

1 **PUBLISHING RESEARCH**

Publication is a key aspect of research. It concerns letting other people know about your research endeavours, findings and ideas. This is its prime importance – why go through all the effort of research if nobody else can learn from it? Research, after all, is about collectively exploring, examining, challenging and advancing knowledge and understanding, building on the work of previous studies and treatises. As a consequence, those who support and fund research expect researchers to engage in such collective practice. In addition, there are obvious secondary benefits to publication that relate to strategic issues such as securing a job or promotion, gaining more research funding, building a research profile, and so on.

Successfully publishing research is, unfortunately, not an inevitable outcome of academic endeavour however. Just because a project produces exciting results, or a new, groundbreaking theory, does not mean that it will automatically be communicated to the wider world, with recognition and plaudits following. Completing a project or developing an idea or theory simply represents the first phase of research. Publication is the second phase and it requires many specific skills and knowledges. Without successful dissemination no one, with the exception of close colleagues, will know about your work. It is vital then that you, as a researcher, know how different forms of publication work and possess the skills to work with and exploit these media. This book provides practical and strategic advice and information on the various means by which researchers publicise their work, and how to effectively and successfully package and present research for those media.

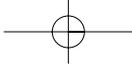
In today's multimedia culture, methods of publishing academic endeavours are diverse, ranging from traditional outlets such as an article in a learned journal or a research monograph, to popular media such as newspapers, radio and television, to more recent inventions such as the Internet. It can also take visual or oral means, such as a poster or presentation. As the

ACADEMICS' GUIDE TO PUBLISHING

chapters in this book detail, each form of publishing has its strengths and weaknesses and reaches different audiences. For example, the strengths of academic journals relate to their high quality, assured by peer review, the fact that institutions recognize them as the most valuable or worthy form of dissemination, and that they are read by a peer audience. The weaknesses of academic journals are their formal style, their restrictions on length and content, and that a peer audience is usually very small in number (generally fellow academics who access the journals through a university library). Books provide a broader canvas to present a theory or study, often receiving some degree of marketing, and are more likely to be seen by a wider audience. Their weaknesses relate to the time and effort taken to write them, the reliance on publishers for marketing and distribution, and their cost. Conference talks allow a work in progress to be presented to, and discussed by, peers, but time constraints often limit the content to one or two specific points and the audience is usually quite small and select. Newspapers and other forms of popular press such as magazines provide access to a very large potential audience and usually universities and colleges will welcome any coverage, but they are very restrictive in terms of content, and controlling the message presented can be difficult. And so on.

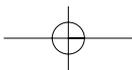
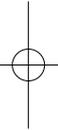
For the uninitiated, the workings of these various media can be fairly opaque. Indeed, if your experiences are the same as ours, most researchers seemingly learn how each form of publication operates through trial and error, slowly gaining an understanding of their practices. That said, individual experiences alone provide only a partial picture because they are limited to just a few aspects of the production process. For example, sending articles to journals and interacting with editors, responding to referees and correcting proofs, provide glimpses inside the 'black box' of journal publishing. However, without someone actually revealing how things work (for example, in a book like this), one only gets a real sense of how a medium truly operates when involved in other facets of production; for example, the full mechanics of journal production only become clear through working as an editor.

This book bypasses the need to learn about publication through personal experience, and attempts to lift the lid on the black boxes of dissemination to reveal how they operate. Drawing on our own experience and that of others, we discuss a range of forms of publication available to amateur and academic researchers, detailing their strengths and weaknesses, and outlining how to use them to let others know about your work. In addition, practical advice is supplied for those who want to take control



PUBLISHING RESEARCH

of their own means of production (for example, self-publishing a report or book or newsletter) or who would like to take a more active role in the production process (such as starting a new journal). In doing so, the book provides a head start, detailing advice and knowledge that we would have valued when we started our careers as researchers.



2 **A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO PUBLICATION**

Given that there are a range of media through which research can potentially be published, and it is unlikely that you will have either the time, or the inclination to explore all of them, there are a number of decisions that need to be made about the best outlets through which to showcase your work. These decisions, such as which journals to submit work to, or which conference to attend, will be shaped by two prime considerations. First, how and to whom do *you* want to communicate your work? Second (and increasingly, just as important), how and to whom do your *employers* or *funders* want the work disseminated? While there is often overlap, in that both you and those that sponsor your work will often want to target the same journals or conferences, it is often the case that there is some disagreement. For example, you might want to target a journal with a particular audience while your university administrators want you to submit to a journal with a high impact factor (as denoted by its citation index – see Chapter 6).

In the latter case, pressure arises from administrators because there continue to be perceived differences in the worth or value of academic work dependent on how it is disseminated. So the same work could, theoretically, be disseminated via a website, through a leading paper-based academic journal, or through the pages of an edited book, and be reviewed, consumed and valued in very different ways as a result. As noted in the Preface, this situation is exacerbated by the unrelenting neo-liberal restructuring of the education sector as certain modes of publication form the basis of calculative practices aimed at monitoring and regulating the endeavours of researchers.

Balancing individual preferences with institutional pressures requires a *strategic* approach to dissemination that utilizes particular tactics. A strategic approach means to have a consistent and planned method of

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO PUBLICATION

dissemination that aims to fulfil defined goals. These goals might be to build a successful research career, to obtain employment, to gain tenure or pass probation, to achieve rapid promotion, to survive the academic system with as little effort as possible, to try to become famous, and so on. Tactics are the means for achieving these goals. These tactics might include submitting papers to the journals with the highest impact factor, attending the most prestigious conferences, organizing events, editing a newsletter, presenting at specialist conferences, sending press releases to the media, working with established researchers, and so on.

In our opinion, the key to achieving any lasting sense of personal academic satisfaction and freedom is to adopt a strategic approach to publication that works in *your* interests – in short, you need to develop your own strategy, a strategy that satisfies the ‘rules of the game’ but which maximizes *your* control over that game, and the time/resources available beyond it.

Of course, it is possible to be relatively successful employing a haphazard approach to publication, and there is no doubt that many researchers are quite haphazard in how they make their decisions on publication. For example, it can be quite easy to agree to submit an article to a particular journal or write a chapter for an edited book or attend a particular conference. But these choices might not be the best tactically in order to achieve one’s goals. If these decisions involve taking on additional work then the time element in one’s strategy will be altered radically. This approach, then, is far less likely to achieve one’s goals than a strategic approach – it simply leaves too many things to chance and serendipity.

As suggested above, this is not to say that a strategic approach should be followed rigidly and in heartless, calculated manner (there is little worse than joyless work). Rather, it is perhaps more sensible to employ a strategy that is flexible and which can react to situations as they arise. In other words, a productive strategy might be one that utilizes a minimum or adequate set of tactics to achieve a goal, but which leaves space and time to take on other interesting and rewarding commitments that also contribute towards this goal. This strategy ensures that defined targets are met, whilst not closing off new opportunities. An important tactic to keep such opportunities open, in an age when many institutions ask staff to set yearly work targets and then assess these targets at the end of the year, is not to over-estimate outputs. Over-estimating targets closes off new opportunities and places a researcher under pressure to deliver. In such a situation, a researcher either fails to deliver everything promised or reduces the stan-

dard of that delivered. It is much more sensible (and flattering) to be conservative or realistic and then to deliver or over-produce.

The strategy adopted and the tactics employed will often depend on what stage of your career you are at. As we explain below, if you are still a postgraduate and your goal is gain a postdoctoral or teaching position then your strategy and associated tactics will almost certainly be very different from if you are an already-established academic whose goal is to broaden your profile or rest on your laurels.

A postgraduate strategy

In today's competitive academic environment a postgraduate student who wants to continue their research career often needs to adopt a strategy that separates them from the rest of their peers, and demonstrates that they can do more than merely survive the rigours of academic life (such as tenure-track and RAE – Research Assessment Exercise as operated in the UK – demands). While for many this is an unfortunate side effect of neo-liberal reforms to the higher education system, and the introduction of pernicious forms of academic capitalism, for the time being at least it remains a simple fact of life for would-be researchers. Gaining access to this environment necessitates employing tactics that stretch well beyond simply completing a competent PhD. Suitable tactics include: attending and presenting papers at regional, national and international conferences; getting involved in societies and organizations (for example, sitting on study group committees); helping to organize meetings and conferences; editing newsletters or postgraduate/departmental journals; submitting papers to journals; and while not (directly) related to disseminating research, getting involved in teaching.

For postgraduates, the journals chosen for submissions do not necessarily need to be the ones considered the most important in a field. They might instead be departmental or society journals or 'lower ranking' journals. The aim is to demonstrate potential and to build confidence. As we note below, the review process for many journals can be an unpleasant and upsetting experience. There is nothing worse than starting one's career with a series of rejection letters for articles that, while not quite good enough for the top journals, display scholarship that is worthy of publication. Similarly, when choosing conferences it is perhaps best to start with those that are more likely to provide a supportive environment for postgraduate students,

such as postgraduate-only conferences, smaller regional and specialist conferences, and postgraduate sessions at major conferences.

Getting beyond contract research and teaching posts

For many researchers their route into a professional, tenured research career starts with a period of short-term research or teaching contracts. They have shown enough potential as a postgraduate to secure an initial step on the ladder. The next step is to secure a permanent position. This step is just as competitive as moving from postgraduate to postdoctoral level and again requires the adoption of tactics that distinguishes you from the rest of the crowd. Tactics that might be of benefit include publishing articles in specialist journals and in more generic, national and international journals (these do not necessarily have to be the top-rated journals, although a couple of articles in these would obviously do no harm!); attending and presenting at national and international conferences; being the main organizer of meetings and conferences; and taking an active role in disciplinary organizations. The aim is to demonstrate that you can achieve what is expected of a permanent member of staff: that you can publish in a variety of quality outlets, you are prepared to share your ideas at conferences and meetings, and that you care about and are prepared to be a steward for your discipline.

A tenure-track or probationary strategy

Tenure-track or probationary posts are those that lead to the relative job security of a tenured position. Tenure does not mean a permanent post that lasts until retirement; rather, tenure provides a right to a due process of evaluation prior to being fired. In other words, a college or university cannot terminate a post without presenting evidence that the professor is incompetent or unprofessional or that the finances that support a job are no longer sufficient (NEA, 2004). Until tenure is obtained, job security is very weak, with colleges and universities able to terminate a contract without reason or cause. A panel of senior professors and administrators, who evaluate the candidate's teaching, research and service, assesses tenure. The weight attached to these various assessment criteria varies depending on the institution, with research output and profile gaining more influence in

ACADEMICS' GUIDE TO PUBLISHING

top-ranked institutions. This assessment period can last between three and seven years depending on the type of educational institution and discipline. In the US and Canada, tenure is something that you pass, but this is not the same elsewhere. For example, in the UK probation (typically lasting three years) is something you fail. In other words, in the US and Canada you gain tenure, in the UK you are appointed to a tenured position from the start which you lose if you do not fulfil certain criteria. Whatever the system, there is no doubt probationary systems are complex, political and stressful. This is largely a function of the imbalance of power between the candidate and the panel of assessors, and the uncertainty of the outcome.

In relation to dissemination, a tenure committee generally expects the candidate to develop a portfolio of publications and presentations that, on the one hand, demonstrates the quality of the research being conducted (that is, by being accepted in top-rated journals) and, on the other, helps create a national and international profile. Typically the pressure will be for research articles in quality, international journals. In some disciplines, typically the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, it is expected that in the majority of cases, work will be single-authored or that the candidate is the first author. In some cases, panels might issue a list of suitable and non-suitable journals. They might even set specific targets of publishing papers in named journals or seek to block work that they deem unsuitable or see as less worthy or valuable than might be achieved.

For example, we know of tenure-track candidates who were strongly advised (in some cases, read forced) as follows to give up writing a textbook (because it was perceived to lack academic, as opposed to pedagogic, value); to give up writing a monograph and convert the chapters into journal articles (because the supposed combined value of the articles would be more than the book); to change which journals they intended to submit their articles to (because the committee felt the journals chosen by the candidate did not have a high enough impact factor); and to attend certain conferences as opposed to others (because the candidate would be mixing with a 'better class' or more international mix of attendees). As a consequence, tenure/probation can be quite a constraining time, with patterns of work to some degree directed by those that assess tenure rather than being self-directed. That said, there is often quite a bit of latitude to make decisions on the focus of research, academic activities and the means of publication. If this is the case, we would advise that these decisions should be made strategically and in line with the recommendations of the tenure panel.

It can be difficult to follow committee advice, especially when it is

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO PUBLICATION

very disciplining and constraining. The instinct is often to rebel and follow one's own path. This might not prove to be a problem if that path produces results and benefits that the tenure committee is going to appreciate (such as articles in top journals). The danger is, however, that it will alienate the committee and turn them against you. Given the imbalance of power, this is likely to be a dangerous and potentially costly approach. Perhaps the best advice, therefore, is to 'play the game' (for the time being at least), doing as much as needed by the committee, whilst using any spare time or energies to pursue your own agendas and tactics.

● **After-tenure strategies**

While securing tenure or probation seems to provide the academic freedom to pursue whatever publication strategy desired, it remains the case that you are still accountable to your employer (most likely a university). This is particularly the case if you wish to progress your career, as research outputs play an important role in judging applications for promotion, salary and merit increases. In this respect, university administrators will expect you to continue to develop and expand your international, research profile. It is true, however, that there is much more scope to explore different forms of publication, such as writing and editing books or writing policy-orientated reports, without necessarily feeling the same pressures and penalties that might have existed at earlier stages in your career. Which strategy is employed is really dependent on goals, which at this stage of a career are almost all self-selected and directed.

That said, institutional pressures to successfully and strategically publish research in particular ways regardless of career stage are growing. Further pressures are created in other ways. For example, it might be that pressures arise from collaborative working relationships where partners are at different stages of their career (with one partner pressuring another to deliver). There is also the pressure to keep one's curriculum vitae full of new additions to enable career progression from one employer to another. Moreover, the extent to which we, as academics, pressurize, exploit and discipline ourselves, and each other, also seems to be increasing, as universities become more competitive places to work (see Fuller and Kitchin, 2004). Perhaps this stage is seemingly more comfortable to some because by this point the pressure, exploitation and disciplining have become the norm – we have learned to conform and play the game?

A strategy to deal with RAE or other forms of research accountability

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the UK, and other forms of pernicious research accountability in operation in other countries, are having profound effects on the strategies and tactics of dissemination required of researchers. These exercises seek to measure the 'quality', 'usefulness', 'impact' and 'value-for-money' of research through the evaluation of research outputs. Typically they examine a sample or all of a researcher's work, judging it through a reading by 'experts', by how and where it was published, or by how many times it has been cited – or a combination of these. Each exercise is accompanied by a rationale and its mode of measurement is pre-circulated so that researchers generally know what to expect.

In recent years, the RAE in the UK has required research staff to submit four pieces of what they consider to be their 'best' published work from the previous four or five years. It is expected that these pieces of work will consist of refereed articles in international journals that have a high citation index or research monographs published and distributed by international publishing houses. This is not to say that other forms of publication will not be considered, rather that these forms are generally expected as they are perceived to denote 'quality' and are much more likely to have a wider, global impact. Almost inevitably this means writing in English, because English-language publishing houses dominate international publishing and English has become *the* language of global intellectual discourse and science. What this means is that consultant reports, pamphlets, papers in regional, national, non-English or lower-ranked journals, online articles, magazine and newspaper articles, conference papers published in proceedings, websites, and textbooks for both school and university level, take on less 'worth' in such evaluative systems. Moreover, it is generally only written works that are seen to 'count', with other forms of publication such as conference presentations and media coverage being seen as relatively 'valueless'. This, however, varies between countries and assessment scheme.

Such exercises can place researchers under enormous institutional and peer pressure to deliver certain forms of prescribed research output, as it is not simply the individual that is rewarded or penalized, but the whole department (whose budget is dependent on collective performance). In turn these exercises can work to (self-)discipline academics by creating institutional systems that reward the 'right' kinds of publication (through rapid

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO PUBLICATION

promotion, access to research monies, stable employment) and punish those that fail to do so (through discontinuation of employment, stalled career paths, higher teaching and/or administrative loads, and so on). In this kind of environment researchers need to adopt a strategy that minimizes stresses and outcomes that hinder their research and maximizes benefits and the freedom to pursue their academic and career goals. The simplest way to achieve this balance is to fulfil the minimum criteria of assessment, providing the freedom to then pursue dissemination strategies designed to fulfil other goals. These other strategies, to a greater or lesser degree, will still potentially contribute to assessment criteria, perhaps replacing other work due to be assessed. Of course this strategy to cope with an assessment exercise is reliant on being able to fulfil the minimum criteria of assessment. If, as time passes, this looks increasingly unlikely, then another strategy is needed.

A strategy to deal with setbacks and failures

As Chapter 1 detailed, successful dissemination requires certain knowledges and skills; it is certainly not assured. A project might be a great success and produce useful empirical material and theoretic ideas, but if you do not know what the conduit of publication expects (and thereby transgress rules concerning submission and production) or your work fails to meet specific criteria and standards (such as focus, format, style, length, standard of argument and evidence, standard of language, grammar and punctuation, and so on), then it can be difficult to get work accepted by editors and publishers and distributed.

If you are having difficulty getting material accepted for publication, the first thing that needs to be done is a review of your tactics and experiences. Submitted work is very rarely rejected by publishers, editors, conference organizers and so on without reason. It is true that some work can be rejected for the wrong reasons, but again this is relatively rare. More usually the problem lies in a mismatch between the submitted work and the need to follow the 'rules of the game'. For example, the most common reasons articles submitted to journals are rejected are: the topic was not appropriate to the journal foci; the argumentation and evidence presented was weak or unconvincing; the narrative of the article was poor in comparison to what was expected; or the article failed to make connections to other relevant literature and therefore lacked context. Similar and other

ACADEMICS' GUIDE TO PUBLISHING

reasons relate to book proposals, conferences and so on, and are discussed in each relevant chapter. Comments from editors and referees, while often painful to read, do give valuable advice that will explain where they think you are going wrong in relation to the 'rules'. You might not agree with all of the comments, but it is almost certain that some of them will have merit when viewed against the expected rubric. Work through these comments alongside your submitted work and reflect on how the piece might have been improved to meet their criticism. It might also be useful to ask friends and colleagues to take a look at the work and referees' comments and give you their reflections. The aim is to try to learn from the experience.

The second thing that needs to happen is for you to use the findings from your review to change your future tactics of dissemination. If the reason your work is being rejected is that it does not follow the brief of submission, then find the relevant guidelines and follow them in future. If the standard of writing is affecting whether a piece of work is accepted, then work hard to improve the deficiencies. If need be, read books on how to improve your writing style (see Chapter 4) or attend a writing course. If your book proposal is being rejected for being too parochial then think about how the text might be broadened to have wider appeal. If your articles are being rejected by the top journals in the field, which often have high rejection rates and only accept the work of the highest quality, then perhaps think about submitting to lower-rated journals, thus building up your experience and confidence. In other words, use the feedback you receive and your experiences to learn and adapt.

The following chapters provide specific advice in relation to the different forms of dissemination available to meet whatever needs you have.

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