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Preparing for Publication: Strategies for Identifying Potential Library Journals

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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.

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