

InterScience Research Network

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Invited Talks

InterScience Research Community

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Publish or Perish

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Publish or Perish



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WRITING A JOURNAL PAPER

Prepare for a journey that:

- Will take longer than you expect
- Will force you to leave your comfort zone as you
 - Learn new ideas
 - Develop new skills
 - Encourage new publishing relationships
 - Understand the volatility of the review process
- But it will bring meaning and excitement to your life

SOME TIPS

- Research is fun!
- Publish and flourish! (it's really a game)
- Writing up requires patience and perseverance: it is worth the effort!
- Nobody is perfect: everybody sweats!
- Be thankful of the reviewer who sends you a 10 page report with criticism & comments: that person has spent a lot of time and effort on your work
- Don't put all your eggs in the same basket - work on different papers simultaneously and have papers at different stages of completion
- If you "fail" it is not the end of the world!
- Collaborate in other people's projects (but don't end up doing all the work for them)

Do Not be Intimidated!

Fallacy

You need to have an interesting idea before you can write a paper.

Write a paper, and give a talk, about

any idea,

no matter how insignificant it may seem to you!
It is most-likely publishable!

Writing the paper is how you develop
the idea in the first place!

Why Bother?

Fallacy

We write papers and give talks mainly to impress others, gain recognition, and get promoted.

Your goal: to infect the mind of your reader with **your idea**, like a virus.

The greatest ideas are worthless if you keep them to yourself!

The Idea

- Figure out what your idea is
- Make sure that the reader is in no doubt what your idea is by explicitly stating:
 - “The main idea of this paper is....”
 - “In this section, we present the main contributions of the paper.”

Many papers contain good ideas, but do not spell out what they are!

Related work

Fallacy

To make my work look good, I have to make other people's work look bad!

The Truth: Credit is not Like Money!

Giving credit to others does not diminish the credit you get from your paper!

- Credit is like love.....
- Warmly acknowledge people who have helped you
- Be generous to the competition. "In his inspiring paper, Seiford (2002) showed We develop his foundation in the following ways..."
- Acknowledge weaknesses in your approach

Giving Credit

If you imply that an idea is yours, and the referee knows it is not, then either

- You don't know that it's an old idea (bad)
- You do know, but are pretending it's yours (very bad)

Failing to give credit to others
can kill your paper!

INGREDIENTS OF A GOOD PAPER

- Right subject matter and novelty of idea (timing)
- Readability (Simple and Compelling)
- Clear Contributions
- Comprehensive review of literature
- Well-Defined Problem
- Good model/Strong data
- Repeatable Procedure
- Reliable and Reproducible Results
- Strong analysis
- Thought-provoking discussion
- Organization (Good structure and logic flow)
- Appropriate use of tables & figures
- Frequent references
- Right length

WINNING PAPER

**Winning Paper Formula = Good Presentation +
Good Organization +
Readability**

REMEMBER:

- If a paper is presented well, is well organized, and is clear, it is likely to be accepted even if the English is so-so.
- If a paper is presented poorly, is badly organized, or is unclear, it is likely to be rejected even if the English is excellent.

READABILITY

- In general, avoid
 - Very long paragraphs
 - Very long sentences
- Use
 - Headings
 - Bulleted or numbered lists
 - Italics and boldface (but don't overuse it)
 - Easy-to-understand graphics

USEFUL TIPS

- Build and expand a network of co-authors
- Write with a experienced colleagues

Co-authoring with experienced researchers can be a great experience (Combination of specific skills of authors!)

SOME IDEAS FOR NEW PAPERS

- Application of other research to a new context
- Uncovering a context where previous knowledge is wrong
- Developing a new method that is more efficient, accurate, and/or predictive
- Finding surprising results from failed experiments

PREPARING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

- Adopt the journal's style (APA is generally a common style)
- MUST reference some papers from the journal in your manuscript (if you do not – you are giving the editor a reason to say your paper “does not fit their overall scope”)
- Include a cover letter
- Keep it simple
- Write your abstract--then rewrite it again at the end
- Get help from a copy-editor or friend

TITLE

- The fewest possible words that adequately indicate the contents of the paper
- Important in literature searching
- Should not include extra words
- Should be specific enough
- Generally should not include abbreviations

AUTHORS

- Generally listed from greatest contributions to least
- Very occasionally listed alphabetically

INTRODUCTION

- Information on the importance of topic
- Highlight relevant previous research by accurately stating what the cited material says
- Identification of unanswered question(s)
- Approach you used to seek the answer(s)
- The organization of the remaining sections

BEFORE SUBMITTING A PAPER

- Make sure the abstract is consistent with the rest of your paper
- Read and revise, read and revise, a paragraph over and over
- Show the paper to other people, and revise it some more
- Re-check the journal's instructions to authors

FUNCTION OF REFERENCES

- To give credit to others for their work
- To add credibility to your work by showing that you used valid information sources
- To help show how your work relates to previous work
- To help readers find further information
- Have plenty (40-50)
- Follow format
- Make sure to include at least a handful references from the journal you are submitting
- Avoid old references
- Stick with Academic journals
- Minimize professional journals, proceedings, and websites
- Make sure that all information in the citation is accurate. Remember that often, authors whose work you cite will be chosen as your reviewers. Inaccurate references to their work will not impress them favorably
- Cite only items that you have read
- Check each reference against the original source
- Carefully follow the journal's instructions to authors
- Use other articles in the same journal as models

WHAT TO AVOID IN A PAPER

- Superficial literature search, Wikipedia-based
- Don't claim that "very little" research has been done in an area if you're not 100% sure! most reviewers will react very negatively
- Sloppiness in presentation of text:
 - Respect style sheet
 - Make sure references are in right format
 - Cross-check list of references and make sure names are spelled correctly
- Stay away from sweeping generalizations
- Claims that cannot be substantiated
- Taking a side in a debate and ignoring the counter-arguments (remain objective)

Word Choice

Use the word that conveys your meaning most accurately. When deciding between two such words, choose the shorter one:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------|
| • Approximately | About |
| • Commence | Begin |
| • Finalize | Finish |
| • Prioritize | Rank |
| • Terminate | End |
| • Utilize | Use |

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

- Instead of: “Expert opinions were weighed, then stored, and analysis were performed.”
- Write: “Expert opinion were weighed, stored, and analyzed.”
- Instead of: “The new facility resulted in a decrease in the production waste.”
- Write: “The new facility decreased production waste.”

USE STRONG VERBS – NOT NOUNS

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| • Make an adjustment | Adjust |
| • Make a judgment | Judge |
| • Make a decision | Decide |
| • Perform an investigation | Investigate |
| • Make a referral | Refer |
| • Reach a conclusion | Conclude |

TIGHTEN YOUR WRITING

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| • At the present time | Now |
| • Due to the fact that | Because |
| • It may be that | Perhaps |
| • In the event that | If |
| • Prior to the start of | Before |
| • On two separate occasions | Twice |

FINDING THE RIGHT JOURNAL

- Aim for balance - have papers in some quick “low” level and some slow “high” level journals under review
- Don’t waste your time with conference proceedings
- Avoid non-refereed journals
- Avoid editors that work slowly (you can’t wait 3-4 years for your publication to come out)

GETTING YOUR PAPER ACCEPTED

- Keep it simple (focus on one specific theme) – it is better to explain one idea in detail than many superficially!
- Announce that idea in your Title, Abstract, Introduction and Conclusion
- Follow the style and the structure of papers published in the journal you have in mind
- If more ideas or themes come to mind, state it as future research in your conclusion and split it off for future publications

WHAT DO I LOOK FOR AS AN EDITOR?

- Does the research address an important unanswered question?
- Is the question of broad enough interest?
- Are the methods appropriate?
- Have ethical standards been met?
- Are the results clear and well-documented?
- Are the conclusions reasonable?
- Is the paper well-written?
- Is there enough Content?
- Can it be clearer, shorter (simplicity)?
- What's new (originality)?

WHAT DO I LOOK FOR AS AN EDITOR?

AND

- Experience: Who is the author? (Editors Google your name!)

The screenshot displays the Elsevier Editorial Manager interface for a reviewer. The top navigation bar includes links for 'home', 'main menu', 'submit paper', 'guide for authors', 'register', 'change details', and 'log out'. It also shows the user's role as 'Reviewer' and a notification about an 'Editors' Update Ethics Special Part'. The main content area is titled 'Pending Reviewer Assignments for Madjid Tavana, Ph.D.' and features a promotional banner for Scopus and ScienceDirect. Below this, a table lists the reviewer's assignments. A dropdown menu is open under the 'Action' column, with a red arrow pointing to the 'Scopus Author Search' option.

Action	My Reviewer Number	Manuscript Number	Article Type	Article Title
View Submission View Linked References Scopus Author Search Scopus Title Search Submit Recommendation Send E-mail			Full Length Article	Risks and Rewards of Cloud Computing in the UK Public Sector: a Reflection on Three Organisational Case Studies

Page: 1 of 1 (1 total assignments)

Page: 1 of 1 (1 total assignments)

<< Reviewer Main Menu

QUESTION ON FOLLOW-UP

What if I don't hear from an editor for some time (e.g., 6 months)?

- You MUST Send a VERY friendly reminder to the journal manager, associate editor or editor, but don't be too pushy.

NOTE: IF YOU DO NOT FOLLOW UP ON YOUR PAPER, YOU ARE SENDING A SIGNAL TO THE EDITOR THAT YOU DO NOT CARE IF YOUR PAPER GETS PUBLISHED OR NOT!

REVIEW PROCESS

- Most reviewers typically make up their mind after 5 minutes browsing:
 - Title/author
 - Abstract
 - Conclusions
 - References
 - Introduction

YOUR ACTIONS

- Make your points EARLY
- Bring up your results QUICK
- Highlight your contributions FAST

REVIEW PROCESS

- Most reviewers
 - Want to give constructive critiques to improve the paper
 - Are positive and constructive
 - Make some honest mistakes

Note that some junior reviewers want to establish their credibility

YOUR ACTIONS

- Make reviewers your friends
- Acknowledge your mistakes and make corrections
- Acknowledge reviewers if a good point is made
- Never say that a reviewer is wrong!

IF YOU ARE INVITED TO REVISE YOUR PAPER

- If your paper is returned for revision, you are in good company
- It's OK to get mad, but don't act on it!
- Try to understand what the reviewers are really saying
- If the reviewers did not understand your work, may be you didn't present it clearly in the first place
- Look for clues from the editor (the final referee) as to how much revision is needed

REVISING YOUR PAPER

- Revise and resubmit promptly (< 1 month)
- Include a cover letter
- Indicate what revisions were made by including a RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS' COMMENTS
- Point-by-point address EVERY comment in your response
- Highlight your changes
- Be constructive and positive
- It's not cool to disagree with the reviewers – the Editor or Associate Editor is not on your side!
- Resist the temptation to prepare a passionate response to points with which you disagree
- Be respectful to the reviewers and do not contradict them (losing game)
- Sincerely thank the editor and reviewers for helping you to improve your work
- They have invested a lot of time, mostly on a voluntary basis
- Ask a neutral colleague to review your response

HANDLING REJECTION

- Understand that most papers (> 70%) are typically rejected
- No feeling of shame or losing face
- Thank editors and reviewers for their dedications
- Display class and style – walk away politely
and then.....
- Submit to another Journal

WHAT TO DO WITH A REJECTED PAPER?

- Read rejection letter, take deep breath, and don't send angry emails!
- Return to it when you have calmed down.
- Take criticism into account (do not ignore it)
- See your paper as a new paper
- Submit to a slightly less prestigious journal

QUESTION ON DISAGREEMENT

What if I strongly disagree with an editor's decision?

- Let it go and move on