1-1-2009

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Deborah H. Charbonneau
Wayne State University, dcharbon@wayne.edu

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/libsp/3

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Preparing for Publication: Strategies for Identifying Potential Library Journals

Deborah H. Charbonneau, MLS
Wayne State University Libraries
Detroit, Michigan

Introduction

Research and publishing in library and information science (LIS) contributes to the profession. As such, publishing in LIS journals offers one avenue for library practitioners to share results and experiences that both enhances and contributes to our collective wisdom. In addition, getting published facilitates the sharing of new discoveries, leads to personal growth, and is an excellent way to establish a professional identity.

However, identifying potential LIS journals for publication can be one challenge that librarians
encounter. Therefore, the aim of this article is to provide practical suggestions for identifying potential journals for library practitioners to get their work published. Furthermore, the importance of following submission guidelines will also be discussed.

Set the Stage

Early on, considering the audience for which one will be writing and how the work fits into a larger context are essential dimensions of preparing a manuscript for publication. Setting the stage involves thinking about the topic and identifying desired readers before preparing the manuscript itself. The next step is to determine the best way to reach this audience. For example, ascertain if an editorial, review, “how-to” or best practices piece, or research article is a suitable fit.

Conducting a review of the literature is a crucial step for determining how the proposed work fits into a
larger context. By performing a review of the literature, one will be able to determine what work has already been done. Overall, conducting a literature review is instrumental for learning what has already been published and effectively demonstrating how one’s work contributes to the body of literature.

Find a Good Match

The key to finding potential LIS journals is to ascertain which journals are the best fit for the proposed article. Key factors involved in the decision to publish a paper include “whether the paper has an original idea worth publishing and whether the journals’ readers would want to read it” (LaBorie 1984, 58). Therefore, one useful strategy to help identify potential journals is to examine recent journal issues which have covered related topics. An easy way to accomplish this is to browse journal tables of contents on the World Wide Web.
Another technique for identifying possible journals is to register for tables of contents to be delivered automatically via email or RSS and then to scan them to gain a better sense of the content and scope of a particular journal. A variety of publishers of LIS journals offer free tables of contents services delivered electronically, including Sage, Elsevier, and Haworth Press. In addition, the earlier literature review will also help to determine which journals have published articles on similar topical issues. Learning what types of articles a journal publishes, such as review articles or original research, is also important. Often this information can be gleaned in the submission guidelines or directly obtained from the publisher’s web site.

Another strategy for identifying potential LIS journals for publication is to contact the editor of a particular journal. This time-saving approach is highly recommended and is often preferred by editors. This approach ensures that one’s article is appropriate for
their journal and allows an editor to offer suggestions for further improvement. Furthermore, several print publications provide acceptance rates for individual journals, such as the Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Educational Technology and Library Science (Cabell and English 2007) or the Guide to Publishing Opportunities for Librarians (Schroeder and Roberson 1995).

Moreover, academic librarians and LIS faculty are often required to publish in peer reviewed journals for promotion or tenure. To find out if an article submission is subject to editorial peer review, one resource to check is the Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory. Other alternatives are to consult the journal’s front matter, review the submission guidelines, or visit a publisher’s web site. Moreover, determining the reputation of a journal also requires some investigation. One resource to consult is ISI’s Journal Citation Reports for the journal’s impact factor which is commonly considered to be one
indication of a journal’s prestige. Asking colleagues for recommendations is another idea.

Follow Submission Guidelines

Attention to detail by carefully following the precise journal submission guidelines is paramount for publication success. Failure to follow the instructions can result in delays in the review of a submission or even rejection. In addition, adherence to standard grammar, writing style, and appropriate citing methods is of chief importance. The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University offers a nice collection of online style guides for formatting manuscripts (http://owl.english.purdue.edu).

Proofreading is an important part of the writing process. The value of getting feedback before submitting an article to a journal cannot be emphasized enough and it is strongly encouraged to have a peer colleague review a draft for clarity and provide
criticism. Finally, keep in mind that it is common practice to submit the article to only one journal at a time.

Conclusion

In summary, there are many exciting opportunities for research and publishing in library and information science. According to Brown et al., publishing can be viewed as “a matter of determination, perseverance, and communication” (2002, 18). Identifying potential LIS journals for publication entails selecting desired readers and finding a good match for the proposed topic. In addition, contacting the editor is a helpful strategy to ensure that the work is relevant to a particular journal and audience. Furthermore, carefully following the submission guidelines and having a colleague proofread the article for clarity and cohesiveness are also important steps of the writing process. Overall, identifying appropriate LIS journals
for publication increases the likelihood of success and can also lead to a creative and exhilarating experience.

References


