3-22-2013

At the Nexus of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy

Marianne A. Buehler
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, mabuehler2@gmail.com

Anne E. Zald
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, anne.zald@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles

Part of the Educational Methods Commons, and the Information Literacy Commons

Repository Citation
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/421

This Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the Library Faculty/Staff Scholarship & Research at Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
At the Nexus of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy

Promoting Graduate Student Publishing Success

Marianne A. Buchler
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Anne E. Zald
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Introduction

Graduate students embarking upon a new phase in their educational careers may not realize the range of expectations, particularly the cocurricular or extracurricular expectation to participate in the scholarly communication process. Unforeseen faculty expectations may include a requirement to publish or copublish an article in order to pass a graduate course or to engage in grant-funded research that will result in conference presentations or publications. Learning about the publication process provides a key transitional experience between the independent intellectual endeavor of conducting research for course assignments and the social dynamics of being a professional researcher or scholar, interacting with a complex human system that encompasses significant variations of protocol. The initiate author must learn to decode and conform to the varied requirements of specific journals, using critical analysis and attention to detail. These lessons come to light and are made personal for the novice author as she transitions from being primarily a consumer to being a creator of published materials.

A widespread assumption is that faculty members mentor graduate students through the transition, however, research on graduate education indicates that the practice of mentorship varies widely. Librarians who are seeking hooks for information literacy connections with graduate programs are advised to look closely, yet discreetly, into the cultural dynamics of their liaison departments, as well as to gain familiarity with their department’s resource requirements. Understanding
the extent to which publication by graduate students is encouraged and supported through mentorship in specific departments or programs is vitally important for planning and implementing services around both information literacy and scholarly communication. Librarians who facilitate professional exchange between faculty and graduate students around the publication process can contribute developmentally to a key transformative experience whereby a graduate student begins initiation into the mores and intellectual habits of his or her discipline.

**Faculty-Graduate Student Publishing and Mentoring Relationships**

A 2005–2006 study, conducted by the Center for Innovation and Research in Graduate Education (CIRGE), surveyed recent University of Washington, Seattle, PhD social science graduates to inquire about the application of their education in their ensuing careers (Nerad et al. 2007). A particular policy recommendation outcome, based on graduate student responses, called for a PhD education paradigm shift focused on universities that “need to pay more attention to connecting research training with teaching, writing, and publishing” and bring it forth “from the margins to the center of PhD education” (6). Of the social science PhDs, 63 percent held either tenure-track or tenured positions, and in the study rated a few aspects of their current positions as “very important,” including writing and publishing. Survey respondents “often viewed their programs as failing to train them well in research design and writing and publishing” (22). The study’s recommendations reaffirmed the value of writing and publishing in the social sciences as a fundamental academic competency. PhD programs might consider whether they are preparing students for creating and collaborating in real-world applications of research across diverse disciplines and engaging with global colleagues (Nerad et al. 2007). Ann Austin’s (2002) work offers a view into the experiences of those graduate students seeking an academic career. Through a review of prior quantitative studies combined with interviews of graduate students about their educational experiences, she identifies significant gaps in the socialization of graduate students for academic careers:

> Particularly noteworthy and a cause for concern is the lack of systematic professional development opportunities, minimal feedback and mentoring from faculty, and few opportunities for guided reflection. Although some students had faculty mentors who guided them carefully through the process, most did not. (104)

Students explore research areas and demonstrate their knowledge by writing, and most graduate students are acquainted with
coursework writing. Adapting to a more challenging writing style for a different purpose is less familiar terrain. For example, aligning a manuscript to the specific requirements of an academic journal may be daunting. Graduate students’ professional identities are in constant development within their respective disciplinary cultures, and whether they choose to focus on a nonacademic research career or to pursue the academic track, they will be required to write for publication (Salas 2009). The studies by Nerad et al. (2007) and Austin (2002) highlight a gap that librarians can fill by facilitating mentorship between faculty and graduate students around publishing endeavors.

Most graduate students experience a substantial amount of contact with faculty members and consider the relationship an important facet of their educational experience. Mutual support between faculty and students and their wide-ranging mentoring relationships may encompass a “nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person” (Anderson and Shannon 1995, 29). Faculty mentoring of graduate students is a “significant aspect that fosters student success” (Lechuga 2011, 757).

As evidence of good faculty mentorship practice, Lechuga’s 2011 qualitative study examined tenured and tenure-track Latino faculty in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) centered on an instructor’s professional work life and motivational aspects of mentoring students. The study found that working relationships between graduate students as employees and faculty as employers contributed to academic socialization and had mutual advantages for both groups. The study also identified characteristics of graduate students that faculty deemed vital for the faculty member’s work. As an employer, one biology professor stated that he considered the most important ability for a graduate student employee is to be able to work and publish independently. Other faculty consistently concurred that with quality graduate students, they could write papers and formulate new proposal ideas with increased productivity.

As agents of academic socialization, faculty in the study furnished their students with professional development prospects. One mechanical engineering professor provided his graduate students with presenting and publishing opportunities, using research monies to send students to conferences. Through these opportunities, graduate students accelerated the intellectual productivity of his lab. Another engineering study respondent asked his and other graduate students to review his journal manuscripts and encouraged them to be active in the scientific community by volunteering scholarly services in professional societies (Lechuga 2011). Though the employer-employee lab context for mentorship is discipline-specific and more common in the STEM fields,
we can accept the general premise that students who have the capacity to navigate the scholarly communication publishing process set themselves up for opportunities and academic success. Librarians need to complement, not intervene, where there are productive mentor-protégé relationships among faculty and students.

Information Literacy, Scholarly Communication, and the Graduate Student

Our literature documents the myriad challenges of providing library instruction for graduate students as well as the benefits of adopting multiple instructional strategies (Sadler and Given 2007; Williams 2000). Strategies that complement curricular integration for graduate students have been addressed in the literature and include topical workshops and tutorials (Rempel and Davidson 2008; Knievel 2008). Further studies of graduate student information behavior document the informality of their research practices and the infrequency of graduate student use of library services (Barton et al. 2002; Bright et al. 2006; Kayongo and Helm 2010; Simon 1995), signaling an opportunity for our services. Librarians have addressed these challenges by adapting disciplinary instructional strategies to integrate information literacy concepts, including those related to scholarly communication issues, into graduate study (Donaldson 2004; Brown 1999; Jacobs, Rosenfeld, and Haber 2003; Newby 2011).

However, there are distinctions in patterns of graduate education, particularly for those on the academic track, which make curricular integration of information literacy less systematic and therefore only one of several strategies that a library may pursue to engage graduate students in this learning domain. Significant learning experiences for graduate students, such as the thesis or dissertation, and initial forays into the world of publishing occur primarily outside the classroom and curricular structures.

In redefining the liaison librarian role, Karen Williams (2009) challenges us to move “from a collection-centered model to an engagement-centered one” (3). Conceptualizing graduate student education as a process of role transformation (Fleming-May and Yuro 2009) provides the engagement-centered library strategies for interaction with graduate programs, faculty, and students (Austin 2002; Nerad 2004). Information literacy learning outcomes for graduate-level education have not been clearly articulated. Examples from professional practice and the library literature assume that performance indicators from, or similar to those of, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for
Higher Education (ACRL 2000) can simply be applied at higher levels of sophistication (UMUC Library 2012; Murry, McKee, and Hammons 1997). Because significant graduate-level learning occurs outside the classroom during the research and writing process itself, librarians have often found teachable moments by making connections to the challenging, integrative tasks of writing research proposals and literature reviews, writing and placing articles in journals, and the thesis or dissertation itself (Libutti and Kopala 1995; Onwuegbuzie 1997). To have an impact on graduate education, librarians need alternatives to the curricular integration strategy that has been so powerful for undergraduate information literacy efforts.

Scholarly communication provides a framework for an engagement-centered approach to information literacy programming for graduate students. The publication process can be identified as an information literacy “threshold concept” with particular immediacy for graduate students. As discussed by Townsend, Brunetti, and Hofer (2011), threshold concepts are transformative, integrative, irreversible, troublesome, and bounded:

Threshold concepts are like learning objectives in that they can provide a focus for curriculum design and may prove to be a tool with which to measure student learning. However, threshold concepts differ from learning objectives in that they are gateways for student understanding that, once traversed, transform the student’s perspective. (855)

The process of getting published as an information literacy threshold concept for graduate students, as an alternative to defining standards and learning outcomes, provides a significant strategy for the engagement-centered librarian because, as Meyer and Land (2011) point out in their article, “Stop the Conveyor Belt, I Want to Get Off,” “The threshold model ... relies on disciplinary expertise rather than ‘managerial’ theoretical templates” (as cited in Townsend, Brunetti, and Hofer 2011, 855).¹

For graduate student authors entering into the hurly-burly of publishing, these concepts become immediate questions and practical learning challenges due to their personal engagement in the publishing process. The unevenness of faculty mentoring in this arena, documented in literature discussed earlier, provides opportunities for engagement-centered liaison librarians to build information literacy programming.

Additionally, librarians committed to information literacy instruction have an opportunity to direct students, especially those in STEM disciplines, to the rapidly expanding selection of resources that
push at the once-rigid boundaries of scholarly publishing venues for locating and interpreting educative materials. Scientists and scholars are embracing social media such as blogs, Twitter, open notebooks, and repositories such as Databib and OpenDOAR as interactive and collaborative community spaces “to watch the process of scholarly knowledge construction as it happens” (Deitering and Gronemyer 2011, 494). The erudite discussions can lead graduate students to be more attentive to what is being said about the intellectual content they discover. Students’ ability to participate in these dynamic scholarly conversations provides “an excellent way for students to find out about the texts, to understand the context, and to find consensus and controversy” (Deitering and Gronemyer 2011, 498–499). Graduate students have opportunities to embrace these social networking and social awareness tools, such as coauthorship networks, to enhance the scholarly communication process that fits their discipline.

Key to enacting engagement-centered librarianship as it pertains to information literacy and scholarly communication for graduate students is the knowledge and expertise that librarians can bring to framing all these concepts within the context of their development as scholars and within their disciplines’ publishing practices. The next section will explore how librarians at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, collaborate with faculty and administrators to build a program around these key issues for graduate students.

The UNLV Scholarly Communication Seminar

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Libraries hosts several graduate seminars focusing on significant elements of scholarly communication that can be tied back to the ACRL Information Literacy Standard Five:² using RefWorks (an online citation management tool) and addressing copyright, plagiarism, and scholarly communication issues. We also offer a session about how to effectively design assignments to incorporate research-based learning in the classroom. For the past two years, the Sustainability Librarian/Institutional Repository (IR) Administrator has drawn upon her background in scholarly communication and various publishing models to offer seminars on the process of engaging best practices to successfully publish a journal article. Academic faculty and librarians have been invited to participate in the seminars to add diverse disciplinary perspectives and real-world examples to the workshop content. Several invitees have enthusiastically lent their scholarship perspectives and publishing experiences. A team synergy exists among the various professionals who contribute their skill sets and time to the workshop, including: the libraries’ liaison to the Graduate College, who focuses on logistics; subject liaisons
from the library, who participate as panelists to share their experiences as authors; technical writers; the IR Administrator, who is responsible for the content and presentation; and invited academic faculty.

Academic librarians with scholarly communication skill sets have offered their expertise as leaders in utilizing new tools and services, such as institutional repositories, open access publishing, social media tools, educating for understanding authors’ rights, and copyright services. There are multiple models for incorporating scholarly communication expertise in academic libraries. Some libraries consolidate these responsibilities in a single position, other libraries ask liaisons to have a baseline of knowledge, and still other libraries practice a blend of these models. Whatever scholarly communication staffing model is adopted, liaison librarians can leverage their teaching expertise into the scholarly communication domain. Whether that involves building their own knowledge through attending an ACRL one-day institute or partnering with the library’s scholarly communication expert, there is clearly room for librarians to take initiative on behalf of graduate student professional development in the area of publishing, open access, copyright, and authors’ rights as social systems, not merely technological systems.

The majority of students who attend the open seminar use the online signup form provided by the Consortium for Faculty Professional Opportunities (CFPO),3 an efficient method of previewing the number of students and their department affiliations. Students from STEM and social sciences predominate, although the humanities, education, hotel administration, and the allied health fields are also represented in the registration. Participants in the three seminars represented the following disciplines: 36 STEM (45 percent), 21 social sciences (26 percent), 8 education (10 percent), 7 nursing/health (8 percent), 4 humanities (5 percent), and 3 hotel (3 percent). Graduate students may apply their scholarly communication seminar attendance to workshops/modules required to receive a UNLV Graduate Research Certificate. Seminar advertising channels indicate that students registered for the Research Certificate Program through UNLV Today (daily faculty/staff e-newsletter), the UNLV graduate e-mail distribution list, the libraries’ website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts, faculty and associate deans, and word-of-mouth.

**Scholarship of Writing**

The seminar emphasizes that scholarly writing can be challenging and rewarding. Attendees learn where to find publishing opportunities, the essentials of making an article stand out, academic writing styles, manuscript components, the article submission and peer-review editorial process, options and tools for retaining key copyrights, and the impor-
tance of open access to research. Graduate students are made aware of the variety of factors that may influence why some scholarly articles get published or not. Editorial board members’ and reviewers’ expressed opinions can sway editorial conclusions. Decision factors may also include the significance, innovative perspective, relevance, or timeliness of a topic to a journal’s audience. Manuscripts should contain elements of new and useful information that contribute to the body of published literature. The quality of a paper’s presentation and its adherence to guidelines play a role in it being published. Acceptance rates, given the supply and demand for specific topics, may also be affected, particularly if there is a manuscript backlog (Overholser 2011). The library workshop highlights these details for graduate students, empowering them to take a more informed role in the publication process.

The outlined elements described below represent the most recent iteration of the seminar that has evolved over the preceding six years of incorporating new resources and responding to participant feedback. While there is a plethora of scholarly communication substance to consider presenting in one and one half hours, part of the instruction time is expended soliciting faculty and student questions and sharing publishing anecdotes. Students possess a broad range of scholarly communication knowledge, hence the seminar’s ultimate goal is to completely describe and disclose the value of the erudite landscape. Presentation materials are archived in the UNLV Libraries Scholarly Communication LibGuide, and a detailed outline is provided to the students as a takeaway.

**Seminar Evaluations and Comments**

At the conclusion of the seminar, participants complete an evaluation, the results of which are used to ensure continuous improvement of seminar content. Taking the next step of reporting seminar evaluation results to the library instruction coordinator or scholarly communications officer (if extant) will document the extent of library programs. Since the publication of the *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report* (Oakleaf 2010), academic library administrators are exploring strategies to document not only collection growth and program activity, but also library impact on institutional goals. Institutional goals for graduate education may include degree completion by graduate students, the rate of publication by graduate students prior to completion, or postgraduate employment. While direct causation between seminar participation and any of these outcomes cannot be proved, libraries are increasingly gathering and analyzing a variety of data to identify patterns of activity and impact. As illustrated in Table 11.1, evaluations of the publishing seminar have been consistently positive.
Table 11.1
Seminar Evaluation Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following activities contributed to my learning in this workshop:</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel the seminar content added worthwhile information to your knowledge about the writing aspects of a journal article?</td>
<td>11 8 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 9 8 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 6 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Nov 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 5 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 15 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 6 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Nov 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 11 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 14 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 7 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Nov 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 6 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 10 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 5 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary Nov 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comments from the evaluation forms provide evidence of the seminar’s impact:

*What aspects of the workshop were the most valuable for you?*
“Practical information about the culture and protocols, understanding of Open Access, presenter and others in audience were good sources of information, retaining copyrights, issues discussed during Q&A.”

“The most valuable information was the handout and going over the general process.”

*What aspects of the workshop were the least valuable for you?*
“I only went to the workshop to learn more about publishing so the writing section was a refresher for me.”

*Describe one thing that you learned that you expect to use or to share with others:*
Frequent comments in response to this prompt include: “The importance of Open Access,” “Information about joining a listserv,” “Impact factors,” “The publishing review process.”

*Is there anything else you want to tell us?*
“I walked away from the workshop feeling my time was well spent.”

“This is a great topic that would benefit almost all graduate students and many undergraduate students. Perhaps discipline-specific workshops can be offered.”

One recent significant enhancement to the seminar based on attendee feedback was the insertion of “authorship order” information. Graduate students need to be advised to address this potentially sensitive topic carefully but forthrightly with their faculty coauthors toward the beginning of the coauthorship process. This issue was raised by a seminar attendee and subsequently rated a comment on the workshop evaluation:

One piece of information of which I found most helpful, although the whole workshop was valuable, was to establish who will be first and second author on the publication and what is expected. Although this tip is a very obvious one, I believe people tend to forget this very important detail.

This is an essential topic for the seminar, as students may choose not to voice an opinion if they feel dissent or misinterpret faculty
author order choices. Within the faculty-student collaborative relationship is the typically unspoken but omnipresent power imbalance. This may be especially true in situations where graduate student publishing expertise and competence are minimal and the faculty member is relied upon for guidance (Morisano et al. 2009). An authorship and authorship order discussion will optimally begin at the initiation of a research project. On behalf of authors in all disciplines, four primary models used for listing authors were identified by the American Political Science Association Working Group on Collaboration: “1) alphabetical order, 2) reverse alphabetical order, 3) non-alphabetic order, and 4) connected by with rather than and, denoting clearly unequal contributions” (Lake 2010, 43).

Listing authors by relative contribution is the norm in the hard sciences, which include physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, and engineering. The senior author who may be a principal investigator or a faculty advisor is listed last, an esteemed position comparable to first author status. This “relative-contribution/senior-author model” (Lake 2009, 43) is also employed in the social and physical sciences. A discipline’s convention for article author order will play a role in the faculty’s decision of who is listed in what sequence. Political science’s dominant surname order leans towards listing authors alphabetically, as does economics, communications, sociology, and anthropology (Lake 2009). Authorship order may evolve over a project’s time line to better reflect actual contributions from the researchers (APA Science Student Council 2006).

Another change prompted by positive feedback from administrators, faculty, and students to the multidisciplinary offerings of this seminar is the development of discipline-specific framing for the publishing seminar content. Programming directed to graduate students has received additional emphasis for the library due to the relocation and reconfiguration of the Lied Library’s Graduate Student Commons. The new commons was collaboratively designed between the Graduate Professional Student Association and the libraries. The commons’ more prominent physical location has prompted increased interaction between these two organizations. Liaison librarian–led workshops hosted in the new commons space are planned on topics such as the scholarly communication seminar, copyright for graduate students, organizing a writing circle, and personal information management. The institutional repository, Digital Scholarship@UNLV, is also gaining momentum, with greater graduate student and faculty knowledge resulting in higher numbers of item deposits. In fact, seminar evaluation data shows graduate students’ responsiveness to open access, with no fewer than 70 percent of seminar participants willing to consider retaining author rights and open access to their publications (see Table 11.1).
The library offerings of this seminar have received support from multiple departments and colleges. The faculty panels have included participants from diverse departments such as English and business. The associate dean of engineering has routinely supported the graduate seminar by promoting it to the college’s engineering faculty and students. In one particularly interesting development, UNLV's College of Engineering recently hired an engineer part-time for her technical writing skills to assist faculty in their grant proposals and support student publication writing skills. The outreach initially leveraged by the engineering collaboration has flourished into a disciplinary subset of the full seminar, “Engaging in Best Practices to Successfully Publish a Journal Article: For Engineers.” The first discipline-specific seminar was offered in Fall 2012 to engineering students. A scholarly communication team (engineering faculty; a technical writer who is also an engineer; the engineering liaison; head of educational initiatives; and the sustainability liaison/IR administrator, who has a substantial background in scholarly communication) planned and presented the seminar to support them in their publishing endeavors.

Initially presented solo by the sustainability liaison/IR administrator for a multidisciplinary audience, the graduate seminar is additionally offered by discipline experts (academic and library faculty) in partnership with the IR administrator to a discipline-specific audience. The variety of perspectives and experiences that have contributed to the development of the seminar provides a well-rounded and holistic view of what students can expect during the publication process as well as the necessary tools for publishing success.

Serious undergraduate researchers and their advisors have also expressed strong interest in attending the seminar. Welcoming the undergraduates has the potential to encourage their aspirations to become graduate students and empower them on their scholarly paths. Both undergraduate and graduate students have a need to understand the difference between research discovery and access. They have a right to know how intellectual content is packaged and distributed, the technologies and tools used for discovery and access, and the bottom line of fundamental economic factors (Warren and Duckett 2010). When students are given “a broader context for how peer-reviewed, scholarly, and research articles are shaped by social and economic forces” (Warren and Duckett 2010, 354) in an instructional setting, scholars-in-training can make informed decisions regarding their own work and influence others. When it is impressed upon students that access to higher education scholarly works may be more difficult after they graduate, their attitudes about procurable research may inform their own more “open” publishing habits.
Conclusion

Information literacy can be understood on multiple levels, that is, as a knowledge/competency domain and as an educational process expressive of the library’s educational mission. The strategies and structures used to build information literacy into curricula and student learning experiences are as important a focus as the content itself. Workshops on publishing and scholarly communication provide a meaningful context to engage graduate students with integrative information literacy concepts. Discipline-specific seminar offerings on publishing and scholarly communication provide liaison librarians a cocurricular mechanism for relationship building that is crucial to twenty-first century library services. Since research and publication are topics at the core of faculty identity, librarians are advised to propose library instruction in a manner that emphasizes the complementary expertise that various partners can bring to this venture on behalf of graduate students. A by-product of student learning is that academic faculty gain knowledge of open access publishing tools, as well as librarians’ expertise with copyright, licensing, and open access.
The Seminar

Engaging in Best Practices to Successfully Publish a Journal Article

What follows is an expanded outline of the seminar content.

I. Opportunities for publishing—where are they?
   This portion of the seminar introduces locating potential publishing venues that are typically useful: e-mail discussion lists in a particular subject area or more general fields of interest, publisher e-mails and websites, and professional organizations, e.g., IEEE, Nature, ACM, APA, MLA. Faculty or librarians may suggest specific journals and also direct students to two comprehensive publishing directories, Cabell’s Directory of Publishing Opportunities and Ulrich’s, which are both subscription-based and delineate manuscript specifications, the submission process, and other journal-related data.

II. Research each potential journal on your list before submission.
   A. Who is the audience of the particular journal to which you are submitting?
      • Every journal has a topical and type-of-article focus. Graduate students are advised to conduct thorough research before submitting to a journal.
      • Submit a query letter e-mail to journal editors. Submit a few query letters to appropriate journals at one time. When the seminar is attended by graduate students from multiple disciplines, they are advised of significant variations of practice related to query letters. For example, authors in the humanities do not submit a query letter, but instead e-mail a cover letter and a concise statement of journal “fit” along with the manuscript.

   B. Required template
      Some journals require authors to use a preformatted template. Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) example: http://oldwww.acm.org/crossroads/submit/.

   C. Impact factors: primarily in the sciences
      Article Half Life, Eigenfactor, h-index, Altmetrics, etc.

   D. Author name and affiliation should always be consistent on all publications.
      Carefully consider your author’s professional name that ideally will be used in all published material. Subsequent articles should use the exact name with or without initials for consistency in indexing and discovery purposes.
III. Writing your article—we write because we want people to read our research.

The purpose or function of an article is to be original, while also highlighting/citing significant research results or expressing theoretical conclusions. There are different types of articles that may affect their journal placement:

- **Article (full paper)**—definitive accounts of significant studies/experiments.
- **Humanities article**—historical or literary evidence in a theoretical framework.
- **Review article**—summarizes the progress in a particular area or topic during a preceding period.
- **Case study**—a qualitative exploration of descriptive research.

**What will make your work different and stand out?**

An article that is publishable typically incorporates some unique ideas “while remaining well-integrated with the established literature” (Overholser 2011, 116). Highly rated papers discuss essential issues, and the conclusions seem to contain valued materials in a particular field. The following points are emphasized for seminar attendees:

- Review the literature that has already been written on your proposed topic. Are there gaps in the literature? Is the literature out of date? Scholarly content research tools may include a web-scale discovery tool, such as Summon, individual research databases, or Google Scholar to locate appropriate intellectual content.
- Choose a topic of interest that meets the criteria or focus of the targeted journal. Research potential journals!
- Citations: Cite resources, chase citations, consider using seminal works where appropriate for a baseline or comparisons.
- Ensure your work will make some type of original contribution: originality of thought or angle is always a plus. Write to be cited!
- How/why is your paper different from other articles on the same or similar topic?

IV. Major Paper Components

A. **Title**

The title of an article reflects the paper’s content and is useful for research indexing. It is best to use effective keywords that are specific, spell out all words using no abbreviations/acronyms.

- Attracts a potential audience by the use of topical
words of interest to the reader—catchy titles are a plus (adds interest if appropriate).

- Aids in online retrieval and keyword indexing.
- Use enough words to get your title across, but not lengthy.
- Usually a title and abstract are confirmed after the writing is complete.

B. Abstract
Clarify your paper’s goal by creating a one-paragraph abstract: ~80–250 words.

- Problem/purpose of research.
- Indicate theoretical or experimental plan used.
- Summarize principal findings.
- Point out major conclusions.

C. Standard outline organization or empirical (observations/experiments)
Article paper—may vary by publication and parallels the scientific method.

- Introduction—1 to 2 paragraphs may include previous findings.
- Literature review.
- Experimental details and hypotheses.
- Results—summarize data collected and statistical treatment.
- Discussion—interpret and compare results; be objective.
- Conclusions—place interpretation into context of original problem.
- Summary and further research—future opportunities for study.
- Acknowledgements: support and financing from people and organizations.
- Other material dependent on publication.

D. Technical writing is different from prose.
It is precise and unambiguous.

- Basic outline for humanities—theoretical framework to support conclusions: study of the human condition, using methods that are primarily analytical, critical, or speculative.
- Use gender-neutral language—choose terms that do not reinforce outdated sex roles.

E. Scholarly communication, copyright, and open access
The second part of the presentation, condensed and more intense because of the obscure concepts, builds upon the initial seminar outline and introduces:
• Author order in a multiple-author article: Discuss at outset, typically determined by faculty depending on who is doing the most research and writing. Initial decisions may evolve to reflect actual contributions.

• Peer-review process and writing tips: 1) Submit article to a journal editor, one journal at a time. 2) Editor establishes and maintains journal standards by selecting competent referees. E-mails article to 2–3 reviewers or referees to evaluate article. 3) Editor determines the summary review decision based on reviewers’ evaluations and journal focus guidelines. 4) Editor may accept article with suggested changes or decline acceptance. 5) Article rejected? Submit to other journals, one at a time.

• What reviewers look for when an article is submitted: Is the article technically correct? Does it fit the mission of the journal? Does the article make a contribution to the field? Is it timely, classic information, or “old hat”? How well is the article written? Does it fill a gap in the literature? Copyright ownership, retaining copyright to one’s intellectual content, the nature of publishing agreements, author addendums, Creative Commons licensing and, open access to research, as well as a brief tour of UNLV’s institutional repository, Digital Scholarship@UNLV (http://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/) are essential elements to be acquainted with in the current and future scholarly communication milieu. University mandated e-theses/dissertations are a prime visual example to show graduate students how their research is showcased in an open access scholarly venue.

This seminar outline was created by Marianne A. Buehler for: “Engaging in Best Practices to Successfully Publish a Journal Article,” last updated September 2012. It is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/.
Notes


2. ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standard Five: “The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.” (ACRL 2000).

3. The Consortium for Faculty Professional Opportunities is a committee comprised of administrators from multiple campus entities, established to sustain professional development programming after the budgetary elimination of the Teaching and Learning Center in 2010.


References


