunities. For example if you have to write a substantial rationale of your methodology for your supervisor or your thesis, consider from the outset how this can be constructed/reconstructed or modified to be an article for publication. You may write the two co-jointly or plan to begin the article in the fortnight after submitting the chapter to your supervisor while you are waiting for feedback.

**Make writing normal business** Write early and often. Schedule writing as a regular and routine part of your academic life. Plan writing into your research design and execution. Establish productive writing practices early on in your candidature. Regard research as writing; writing for yourself, for your supervisor, for colleagues and also for wider audiences.

**Writing as social activity** Writing with, and /or for others can help you make writing ‘real’ because it involves making and keeping commitments, it provides opportunities for discussion and feedback from ‘real’ people, plus it’s fun. Examples include working with writing mentors or coaches, writing buddies, and writing groups.

**The publication process**

*For scholarly journals* Usually expect a sophisticated electronic system overseeing the entire process. If you have never submitted an article electronically, be warned – the process can be complicated and time consuming. Generally the process follows this pattern:

1. You, the first author submits the manuscript to the editor as per instructions on the journal homepage (this can be challenging – allow plenty of time).
2. You will receive an automatically generated acknowledgement of the submission, and if the editor decides to accept the manuscript you may be informed as to when you might hear back from the reviewers.
3. You will receive an email from the editor with the reviews/or a summary of the reviews, plus the editorial decision and an indication of the next steps (eg major revisions, minor revision and resubmit, or just go away!).
4. Having made the changes as required, the author resubmits the manuscript with an email to the editor explicitly detailing how the editor’s concerns and the reviewers’ comments have been attended to in the resubmission (Construct this email very carefully prioritising your response to editor comment but indicating your response to all reviewer concerns).
5. The first author will hear back from the editor as to whether or not these changes have been deemed acceptable with next steps (eg more work required/rejection/acceptance with notification of when their article may go to press).
6. The author will receive final proof copies to check and correct. (There is usually a very limited turnaround time – ie 1 week)
7. It gets published - and you get a free copy!

*For scholarly books* Different processes occur with different publishing companies; practices also differ in different countries. Most commonly in the British and Australian situation for major academic publishing companies, an author will put together a book proposal which they will send to the publishing company. In other instances this proposal may be accompanied by a segment of the book, typically an already written Introduction or chapters 1 and 2. The senior publisher will accept/reject/recommend and then send the proposal for blind peer review. Depending on reviewer responses, the publisher would advise the author accordingly (ie accept with changes/reject) and hopefully discussions about deadlines begin...

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**Know the system and use it well**

For further reading:


**PLUS:**

http://www.altmetric.com/

http://www.journalmetrics.com/?utm_source=acm&utm_medium=link&utm_content=usrM&utm_campaign=journalmetrics

http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/04/03/reading-list-for-hefcemetrics/


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