Publishing Tips
March 2019
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Overview: In this document, I provide an overview of the journal publishing process and discuss tips for success. I also provide answers to questions submitted by my Iowa graduate students.

Peer Review Process:

1) Step 1: Write a paper, get feedback, and prepare to submit it to an academic journal.
2) Step 2: Select a journal (note: most journals have annual reports with the kind of information I'm describing below)
    a. Audience (Do you read this journal? Who else reads it?)
    b. Impact factor (e.g. typical rejection rate?)
    c. Turnaround time (how long does it take journals to review a piece)
    d. Read journal instructions for submissions (word limits, reference style, how to submit online, etc)
    e. Submission to more than one journal at a time is not allowed
3) Step 3: Your paper is sent out for peer review
    a. Journal editors and their editorial assistants select 3-5 reviewers for your piece (experts in your field, usually PhDs) unless the piece is desk rejected
    b. Members of the editorial board may be asked for names too
    c. Journals may ask you for recommended reviewers. Do this!
    d. Editors will look at your bibliography for reviewer ideas too, so cite people who could be good reviewers
    e. Reviewers are asked to review your paper in a specific time period (e.g. 3 weeks to 3 months); this can take a long time between reviewers are not always prompt or willing to complete a review
    f. Single blind vs. double blind review process: most political science journals are double blind (you don't know reviewers & they don't know you)
    g. My thoughts on the peer review process: https://thepoliticalmethodologist.com/2015/12/31/an-editors-thoughts-on-the-peer-review-process/
4) Step 4: Journal editors render a decision on your manuscript
    a. Reject: the journal is not publishing your work so consider revising it and trying another journal
    b. Reject and resubmit: you could submit the paper back to the same journal with a major revision
    c. Revise and resubmit: you are being invited to make revisions and send the manuscript back to the journal (some journals have deadlines)
    d. Acceptance (conditional or outright): the paper will be published by the journal subject to any final revisions being requested
5) Step 5: Author revises paper (for R&Rs)
    a. Include a memo describing revisions (address general changes & each point raised by reviewers and the editor)
    b. You can put things in the review memo that address reviewers' concerns but do not fit in the paper. This will be an online appendix for the piece if accepted. But don't relegate great stuff to appendices! If you have a long description of an original dataset, try publishing it as a separate article.
6) Step 6: Resubmission of paper to journal

    a. Some journals make editorial decision in-house while others send out to the original reviewers.
    b. Some journals solicit one new reviewer on the second round (e.g. *JPR*), which can increase chances for rejection and time to publication.
7) Step 7: Journal makes final decision
    a. If accepted, your paper will go through copy-editing and you will receive page proofs prior to publication (only a week or less for turnaround).
    b. Many journals require submission of replication materials and will replicate your empirical results.
    c. Online appendices must be made available through the journal website or your personal website.

Journal Fit

Q: I think one of my larger questions is about "journal fit". I am starting to develop an implicit understanding of the hierarchy of journals, but I still am confused about what type of papers or projects go where. I don't want to get desk rejected because the paper simply doesn't fit with the journal. I suspect there is a lot of overlap among a lot of journals, but this still sometimes happens. How can you anticipate this possibility (as best as you can)?

1) Do you read the journal and cite material from it in your work?
    a. If not, don't submit! Your chances of getting in are pretty low.
2) Does the published mission of the journal fit with your research?
    a. Go to journal website and click "About" and "Author Guidelines"
    b. See what kinds of submissions they accept: research articles, research notes, special issues, etc.
3) Is the style of research published in the journal similar to your work?
    a. If you use game theory in your work, look for journals that publish formal modeling pieces.
    b. Look also for the density of pieces like yours; more is better.
4) Who do you want to read your work? Do you think those scholars are reading the journal?
    a. Sometimes in IR, publishing in a subfield journal (e.g. JCR) could get more readership for your work than publishing in a general journal (e.g. PRQ).
5) Are you speaking to audiences in more than one discipline or subfield? Or is the topic to a narrower audience?
    a. General field journals (e.g. APSR, AJPS, JOP, PRQ, PSRM, P.S., PoP)
    b. Subfield journals that publish in multiple areas (e.g. World Politics, BJPS, IO, International Security)
    c. Subfield journals that are more specialized (JPR, JCR, II, CMPS, PA, Security Studies, JoGSS, FPA)
    d. Journals that are not ISI rated or predatory (beware!)
6) What is the overall ranking or reputation of this journal? How much does this matter to my career?
    a. On the tenure track, you may have to balance department expectations (e.g. general field journals may be valued highly) and external letter writer expectations (e.g. they might be familiar with your work if you published in a journal they read regularly).
    b. Consider a portfolio strategy where you send some papers to high end journals and others to field specific journals. You can't know for sure which papers will be accepted, but you can try to increase quantity as a junior scholar by maximizing your portfolio.

Journal Rankings/Reputation

Q: I have two questions about publishing. First, is it generally a good idea to submit a paper to top ranked journals first and then next tiers after getting rejected?

In the "olden" days of publishing, this was the strategy! Start at APSR and work your way down!
I think that is a bad strategy for several reasons. First, top journals receive more than 600 submissions a year and reject 93%+ of all papers, so the chances of landing in the top journals is much harder today than in the past. Second, you might have better readership for your piece in a subfield journal. Some of my papers in JCR, for example, have more citations than my papers in JOP (a general field journal). I recommend using a portfolio strategy as noted above, although you can't always predict which papers will be best received by reviewers.

Time to Publication

Q: Second, we were told about "backward calendar for graduation." Probably, some students have goals about publishing (i.e. total number, particular journals, or the combination of them). To achieve the goals, we need to know how long it takes to get a paper published. It would be helpful to know how long the process takes (depending on journals).

Q: How can I know which journals are usually fast and which are usually slow?

Many journals publish information about processing time, rejection rates, breakdowns by topics/subfields, etc. For ISA journals, for example, you can find this information on the ISA website. If a journal is affiliated with an association (e.g. AJPS-MPSA) or section (e.g. PA-methods section of APSA), then you might find the journal reports through those association pages or on the journal's website. You can always email the editors and ask for the most recent editorial report to get this information too.

Ask around! The efficiency with which journals process manuscripts varies a lot across editorial teams (which change every 5 years for ISA journals, for example). It is better to submit early in a team's editorship because they are fresh. You might avoid submitting in the last year of an editorial term for a similar reason. Editors are burned out and they might not want to fill too many pages of the journal to crowd out the incoming team.

**ISA Journals 2018 statistics**

| ISA Journal | Avg Time | # new ms | desk reject | reject | r&r | accept |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FPA | 63 | 198 | 23.7% | 67.7% | 8.6% | |
| II | 47 | 194 | 16.4% | 75.6% | 24.4% | |
| IPS | 60.5 | 183 | 60.1% | | 17.7% | 13.4% |
| ISP | 56.3 | 117 | 51.2% | 18.7% | 21.9% | 8.1% |
| ISQ | 58 | 659 | 50.7% | 38.3% | 10.7% | |
| ISR | <60 | 312 | 39.2% | 30.9% | 21.9% | 7.9% |
| JoGSS | 57 | 174 | 27.6% | 23.5% | 23% | 5.2% |