

Getting Published in Scholarly Journals

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Scoping Out the Territory

- read widely in the journals of your field; make checklists of the principal research areas and professional genres each of the journals publishes (articles, reviews, review articles, short news items, research bibliographies, letters to the Editor, necrologies, lists of new titles, calendars of conferences, software notices and reviews), and what languages they can accept
- compare your notes against, say, the MLA Directory of Periodicals, an excellent source that's always somewhat out of date – check it against what the journal says about itself in its latest issue and the journal's home page if they have one
- start a collection of Guideline sheets by writing to your target journals and asking for them or by studying the journals' web sites; they will educate you about common standards and help you focus on precisely where you should be submitting your work
- buy yourself the MLA Style Manual and Handbook, the Chicago Manual of Style, or whatever is the standard in your field, and learn its norms well
- join several e-mail bulletin boards and then quietly “lurk” to eavesdrop on the discourse of the group, intervening occasionally with questions and your own reflections; the informality of the medium is a lot more forgiving, and so is the lack of a paper trail; and on the positive side you may make yourself known to the worthies in the field in advance of your hardcopy publications, which may in turn bring you invitations to do book reviews or other collaborations
- And when you write...

Don't . . .

... exhaust yourself (and your editor/readers) with a long bibliographical or theoretical preamble surveying all research to date (no article should start out looking like the first chapter “review of past research” part of a dissertation)

... ramble about your subject accumulating what you hope will be a preponderance of (unstructured) evidence

Do . . .

... briefly acknowledge the principal points of contention on your subject and their major exponents if necessary **S** then state your thesis and get to work

... display internal structural markers for your argument with *brutal clarity*: editors and outside readers will judge the lucidity of your line of argument perhaps with no more than a flip test before actually starting to read; if the structure is not apparent, they'll reject the manuscript without further bother

... try to carve out a niche for yourself by denouncing the errors of the previous generation of scholars

... multiply footnotes in an effort to impress

... send in your first draft, expecting lots of help correcting and retooling your submission

... send in your manuscript on disk with your hardcopy submission, as if there will be nothing to improve prior to acceptance

... timidly wait to be informed about a journal's policies concerning illustrations, copyright permissions for quoted material or ownership of copyright for your own submission if accepted, or if there will be a contract between the publisher and author

... include your name in a running header, in case the journal tries to provide blind review

... show where our understanding has deepened and where we can modulate our perspectives and join a wider scholarly conversation; yes, the buzz word is 'interdisciplinarity' but make sure you declare yourself a citizen of the intellectual homeland of your readers, not an invader from psychology or anthropology or econ

... provide appropriate citations to the work of others to establish the building blocks and points of departure of your work – you'll want to avoid any hint of plagiarism, and recognize where your arguments intersect with the thoughts of fellow researchers in whose community you participate

... practice and exchange *specific* editing services among a circle of your peers, like copy editing only for paragraph structure and concluding sentences, verifying each other's notes and bibliography, copy editing against MLA guidelines, creating alternate / improved titles and internal subheader titles, extracting an outline and handing it back to the author to see if that was what he or she really meant, etc.

... provide as many printouts as the journal normally requires and offer to submit final copy on disk upon acceptance; also learn how to transfer files by e-mail if that's what they prefer; send in the submission on disk at the outset only if specifically requested in a journal's published guidelines

... extract this information from their current issue, published guides to periodicals, the journal's web site, or ask directly in your cover letter; provide all tables, graphs and illustrations that you would like to include in as-near-to-camera-ready quality as you can (they'll probably want to retypeset them, but at least they can see what your intentions were); secure copyright permissions for all extensive quotations and illustrations

... number pages (a depressingly frequent oversight!); avoid allusions to yourself or to your other publications, especially those still forthcoming: editors will see it as puffery **S** trying to prove your argument by citing yourself **S** or shameless self-promotion

... make a prolonged argument in your cover letter to the journal about what your article tries to do (although for book submissions to presses the cover letter is often crucial)

... write a cover letter stating the full title of the paper and giving your complete address(es), phone number, fax and e-mail; affirm for the record that your manuscript is *not* being considered elsewhere; state your willingness to make revisions and adaptations according to the suggestions of the editor and outside readers; ask how long it will take to hear back from them

... get discouraged if your article is rejected

... realize that everyone gets rejected, just less often as time goes by and your skills improve; learn what you can from each rejection and send it out again: it's often just a matter of not matching the article with the right readership, something editors always have a better handle on than outsiders can

Becoming a Player in the Game

- try to volunteer to participate in some locally produced journal so you can learn how the process unfolds from the inside and learn to understand the need for confidentiality about submissions, something that tends to inadvertently mystify the publishing process for newcomers
- identify an area of service you can contribute for a locally produced journal:
 - help stuff envelopes or photocopy may sound menial, but may be deeply appreciated and you always learn something from seeing how things work from the inside, especially with smaller operations
 - set up or enter data for the journal's web site to better advertise it, post its Table of Contents, extend its useful links, etc.
 - database their subscribers, or their cumulative index (perhaps to go on-line)
 - offer to collaborate on identifying recently published titles in the journal's area and submit your list on a regular basis
 - help identify marketing strategies, like acquiring the mailing lists of professional organizations whose membership might get a direct mailing, or using a rank listing of research libraries to notify those who don't subscribe yet
- offer to review books or other resources in areas you identify as specific fields of expertise which may be especially welcome in cases of reviews of software, multimedia applications, audio recordings (discographies), special live concerts, performances, recreations and exhibits not likely to be accessible to the readership of a journal or its usual reviewers, and of facsimiles or other materials that are of limited circulation and to which you happen to have access
- eavesdrop on what editors discuss, agonize over and take flack about by familiarizing yourself with the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (<http://www.celj.org>), reading the journal *Scholarly Publishing*, and searching out the public debates over editorial practices aired in the MLA newsletters and the pages of PMLA
- *demystify the process* get something, *anything*, published, to get over your first fright