GETTING PUBLISHED IN AN ISI JOURNAL

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Objectives

To provide a discussion of some of the broad and basic considerations for publishing in ISI journals.

- Discuss the significance of publishing in ISI journals in the context of developing research in HEIs
- Discuss how ISI journals work
- Discuss the most important general considerations in publishing in ISI journals
- Suggest some strategies for improving chances of publishing in ISI journals
WHY DO WE DO RESEARCH?

WHY DO WE PUBLISH OUR REPORTS?
Some short-term answers:

- because our university president is requiring us
- because faculty members need it to get promoted
- because faculty members need it to become permanent
- because we need it to attain university status
- because we need it to get higher accreditation level
The Three Foci of Higher Education Institutions

- Teaching
- Research
- Extension Service
Understanding the Three Foci

TEACHING
Knowledge Dissemination

RESEARCH
Knowledge Generation

EXTENSION
Knowledge Application

KNOWLEDGE
OK, research seems to be important, but why do I have to publish in national and international journals?
Publication makes your research findings public, that is, opening to the examination and use by other scholars and knowledge users.
What makes an ISI journal?

- **Strict refereeing process**
  - from 2 to 4 referees for each manuscript submitted
  - referees are from the highest levels of publishers in the field/subfield
  - acceptance rate is less than 50% (some have less than 20% acceptance rate)

- **Articles published tend to be more highly cited in the field**
What makes an ISI journals?

- There are sub-categories and levels within the category of ISI journals.
- The highest level of ISI journals typically define the most original and important contributions in the field/subfield.
- Publishing in an ISI journal is a very good indicator that one’s research is considered a significant contribution to the field/subfield.
What types of articles are published in ISI journals?

- Articles that describe original and significant contributions to the research literature
- Articles that effectively present the original and significant contributions to the research literature
How do you publish an article in an ISI journal?

- Do research that has original and significant contributions to the research literature
- Write an article that describe your original and significant contributions
- Write that article in a way that effectively presents your original and significant contributions
What is a contribution to the research literature?

A contribution to the research literature needs to be defined in the context of the nature of the research enterprise.

A significant contribution can only be understood in the context of the current research environment and the types of research outputs that are being or considered within.
A Proposed Metaphor

“Research is Conversation”

- research is argumentation
- basic idea, is that a group of people are taking turns in advancing ideas relating to a particular question or inquiry
Social Dimensions of Conversation

- conversation is a social activity
- there are other participants in the conversation
- participants have a relatively common goal/purpose in conversation; purpose might change as conversation progresses
Social Dimensions of Conversation

- participants collectively decide the norms and standards of the conversation
  - participants collectively decide which arguments/assertions are pursued (expanded, refuted, clarified, etc.)
  - participants collectively decide how to assess and/or accept the arguments or assertions
  - participants also decide who can participate or not in the conversation
Contributing to a Conversation

- Conversations rarely start from scratch.
- The first contributions to a conversation typically draw from previous or existing conversations.
- Interesting and important conversations maybe those that seem to pose an original line of inquiry.
## Significant Contributions to a Conversation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Argument or Conjecture</th>
<th>Rephrasing of Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Definition</td>
<td>Recasting of Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>Evaluation of an Earlier Assertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration or Exemplar</td>
<td>New or Alternative Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>Supportive Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refutation or Rebuttal</td>
<td>Contrary Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significant Contributions to a Conversation

Significant contributions

push the conversation forward or towards some positive direction

always involve building on the previous contributions

The degree of importance of the contribution depends on the degree to which the contribution advances the conversation.
Insignificant or Bad Contributions to a Conversation

- saying something obvious
- saying something people already know
- repeating something that has already been said
- saying irrelevant, off-track, or even misleading things
- inappropriate response to other contributions
- indiscriminately disagreeing or agreeing with everything
- talking about something no one cares about
- overreaching in arguments (without evidence)
The Role of Theory in Conversation

- Perspective or point-of-view
  - may be explicit or implicit
- Prior? or Emergent?
- Some dimensions of perspective evolve or change as conversation develops, but some aspects are inflexible.
The Role of Data in Conversation

- Evidence: supportive, clarificatory, illustrative, or contradictory

The Role of Data-Gathering and Data-Analytic Methods

- Quality of data: relevance? representativeness? accuracy? verifiability? completeness?

- Quality of analysis: logic in inference; rationality; persuasiveness; vividness; emotional appeals; usefulness, practical, political & ethical dimensions
Applying the metaphor

Trying to publish in an ISI journal is like trying to be included in a very important and exclusive conversation, and trying to contribute meaningfully to that conversation...

So, do you really have something to contribute?
Publishing in ISI Journal:
The First Question

“IS MY RESEARCH WORTH PUBLISHING” or

“IS MY RESEARCH REPORT DESCRIBING AN ORIGINAL AND SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH LITERATURE IN MY FIELD/SUBFIELD?”
Thinking about one’s contribution(s)?

- Most scholars in my field/subfield now think/say that ____________________
  ________________________________

- My research shows that ________________
  ________________________________

- Other scholars should appreciate my research because ________________
  ________________________________
Realizing what you have to contribute

- It is important that you find something in your research that some group of other scholars will find interesting.
- You need to know the breadth and depth of existing research literature.
- You need to consider the diversity within the community of researchers in your field/subfield.
- Even “small” contributions will have space in the research conversation.
Realizing what you have to contribute

- Be clear about what “contributions” you will highlight in the manuscript.
- Your “contributions” may not be the same as you had planned in your research proposal.
- Your research question/problem should “match” your “contributions.”
- Be very clear about what your “contributions” are in relation to what the present literature is stating.
Most scholars in my field/subfield now think/say that ____________________

______________________________

My research shows that __________

______________________________

Other scholars should appreciate my research because _________________

______________________________
Considering one’s options

- If you cannot think of good answers to the last two items, don’t even think about publishing in an ISI journal.

- If you have answers to the two items, but they do not seem to be very compelling, you should consider a lower-end ISI journal or non-ISI refereed journal.

- If you have very strong answers to the last two items, GO!
Choosing the Journal

- Try to know as much as the journal as possible (editorial policy, types of articles published, audience, etc.)
- Make sure the you choose a journal that fits the scope and nature of your research
- The way you prepare the manuscript should be appropriate to the journal you will submit to
Organizing the Manuscript

- Keep in mind what your “contribution” is.
- Know the audience you are writing for; think of the journal you are writing for.
- To key principles in preparing your report: **clarity** and **accuracy**.
- The two principles are important because your readers will be assessing whether they will believe what you are writing. So don’t be vague, obscure, or intentionally misleading.
Thesis format vs Journal format

- The thesis/dissertation format was designed for pedagogical purposes.
- The journal format was designed for "research conversations."

Do not make the mistake of simply and mindlessly transplanting the parts of your thesis to your journal manuscript.

Journal editors and reviewers will easily see that you are an amateur.
Writing the introductory sections

- Start with the big picture; talk about something that readers will understand in concrete terms.
- Begin limiting the problem, gradually focusing on your topic.
- In gradually focusing on your topic, you should already be discussing the significance of your topic.
- State your research problem in broad terms; if possible, in one question.
Writing the introductory sections

- Discuss what other researchers have said in relation to the problem.
- This review of literature should not be enumerative & need not be comprehensive. It should be selective but representative, and presented in a way that coherently describes the current research context in which you want to make a contribution.
- In the review, be explicit about how you define & use important terms or concepts.
Writing the introductory sections

- If appropriate, your review should clearly state your theoretical premises.
- End the section with a brief but detailed articulation of your research problem, variables, (& if appropriate, hypotheses), being explicit about how it relates to the existing literature.
- Note the funnel-shape structure of introduction section
Writing the methods sections

- This section should be very detailed and accurate, without being too detailed.
- Detail should be sufficient to allow readers to adequately assess the sufficiency of the methods.
- Refer to similar types of articles that have been published in terms of how to organize this section.
- Try writing this section following a clear and linear narrative style.
Writing the results section

- Preface the presentation of results with a reminder of the research questions, and if appropriate, the hypothesis.
- Organize the results in ways that clearly allow the readers to see the answers to the research questions.
- Provide the “conceptual” answers to questions before giving the details of the results and analysis.
Writing the results section

- Use the conventional forms of reporting data (e.g., tables, figures, statistical analysis); if necessary refer to published papers in your intended journal.
- Do not be redundant in data presentation; choose the most effective way of presenting your data.
- When describing large data sets, provide summaries after subsections.
Writing the discussion section

Before embarking on discussion:

- very briefly summarize your findings, highlighting how your findings relate to existing literature.
- state possible caveats in your conclusions brought about by limitations of the study.

Start discussing your findings: discuss similarities differences with other research, theoretical and/or practical implications, educated speculations, etc.
Writing the discussion section

- Be careful not to overreach with your discussion and conclusions.
- Do not end with “future research” or “limitations.”
- End with a bang. Make sure your readers feel they got something from your report.
- Note reversed funnel-shape structure of discussion section.
- Note hourglass structure of report.
Some reminders on writing

Be very strict in following all prescriptions of the journal editors (e.g., citations, headings, tables, figures, etc.)

You conversational academic style of language. Avoid being abstruse and too formal (e.g., use of third person).

Use repeated and parallel construction.

Use active voice unless the content dictates otherwise. Avoid self-references.
Some reminders on writing

- Be meticulous in all the details.
- Be concise. Make sure every word is absolutely necessary.
- Don’t be offensive. Avoid bias (i.e., gender, stereotyping, prejudice, etc.)
- Avoid jargon. If you need to, define it first in concrete terms & use an example.
- Proofread.
Important reminders on writing

- Think of your reader -- one who is fairly intelligent, with enough background in the field, but is not a specialist.
- Write as if you are teaching your reader.
- Revise
- Revise
- Revise
The review process

- Submit the manuscript following all the guidelines stated in journal.
- You will get acknowledgement and information about the process:
  - length of review period
  - name of action editor (?)
  - number of referees (?)
- Then wait!
The review process

- When you get reviews, the action editor gives you his/her comments, the referees’ comments, & the action editor’s decision.

- The decision will be one of the following:
  - Accepted without revisions
  - Accepted with minor revisions (indicated)
  - Rejected but encouraged to resubmit with revisions
  - Rejected no revision will be accepted
How to respond to reviews:

- Whatever the decision, read the reviewers’ comments carefully, and process the comments.
- If the reviewers’ comments indicate that they did not understand you correctly, don’t blame them... It’s your fault!
- Don’t take negative comments personally. Take these as feedback that would be helpful in improving your work.
How to respond to reviews:

- If you have the option to resubmit, consider whether you want to revise according to the reviewers’ suggestions.
- Remember, you don’t have to follow all the reviewers’ suggestions.
- But you should pay attention to those reviewers’ comments that are highlighted by the action editor.
- You need to think about how far you are willing to depart from your original work.
How to respond to reviews:

- If you are submitting a revision, you should work on it immediately.
- When resubmitting, include a cover letter enumerating your responses to the comments (detailing your revisions and specifying why you did not follow some suggestions made by reviewers)
- Editors may send out your revision for peer-review again. If so, you will have to wait again.
How to respond to reviews:

 Editors may decide to review your revision on their own.

 Editors will make a decision on your revision; same options as with first submission.

 The cycle continues until the editor pronounces that your paper is finally accepted or finally rejected.
How to respond to reviews:

If your work is rejected, or you think you could not adequately assess the reviews, you have the following options:

- Resubmit same paper to another journal
- Revise or reconfigure the paper and submit to another journal
- Conduct further studies/analysis and submit to same or another journal
- Publish in a “catch-all” journal
Closing suggestions

- Read and model the articles published in ISI journals.
- Be courageous and be willing to stick your neck out.
- Set high expectations of yourself, work hard and always try to do your best.
- Don’t ever take the negative outcomes personally.
- Never give up. Because we can all do it.
GOOD LUCK!

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