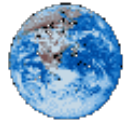




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## TIPS FOR GETTING PUBLISHED

- I. **Getting started:** These points were made by John Orbell and are well-advised.
- A. "First, get a good idea."
  - B. "Before that read a lot of books."
  - C. "Then talk to people to see if it's been done before..."("it probably hasn't")
  - D. "Then start writing"
  - E. "...and be prepared to write at several drafts, circulating them for criticism, before sending it off."
  - F. Finally: Send it to the best imaginable journal.
    1. If you get a hit, the payoff is far higher than just getting a line on your vita from some invisible place.
    2. If you miss, at worst you've got some criticism from probably the best set of reviewers you're likely to face.
    3. If they don't understand what you've done, then you need to think about communicating with your audience.
    4. If they do, and they trash it fairly, then go back to the drawing boards... perhaps that's the time to see if you can con someone at an invisible journal to take the paper to produce the line on the vita.
  - G. BUT: In general "Getting published" is not the real issue. Producing important knowledge is. If you aim at the latter, the former will happen. But if you aim at the former, then you'll rapidly find yourself getting bored with your profession, and there'll be no social consequence, either.
  - H. Thanks to John for these useful suggestions.
- II. **Send out your work early and often.** More vernacularly, "send out drek."
- A. Almost all of us have a tendency to hold onto our work for much longer than needed, polishing it and "making it perfect" before allowing it out into the light of day. There are two problems with such an approach in my (Ron Mitchell's) view:
    1. You aren't getting enough feedback on the work to really improve it.
    2. You are becoming increasingly invested and committed to the work and hence are becoming increasingly defensive against any suggested improvements to it.
    3. Both of these developments mean that, unless you write perfectly all by yourself which few of us do, the work is becoming less subject to the helpful inputs and suggestions of others.
  - B. By sending stuff out early and often, you can use the reviewers from journals to provide you with useful feedback that can improve the argument as well as increase the chances of being published.
  - C. By "sending out drek," you air out your work and get feedback that can redirect you before you have committed vast sums of resources, effort, and emotional capital in a project that is

not promising but could have been quite promising if you had let a reviewer guide you down a more productive path early on.

- III. "**Gird your loins**" - reviewers can be harsh and most of the articles you submit, especially those submitted early on in your career, are likely to be rejected, so prepare yourself.
- A. Expect rejection.
  - B. You will not get an "accept" or "accept with minor revision" on the first round submission. It simply doesn't happen (ok, it happens once in a rare while but not to most of us).
  - C. **If you get a "revise and resubmit," you should be ecstatic!** They are very rare from most journals in the field. They also indicate that you now have a very good likelihood of getting the article published.
  - D. "The reviewers are often harsh but are always right."
    1. The anonymity provided by "blind review" (in which reviewers don't know who wrote the article and authors don't know who wrote the reviews) allows reviewers to be quite harsh and many take advantage of that. On the other hand, they are rarely harsh without a reason. Try to separate out two parts of each review - the "gratuitously nasty" from the "brutally accurate." My experience is that most reviewers often combine both, giving you good intellectual advice in a less than heartwarming tone. Disregard the sometimes nasty tone and try to really assess whether the intellectual advice is correct. Again, as just noted, it usually is correct. If you can't see that, have a friend or mentor read it. They may be able to help you see how the reviewer's advice actually would help you make a better argument in your article.
    2. For most journals, if you just follow the advice of the reviewers that come with the "revise and resubmit," you are very likely to get the article published. The best advice is to "paint by numbers" from the advice of the reviewers and editor. Don't spend time thinking about why the reviewers are wrong - just do what they say. If you truly believe the reviewers are wrong on a point, fine. But in almost every case, they are probably right, and even if not, they are the people you need to satisfy to publish in that journal, so disregarding their advice only decreases your chances of getting your article published - not something you want to do.
- IV. Make sure your manuscript has an argument and is professionally presented. Before sending out your manuscript for submission:
- A. **Make sure you have a clear and convincing argument.** Regardless of anything else, if it doesn't have a clear argument it will be rejected. If it does have a clear and convincing argument, then it is likely to receive a "revise and resubmit," even if it is not fully and completely developed (though it helps if it is).
  - B. **Make sure it is professional in appearance in all respects.** Spelling errors and grammatical errors are inexcusable. Have someone else read it to make sure it looks professional. All citations should be in the document with complete corresponding references in the "works cited" section. The references should be in a consistent and complete style, though it usually isn't necessary to put them in the journal's style on first submission (though why not?). If you don't make sure the article is professional in presentation, then the reviewers will just get mad at you for wasting their time and won't even get to evaluating the argument itself - not a good outcome.
  - C. **Remove all self-reference.** After you have finished the article and are ready to send it in, save it in a new file and then proceed to remove all self-reference and any other means that the reviewer could use to determine who you are. Start by doing a search for your name throughout the whole document. Most journals tell you exactly where your name should appear - usually on a separate title page on one copy with all the other copies have a title page that does not have your name on it. Not only must you remove your name from the

title page but also from the header or footer, from any footnotes, and from all citations. Especially if you cite yourself, remove all such in-text citations (you can replace them later if the article is accepted) and remove all of your citations from the bibliography. The easiest way to identify the author of an "anonymous" manuscript is if the manuscript has three or more citations by a single author: that is usually a dead giveaway that the author of the present manuscript is the one so frequently cited. In case reviewers think it is a really bad manuscript, you don't want them knowing it was yours.

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