

1

WHEN, WHAT AND WHERE TO PUBLISH

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter will be especially helpful if:

- You are unsure about whether or not to produce an article at this stage in your research career.
- People have offered you a mass of advice, some of it contradictory, and you want to sort through it in deciding how best to approach an article.
- You want to produce an article but feel unsure about the most productive way to approach the material.
- You are nervous about the whole process of writing an article.

As you begin to read this book, we feel that we know you a little. You are interested in writing an article for a journal – that is presumably why you are reading it. We also know that you are not especially interested in doing this the hard way, by trial and error, but would rather take the most direct route to success. So, you want to learn the craft of writing journal articles and use the advice in this guide to achieve this. You also know a little about us: you will probably have scrutinised the back cover and table of contents of this book before you started to read, so you know who we are and how we are approaching this subject.

What we cannot know about each other, just yet, is the approach we would all take to writing journal articles. You will learn about our approach as you read on, and at the same time you will be devising your own strategies, taking the advice from this book where you feel you need it. You may simply skim read

2 PUBLISHING JOURNAL ARTICLES

some sections (you might not, for example, be suffering from writer's block) whilst others will be beside you as you plan, form and write your article.

We cannot know how far you are along your journey to a completed article. Perhaps you have submitted an article in the past and not been successful, or you might have several articles published but want help with one aspect of the process which you find burdensome. You may well, of course, be facing the challenge of writing your very first journal article. It is for this reason that we have structured this book so as to take you from the very first stage of the process right through to the end of your article and beyond. We might not be your constant companions on the journey, but we hope that you will return to the book again and again as each new challenge arises.

What we do not need to know about you is your specific situation. This guide has been designed to support any scholar who is interested in this field, whether you are a research student in the early stages, or a more experienced postgraduate, whether you are an early career researcher or an academic with far more experience. Indeed, you might not be in academia at all. We refer throughout to supervisors and mentors. You might have a doctoral supervisor, you might have a research mentor, but really we mean here anyone who you feel is offering you advice on your development as a researcher, and this could be several people in your life. The examples we have used have been drawn from many disciplines and the advice is relevant to writers regardless of their first language or the location of their institution.

It is worth us pointing out at the outset that, whilst our focus in this guide is on helping you to produce a successful article, it will soon become clear to you that the advice we offer is relevant well beyond this task. Many forms of writing require you to work through the stages we outline throughout this book, so you may find that you return to it repeatedly, in writing research bids, producing a book chapter or monograph, preparing a conference paper, indeed, whenever you are required to disseminate your research through the written word.

The first question to ask yourself is, funnily enough, the one most easily and often overlooked. Why do you want to write a journal article? It may seem like asking the obvious – of course you want, and need, to become a published scholar – but your motivation for writing will have a significant effect upon the early stages of your journey. You need to be clear about why you are writing so that you can ensure that you end up in the right place, with the right article, at the right time.

WHY ARE YOU GOING TO WRITE AN ARTICLE?

If you spend a little time now considering your reasons for writing an article you will be able to take control of the situation and move ahead effectively. We have listed below some of the most common motivations for beginning on a journal article, and then we offer you some advice on each situation.

- You have been told that a chapter or essay would make a good article.
- You think it will advance your academic career.
- You hope it will help your career outside academia.
- Everyone else seems to do it.
- You want your ideas to reach a wider audience.
- You hope to increase your academic network.
- You enjoy writing.

It may be that several of these factors have come together to make writing a journal article seem like the next logical step in your career as a scholar. Let us look at each in turn.

YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT A CHAPTER OR ESSAY WOULD MAKE A GOOD ARTICLE

This is an exciting position to be in, having work which you produced with no thought of publication being considered as worthy of publication. You will, naturally, feel flattered that it is so admired and you will want to get on with publishing it. This may be the best option, of course, but you are unlikely to be able simply to send off your piece and expect it to be snapped up by a journal publisher. There are advantages and challenges to this situation, and a clear way forward:

ADVANTAGES

The work already exists, so you are not starting from scratch, which could make the process easier. In reality, although this will rightly boost your confidence, you will still have challenges to face.

CHALLENGES

Because the work already exists in one form (as a chapter of your dissertation or thesis, for example) it can be far more difficult than you might expect to convert it into an article. Your readership is going to be different and it will be read out of its original context, so you will need to turn it into a free standing article rather than an embedded piece of writing.

MOVING ON

Although you have the advantage of material which you have already written, you will need to deconstruct the work, identifying the salient points and reworking them to create an article which is fit for purpose.

GETTING HELP

You will find the sections on adapting your work in the next chapter especially useful.

YOU THINK IT WILL ADVANCE YOUR ACADEMIC CAREER

And why should you not think this? We hear all the time about the importance of publishing within academia, and it is certainly taken as a measure of research success. Much of the funding for any institution comes from forms of research assessment which rely on publications as an indication of research activity.

ADVANTAGES

Publication of a journal article will get your name out there and so will increase your standing in the academic community. It will therefore be a benefit to your career.

CHALLENGES

In an environment under ever increasing funding pressure, you absolutely must ensure that you are publishing at the right time for you, and in the right place. You will need to analyse how much time you can dedicate to writing an article amongst all of the other competing demands on your time and prioritise it accordingly. You also must, absolutely must, seek advice. Your article, and so your reputation, will be judged not only on its content, but also on where it is published, and this is going to be vital if you are to get the maximum benefit for your efforts.

MOVING ON

Seek support and guidance from your supervisor or mentor, from your colleagues, from any research advisory board within your institution. Make sure that you are perfectly clear about the benefits of publication before you begin to write the article itself.

GETTING HELP

Before you seek advice you will probably want to have an idea of what you might publish. The early chapters of this guide will help you in this, and we would recommend that you do not go beyond the early planning stages before you work on the placement of your article. It makes much more sense to write with a target journal in mind than to write it and then have to adapt the work at a later stage.

YOU HOPE IT WILL HELP YOUR CAREER OUTSIDE ACADEMIA

In some ways you are on safer ground here. If you are already working in a professional area with which you are familiar, you are likely to be fully aware of the type of publication you need to target, and the benefits which will accrue from publishing an article in your field.

ADVANTAGES

You know your area, the competition might be a little less fierce in trying to place your article (depending upon your professional area) and you can be clear about your target readership.

CHALLENGES

If you are aiming at a profession subsequent to your academic research, rather than working in it already, you will need to carry out the same level of research as we have suggested above, so that you can guarantee that you are targeting the best journal for your ambitions and your research area.

MOVING ON

Your focus cannot be entirely on your research: you will need to spend time assessing the market in professional journals in your field to see what might appeal to that readership. It may be more likely that you will have to focus on just one aspect of just one part of your research and work it up into an article which will be of greatest interest to your chosen readership.

GETTING HELP

The support within academia will be the same as above, your supervisor or mentor, your research colleagues and so on, but you will also need support from your profession. Canvas the widest possible range of opinion from those you think will have the 'inside information' on where and what to publish.

EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS TO DO IT

It can sometimes seem as if scholars are constantly writing articles, throwing them off at a moment's notice every day of the academic week. This is just not the case. We think that the ratio of article talked about as being 'in the pipeline' as compared to those actually written, let alone published, is at least four to one. So, you are going to have to cut through the mythology and find out what is really happening in your area of expertise. In some areas and within some institutions, for example, it is far more common to produce full texts, either monographs (single authored books) or jointly published volumes, than articles. In other areas, articles are the norm.

ADVANTAGES

If you find that it is the case that articles are the most usual route to publication in your field, and that there are many of them published each year, this could mean that you have fertile ground for your publication, with plenty of journals being published in your area, all of which need to include articles.

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CHALLENGES

These are an obvious corollary of the advantages: many eager scholars clamouring to find publishers could mean stiff competition.

MOVING ON

You will have to be astute about the approach that you take. However mainstream your research area, be prepared to be adaptable in order to produce an article which might not reflect the main body of your research, but which will capture the imagination of journal editors.

GETTING HELP

Your greatest source of help, beyond this guide, will be the journals themselves. Researching each journal and reading copious back copies will give you a good feel not only for what topics and approaches have been popular in the past, but also give you a good feel for the current direction of the journal. This can seem like a time-consuming distraction, but it is a far better use of your time than simply writing an article and then waiting in vain for someone to publish it.

YOU WANT YOUR IDEAS TO REACH A WIDER AUDIENCE

This is perhaps the most natural reason for wanting to write an article: dissemination is the natural instinct of most scholars, and it provides a powerful motivation to write and be published.

ADVANTAGES

Your motivation will be high and you will enjoy following the guidance in this book as a way to increase your effectiveness and chances of publication. Your natural research excitement should come through in your writing.

CHALLENGES

In your enthusiasm for disseminating your ideas, you might overburden your article with every single research idea you have. This will inevitably lead to a cramped and superficial article, even if you are in the early stages of your research career.

MOVING ON

Whilst you can give yourself fairly free rein to let your passion for your research show through at the writing stage of the process, try to curb your excitement a little in the early stages, as you plan your article and select material.

GETTING HELP

It can be difficult to assess how much material would make for a good article unless you have plenty of experience, and it can be demoralising and difficult to have to reduce the content of an article significantly once it has been written. Use the planning advice in this book to produce a communication platform. Discuss your plan in detail with those around you, aiming to cut the ideas down to a size and shape which fits the journal you have in mind. Although seeing your article in print is going to be a thrill regardless of where it is published, try not to stint on the time you spend researching journals: your work deserves the best possible showcase.

YOU HOPE TO INCREASE YOUR ACADEMIC NETWORK

In this respect, journal articles can work in a similar way to giving papers or presentations at conferences: fellow scholars from all over the world may contact you as a result, and you can increase your academic network significantly in this way.

ADVANTAGES

You will increase your network, and if this is your primary aim you need to ensure that the topic on which you publish is one in which you have a 'live', active interest, rather than one which you worked on some time ago and which is of only limited relevance to your current research activity.

CHALLENGES

You will need to strive to create an 'open' article, one which raises questions and thought provoking challenges in the readers. If you appear simply to be trying to offer the 'last word' in an area (impossible in any case in reality) you are less likely to invite comment and so will not boost your academic network as much as you might have hoped.

MOVING ON

This need not be a great challenge, as long as you remember in the planning stages to introduce an 'open' aspect to your article.

GETTING HELP

Conferences, research seminars and symposia can help here. If you are happy to present an early version of your article to your colleagues and fellow researchers, you will get a good idea of how lively the response to your article will be.

YOU ENJOY WRITING

It is hard to fault a love of writing as a reason to produce a journal article: you have an enjoyable and satisfying time ahead of you!

ADVANTAGES

It is surprising how many scholars actually do not especially enjoy the process of writing, so if you know that you are not one of them you have an automatic advantage when it comes to crafting a journal article.

CHALLENGES

Your natural love of writing can lead you astray dramatically. What starts out as a journal article can rapidly become an embryonic monograph almost without you noticing.

MOVING ON

You must exert a strict discipline over yourself. However much you enjoy writing, and however much you are convinced that your potential readers would be interested in a fascinating point you are making, a journal article presents a restricted space in which to write. You must plan meticulously and (perhaps more challengingly) you must stick firmly to your plan, regardless of temptation.

GETTING HELP

Focus on the planning chapters of this book before you go on to study in any detail the sections on writing. If you find that you simply cannot seem to stay within a word count, try introducing another stage in the process. Take your plan and expand it to the full article, but only in bullet points. Then expand each bullet point into beautiful writing, but refuse to allow yourself to introduce even one single extra piece of information.

WHEN SHOULD YOU WRITE AN ARTICLE?

The obvious initial response to this question is *now*. You have decided that you want to write an article. You feel that you should be aiming for publication. You have bought this book, so is that not the only possible answer to the question? You are probably right to answer ‘now’. It takes an inordinate amount of time for an article to go from writing to publication and your academic reputation, perhaps your career advancement, relies on you publishing. We spend much of our lives urging our research students to get out there and share their work with the world, fully aware of the pitfalls of ignoring this important aspect of the life of a scholar. If you are aware that you have already left it a

little later than you had hoped, or if you are being strongly advised by your supervisor or mentor to begin the process, then you need do nothing more than plunge into this guide and begin on the road to an article. However, if you feel, having taken advice, that you have some leeway as to when to start on your next, or perhaps your first, article, then this checklist might help you.

Before you take the plunge

- 1 Putting aside any everyday moans and groans about overwork, do you have time to begin on an article right now?
- 2 Are there no other competing demands upon your attention which you feel would harm your work if they were neglected a little in favour of writing an article?
- 3 Does your subject area tend to favour articles over books as the most desirable form of publication?
- 4 Do you have the germ of an idea, and some research material to support it, which you feel would make a good article?
- 5 Do you have a good sense of where you can most advantageously submit your article for publication?
- 6 Do you know the best way to approach your chosen journal? Does it offer guidance on this (either in the journal itself or on its website) and are you clear about how to approach it? If not, can your supervisor or mentor offer guidance on this?
- 7 Do you tend to write in short bursts, mulling your thoughts over in between periods of writing?

If you have answered ‘yes’ to all of these questions, you are ready to go and can happily read on, knowing that this is a good time to begin your article. If you have answered ‘no’ to any of the questions, it does not necessarily mean that you should not go ahead now, but it would be worth reading our guidance below first:

1 I do not have the time to write an article now

The good news is that very few academics feel they have the time to produce an article right now – ever. Yet they have to do it, so how? The secret is to assume that there will never be a perfect time to set aside the space to write an article, and then focus on how you work best. If you are happy to devote the time to planning an article, it is then possible to write it in small sections, allowing yourself just an hour or so for each writing session. This is often advocated nowadays as the most productive way for academics to write. However, if you know that this simply would not work for you, you will need

10 PUBLISHING JOURNAL ARTICLES

to plan your time so that you can move around your research and other commitments until you reach the point where you can allow yourself enough time to concentrate simply on writing, and you will blank this time out firmly in your diary. This may put off the moment when you actually begin to write, but it will ensure that you can write with total concentration and at some speed once you begin.

2 It will harm my research progress if I take time to write an article now

This is a similar concern to the one expressed above, but suggests that you have analysed your situation and come to a studied conclusion about your commitments, rather than simply suffering from the crowded timetables under which many academics labour on a daily basis. Before you abandon the idea of writing an article altogether, work with your supervisor or mentor to ensure that your perception is, indeed, correct. In this way you can postpone writing an article safe in the knowledge that you are doing the right thing. Of course, the secret to success in these circumstances is to postpone the challenge rather than abandoning it altogether. Before you know it, several months will have slid by, so make sure that you have a deadline for coming back and revisiting the question of when you should begin.

3 Writing a book would be a more advantageous aim in my discipline

It is never safe to assume that this is the case simply on the basis of casual conversations or a general 'feel' for your area. You will need to investigate this as thoroughly as possible, at the very least by talking to your supervisor or mentor and your head of department or school. If it does genuinely seem to be the case that you should focus your energy on producing a full text, you might find yourself in a conundrum. It may be that you will not be in a position to produce a full-length monograph until much later in your research, so consider instead the option of contributing to a joint authored publication, in which case much of the advice offered in this guide will be of relevance to you. Do also make sure that you keep an eye on the situation: it may change and you will need to be ready to change your writing strategy in line with developments.

4 I do not have an idea, or enough material, for an article

This is so unlikely to be the case that we feel we can almost dismiss it out of hand. Except, of course, that it is a very real concern for many facing their first article and so we want to address with you the potential difference between your perception and the probable reality. Good journal articles rely upon a

good idea, based on a sound premise which can be supported by reliable evidence. That is all. If you look at it in this way, you will find that you already have all of these things in place.

Having spent many years working with researchers we have learnt that the first of these, a good idea and a sound premise, are the key elements in article writing. You may have to spend a little time after making an initial plan gathering up more evidence or ordering the information that you have in order to show how well it supports your idea, but the fact that you will have collected and analysed less evidence than a scholar with many years' more experience does not disqualify you from writing an excellent article; it simply means that your article may have a narrower focus, and will not suffer at all from that.

If we have not yet convinced you, we hope you will be inspired by the next chapter of this guide, which will demonstrate for you the different ways in which you might find your ideas and how to work them up into an article.

5 I do not know where best to try to place an article

This is common to most scholars when they approach the challenge of writing an article, and it is a good reason to pause for a while. Until you know the journal and readership at which you are targeting your article, it can be disadvantageous to jump in. By doing the research (some of which is outlined in the next section of this chapter) you will not only get a better idea of how to nuance your article towards a particular readership, you will also be exposing yourself to the style of writing in different journals, and this is going to be useful to you once you actually start to write up the article. So, a pause here is appropriate, but a complete full stop is not. Do the research, find the right journal, and you are ready to move ahead.

6 I do not tend to write in short bursts and leave time to think between writing sessions; I prefer to produce a piece all in one go

There are two distinct types of writer: those who enjoy mulling over an article for many months, occasionally writing a paragraph or two and never feeling (or assiduously ignoring) any pressure to complete it, and those who would find this an almost unbearable, tedious and counter-productive approach. It is vital, at this early stage, that you know which sort of writer you are. Thinking back to your previous experiences will help. Most of us tend to know whether we love the excitement of deadlines or always complete significantly before them, whether we enjoy late night writing so as to get something finished or would prefer to rest and begin again the next day, whether we tend to rely on

12 PUBLISHING JOURNAL ARTICLES

adrenaline to get us through each challenge or would rather try to eliminate that aspect of the process.

If you are the former, a long-haul writer, you need to start as soon as possible so as to give yourself time to produce your article. Once it is complete you can be confident that it is the best you can achieve, having spent so long considering the topic, although there is a chance that you might never actually get around to finishing it. If you are the latter, a sprint writer, you run the risk of writing in such a rush that you will miss out salient points and not spot the omissions before you submit, so in your case we would advise you to delay writing until you have formed a painstaking plan and reviewed and revised it several times, just to ensure that you can write at speed and with confidence.

WHAT SHOULD YOU PUBLISH?

You may already have a clear idea about the topic of your article and you may even have some draft material in place, but now is a good time to look anew at what, exactly, you plan to cover. This can seem simple, but the source of your material is often as important as the topic area at this stage of the process.

You will probably already have used and reused some of your material, perhaps by writing a draft chapter for your thesis and also covering similar material in a conference paper. You will also have material which has only been written up by you once, and some research which is little more than notes on findings. All academics live their lives in this state of flux: gathering, analysing, drawing some early conclusions, writing up a little, leaving some work alone to simmer whilst your mind ticks over, thinking about its implications. This is a good position to be in, as you can make creative choices about your source material for an article.

Our main injunction here would be to avoid the obvious, just for the moment, whilst you consider the advantages and disadvantages of the source material to which you might turn for your article. It is so easy (for researchers and their mentors alike) to simply assume that the best way to approach this is to rework a chapter of your dissertation or thesis. This might be the case, but it can also throw up more problems than solutions, so we outline here a range of options open to you, so that you can consider your best approach before you move on.

A word on terminology here: the terms 'dissertation' and 'thesis' can mean different things in different countries and between institutions. When we refer to a dissertation, we mean a substantial piece of written up research, perhaps 20,000 to 30,000 words in length and typically produced at master's level. A thesis, in this guide, refers to a more substantial piece of work, perhaps 80,000 to 100,000 words long, produced at doctoral level.

A THESIS CHAPTER

This is an obvious first choice, as the work is there already and adapting it can seem, at least initially, to be a far easier task than writing from scratch. In many cases this might be true, but there are advantages and disadvantages to this approach:

ADVANTAGES

- The material already exists in written form, so it is a safe place to start.
- You will already have crafted it beautifully, and you are proud of it.
- You can feel confidence in the conclusions you drew.

DISADVANTAGES

- You did not write the chapter for an article readership.
- You will have to recontextualise a section of the work and perhaps alter the style of writing.
- You might be too close to see how to do this, or be a little jaded with the topic.

A DRAFT CHAPTER

If you are in a position where you are working on your dissertation or thesis now, or perhaps working on a monograph, you could take advantage of this, as long as you are aware of the ramifications:

ADVANTAGES

- The work is in flux, so breaking a section of it down and working it up into an article is perhaps easier than reworking a completed and polished chapter.
- The readership of the journal can be uppermost in your mind as you work it into an article from its original, draft form.
- You will be confident in the material, and will enjoy working with it.

DISADVANTAGES

- It is very unlikely that you will be able to produce the article and then simply reinsert it back into the original piece of work: you will have to view this as a separate project.
- You might lose confidence in the organisation of the material in the original piece of work, once you have worked up an article from a draft chapter.
- As you will not have completed the original piece of work, you are laying yourself open to the chance that you would have changed your mind about some of your conclusions by its completion, which might leave you frustrated subsequently with the direction of the article which you will, by then, have submitted.

NEW RESEARCH

This moves us to the other end of the scale: the possibility of taking research which is not yet written up in any form:

ADVANTAGES

- This will be exciting, as the ideas will be fresh in your mind.
- You will not need to adapt existing writing, which can be an arduous task.
- You can focus from the outset on your target readership.

DISADVANTAGES

- This material might not have gone through the informal 'peer review' of discussion and analysis with your supervisor or mentor.
- You might feel less secure in all the facets of the material and your interpretations than in your completed work.
- You might feel, quite naturally, a little protective of material which has yet to be circulated widely.

OLD RESEARCH

Many of us have research material which we once used for purposes such as research proposals, research seminar presentations, teaching or similar. This is often in embryonic form and can be an extremely productive source of article material, but as always there are issues to consider:

ADVANTAGES

- It is pleasing to think that you are wasting nothing in your academic journey.
- As this will be in embryonic form, you can craft it into an article relatively easily.
- You will gain confidence as you write by bringing your more mature knowledge and understanding to an earlier piece of research.

DISADVANTAGES

- You may well have changed your mind about the conclusions you drew some time ago.
- Your more recent research material might diminish or even negate the relevance or validity of some aspect of the earlier research.
- You might be tempted to ignore both of these considerations and then waste your time planning and drafting what you finally realise will be a less than convincing article.

SPARE RESEARCH

This can be a delight: material about which you were enthusiastic, and which you perhaps worked up into a plan or an early draft, but which you then had to abandon because your research took a new direction. Now, it is sitting on your computer or in your notes somewhere, just begging to be turned into an article, once you have considered the pros and cons:

ADVANTAGES

- You will not have worked the material up so much that you have become bored with it.
- You will be able to disseminate an interesting idea to a wide audience.
- It might gain you feedback which could help you to develop it further in the future.

DISADVANTAGES

- Spending time on this material will take your focus away from your main area of research for a while, and might confuse your principal research direction.
- You might be tempted to try to develop it further after your article, when in fact it is a naturally end stopped area of research for you.
- Although you ostensibly abandoned it because it did not quite fit your purposes at the time, you will need to interrogate it thoroughly to ensure that it was not also flawed in some way.

JOINT RESEARCH

All joint research involves compromise. You will have decided with your research partner (or partners) both the direction of the project as it developed and the material which was to be included in the final outcome (perhaps an article, conference paper or more substantial piece of work). This can leave you brimming with ideas which were not explored at the time, or with material which was never used, so it seems like a good place to revisit for a journal article, with just a few caveats:

ADVANTAGES

- The frustration of abandoning research material can be relieved by crafting it into a journal article.
- You have a wider context into which you can place the material, as there is already some output from the joint research endeavour.
- You can feel confident that the material has already, to some extent, been scrutinised by your peers.

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DISADVANTAGES

- This can be dangerous ground. You absolutely must, without fail, consult your partner researchers before you even approach this research material again.
- Your research partners may already have used some of the material, which might compromise the article you have in mind.
- If you are aiming for a single authored article, returning to this material might jeopardise that objective. You will, of course, cite both the earlier output and your fellow researchers, but you might also find it necessary to work again with your partners. This could be a fruitful process, but might frustrate you if you really wanted to work alone on an article.

RESEARCH SEMINARS

You are not always in control of which material exactly you will be working up for a research seminar. For the sake of collegiality you might well enter a research tangent and consider your research in a new light, or even conduct new research, simply in order to contribute to a research seminar. This can be a pleasure in itself, but can also bring the benefit of leaving you with material which you do not intend to use in a substantial piece of written output, but which could be used in an article:

ADVANTAGES

- The research paper you gave might be in a slightly unfinished form, with bullet pointed discussion points, for example, rather than fully worked up paragraphs. This is ideal material for the beginnings of an article.
- You will have had the benefit of immediate feedback from your peers, in what is usually an informal and productive environment, and this will give you confidence in your material and a sense of how it might develop or be edited down for an article.
- If the research is slightly away from your usual research area, you might enjoy more options in terms of journals which might take your article, rather than relying on those traditionally associated with your principal research area.

DISADVANTAGES

- When you come to review the seminar paper again, you might feel far less enthusiastic than you did at the time, because you have moved on in your thinking.
- People can be overly polite, and you might feel in retrospect that a minor comment offered quietly during the seminar actually undermines your entire hypothesis.
- If you moved away from your core research for the occasion, you might need to find new mentors for this area of research before you are happy to work it up into a finished article.

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

These are, without doubt, valuable sources of material for journal articles, as long as you are aware of the benefits and pitfalls:

ADVANTAGES

- A conference paper or presentation usually contains about the right amount of material for a journal article.
- You have produced it with a relatively wide audience in mind, so it should suit the relatively wide readership of a journal.
- Your tone and approach should be right: immediate and gripping whilst being intellectually sound and persuasive.

DISADVANTAGES

- You might have had your confidence in the material shattered by an unhelpful or even aggressive line of questioning at the conference. You will need to overcome this initial reaction if you are to reinterrogate the material and make a considered judgement on its value for a journal article.
- Material for a conference is often presented as a work in progress, and the conference audience will have been aware of this. Your journal article will not be the last word in this area of research, but it will need to include a greater sense of confidence and certainty about the value and interpretation of the research material.
- Giving a conference paper or presentation may have generated new partnerships and fresh ideas for joint publications or projects, and so you might want to reserve your position on publishing until you see how these prospects develop.

TEACHING MATERIAL

This source of material for a journal article is surprisingly often overlooked, perhaps because it was never intended for publication, yet it can offer interesting publication possibilities, if approached in the right way:

ADVANTAGES

- As with a conference paper or presentation, you will have tailored the material for a relatively wide audience.
- You will have received instant feedback, but from relatively non-expert audience members. The benefit of this is that they may have asked the obvious questions which a more specialised audience might overlook, but which journal readers may want answered.

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- You have had to produce context as well as hypotheses, which makes it perfect for a complete journal article.

DISADVANTAGES

- If you were teaching a session at a fairly basic level, the material might not be at the right level for your chosen journal and will need to be worked up again.
- If your material was targeted towards the needs of a particular course, this might provide a poor fit for your chosen journal.
- Because the material was used in a teaching context, you might find that your article naturally tends towards a more laboured explanation than is needed for a journal readership, with the consequence that your article can seem patronising or tedious.

From anecdotal evidence, we believe that the most common piece of advice offered to researchers considering writing a journal article is simply to rework a dissertation or thesis chapter. As you may have gathered from this section, we have some reservations about this approach. It may, indeed, be the best way forward for you, and it certainly has some advantages in terms of familiarity and academic rigour and review, but it can also cause problems. Our advice is not to dismiss this approach, but also to explore every option open to you. There is no ‘perfect’ body of material that will transform itself effortlessly into an article, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. You will want to make the article insightful, relevant and persuasive, and work undertaken to this end must be a good thing. The decision you make now is going to be vital not only to the ultimate success of your article, but also to the ease with which you can transform research material into an elegant and persuasive piece of writing, so time spent now on considering your options will pay dividends in the future.

WHERE SHOULD YOU PLACE AN ARTICLE?

There can be a temptation to write an article and then to search around trying to find a journal whose needs seem perfectly to suit your article. This is rarely a productive way to approach the task. You will, of course, have an idea of the subject of your article, the range of material you aim to include, the argument you hope to develop and the conclusions you feel you could offer. However, by targeting your journal first, you can ensure that the way your article develops from this point on is nuanced at every stage to the needs of a clearly identified reader, and this is an important aspect of article writing.

Identifying the right journal for your work is often a challenge and there is no easy answer, but there are avenues you can pursue which will help to make the choice clear to you.

Ask your supervisor or mentor

This seems an obvious starting point, and you may have had this discussion already. A word of warning though: it is worth considering how much, and how recently, your supervisor or mentor has published. In a genuine effort to help guide you, your supervisor or mentor might point you towards a journal in which he or she has published in the past, but if this was several years ago, the journal may have changed its direction significantly since then. Similarly, there is no guarantee that your supervisor or mentor has extensive experience of publishing journal articles, and he or she may not be able to give you the most comprehensive view on the subject. The answer to this dilemma is to canvass opinion from a wide range of sources: get as much information as you reasonably can, and then make your own judgement.

Your library/resource centre

Although of course your library will not hold every journal which you might wish to target, a browse along the shelves and, more importantly, an online browse, will give you a good sense of what is out there. Be careful to avoid hunting just in your specialist area: there may well be more general journals which could offer you opportunities, so check the table of contents from back issues over several months of any that look even marginally likely to be of use to you.

Citations

Although disciplines vary in how much store they place in citations, it would be safe for you to assume that a journal which is cited regularly in scholarly output is going to be of interest to you, and this citation information is available online. As you develop your article, you will want to think in particular about a title which will have the widest possible appeal whilst still reflecting the content of the article accurately, and also your abstract, which needs to include keywords which would help other scholars find (and then cite) your article easily.

Career targets

Journals will list their editorial board or panel, both in the hard copy and online, and this might be worth checking once you have narrowed your hunt

20 PUBLISHING JOURNAL ARTICLES

down to a few likely journals. If you would like to showcase your work in an institution other than your own, submitting an impressive article could be the way to ensure that your name, and your particular field of work, gets noticed.

Longevity

We would not want to urge you to target only the most long-lived and established of journals, as there is much to be said for targeting a new journal which more aptly covers your specialist area. The right journal for your material must be your first priority, but if you have a choice, then it makes sense to discuss with your supervisor or mentor whether a long-established or a more recently-formed journal is the best option in your particular field.

Contacts

It would be inappropriate (and probably disastrous) to approach a contact you have who happens to work on the editorial board or panel of a journal. However, if you do have a reliable contact who works for a journal in any capacity, you might want to discover anything you can about the general principles behind its decision making, such as whether it has any 'special issues' coming up, or whether it is about to branch off into a new direction.

Distribution

Whilst all journals are available globally, they will all have an initial 'home territory' where they are published, and it might be that you are unknowingly biased towards the journals published in your country of study, because you are exposed to these regularly and feel a familiarity with them. You will need to think as widely as possible about your publication. If, for example, you are living and working in America, you will have a plethora of journals to choose from, but if you have carried out research on Italian religious iconography of the sixteenth century, you will also want to consider Italian-based journals. If you are considering writing an article away from a country in which you have some experience, make contact if you can with academics in your field who are already working in that country, to ask for their advice on the most appropriate journal to approach.

Translation

Linked to the point above is the possibility of translation. Not all journals remain in simply one language, and you might want to consider the translation and distribution possibilities, if you believe your article has an especially strong international appeal.

Internet exposure

Our first word of caution here, if you are attracted to a journal which publishes in both hard copy and online, is to ensure that it has impeccable credentials, that it is peer reviewed and that it is a respected outlet. Whilst hard-copy journals also appear online for subscribers, those which are only distributed online might be perceived as having a lesser claim to academic gravitas. This will inevitably change in years to come, with the probability that many journals will only be available online, but until that time comes you need to protect yourself from any imputation of going for the potentially less esteemed option of online only publications, at least for your principal articles. This does not, of course, preclude you from publishing online occasionally – it can be an excellent way to raise awareness of your research – but you must approach this option with care (see especially Chapter 9 of this guide).

OPEN ACCESS

Whilst we have mentioned above the possibilities provided by journals which publish online as well as in hard copy, there is also another trend to consider: open access journals. The concept behind these is simple: they are intended to be free for the reader at the point of consumption, and are funded by institutions, research grants, research councils, and government bodies. These open access outlets are an excellent way for scholars to reach their readership speedily (no printing delays) and so to foster a community of scholarship. They can also be read by those in your field without the limitations of libraries having restricted funding for journals. Despite being free to access, they are not amateur productions: articles are still peer reviewed and can be of the highest standard. As with all publishing ventures you need to approach this option with your eyes open: make sure that you are working with an open access outlet which you can trust and which will further your career and promote your research appropriately. Always ensure before you go ahead that you are very

22 PUBLISHING JOURNAL ARTICLES

clear about how publication in this online form will affect your intellectual property rights. Major journal publishers, such as SAGE, are involved in this movement, so there will be no need for you to compromise professional quality and integrity in order to gain a wide and immediate readership.

Content slant

It is not usually simply the nature of your research which will be of interest to a journal, but your treatment of that research. Journals tend to represent a particular viewpoint on a subject area, displaying an interest in certain aspects of the topics within their purview and publishing articles which fall within a particular remit. The only way to ensure that your article is the 'right' type of article for a journal is to read as many back issues as you need to explore until you get a good feel for what would be particularly appealing to that journal. This has added benefits in that you will soak up the general writing style and format which tend to be favoured by that journal, as well as some inspiration for topic areas of your own. The reason this reading research is so important is that, too often, scholars feel disappointed when their work is rejected when in reality they have produced an excellent article which is entirely worthy of publication, but they have targeted a journal whose editorial board feels that it is not a good fit with its publication agenda.

Speed of publication

This should not be a main factor in your decision making, but it is at least worth glancing at the speed at which an article is likely to progress from submission to publication. The simple answer is always 'too long', but established academics are used to this lengthy timeframe and it is unlikely to change in the near future. Although it might be a little frustrating to have to include an article on your academic CV under 'forthcoming' publications, it will not be a problem; what might be of more concern is the time it is likely to take from submission to a decision on acceptance of an article. This will not generally be a great concern to a scholar, but if you really need that publication at this stage in your career, and you need it in a hurry, it might have some bearing on your decision as you consider competing journals.

Editorial board or panel

Again, this is of secondary concern to you, but you might just check on the published output of the members of the editorial board or panel. This might give you some clues as to the possible 'slant' of a journal, although you will

only be able to take this as a possible guide: it is the journal contents which will be your primary concern.

Journal presence

Certain journals will cause a 'buzz' in the academic world from time to time, as they perhaps change editorial direction or lend themselves to an emerging area of scholarly interest. Keep your ears to the ground: listen to which journals are being discussed at conferences or at your research seminars and be prepared to take the initiative and ask which journals your colleagues think are likely to be increasing their presence in the coming months. In this, do not ignore journals in a country other than the one in which you are currently working.

Specialist issues

Journals will sometimes give over an issue to a particular topic and this could be good news for you. It might be that the journal will publish papers from an academic conference, or send out a call for articles through specialist research groupings. You need to make sure that you are a member of any special interest groups in your area of work: research groupings, regular symposia, conference email lists.

Networking

Throughout this guide we will be urging you to ask for feedback on your article in various stages of its development. Your primary concern will be to gain feedback on the content, format and writing style, but you can also get a sense of how well your article might be received by journals in your area. Once you feel confident that your article is ready for submission, circulate it again asking for feedback on where you might place it. You will already have a target journal, and you will have written with this readership in mind, but being offered other possible journals once it is written gives you useful alternatives if your target journal is not as receptive as you had hoped.

Until this point your focus, naturally, has probably been on writing your article: this is the most immediate challenge you seemed to face. Now you will see that this is not so. Having a great idea for an article, and the material to support it, is an exciting moment. Planning and forming your article is also creative and satisfying. Even writing, whilst sometimes demanding, is under your control and a constructive process, but it is placing your article which is likely to be your greatest challenge. Spending time and energy researching journals and finding the perfect outlet for your work is not time wasted: it is

an essential part of the process and one which you cannot afford to neglect. Finding the best journal at the best time will save you hours of wasted time and energy later, and will help hugely in the task we come to next: selecting a topic and adapting your work.

YOUR ARTICLE AND YOUR ACADEMIC STANDING

We have already asked you to consider, in brief, how the publication of an article might have a positive impact on your career, if you are working within academia. Here we want to consider two aspects of this in detail: impact and the REF (Research Excellence Framework), which has replaced the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) in the UK. Similar organisations exist throughout the world, so the advice we are offering here will be of relevance to you wherever you are carrying out your research and publishing your results.

These two factors, impact and the REF, will undoubtedly have a bearing on your published output and you ignore them at your peril. It is no longer enough simply to publish what you like, where you like, and assume that this will be career enhancing in and of itself. Indeed, one could argue that this never was truly the case.

We would not suggest that you need to be constrained in all the plans you are making by either impact or the REF – that would make no sense either intellectually or practically; what we are suggesting is that you recognise and understand the effect these aspects of academic life will have on your published output. Unfortunately it is not possible in a guide of this length to explore and delineate every ramification of them (although a further book in this series will offer you this detail). What we can give you is a broad guide to how things work, a ‘heads up’ on how and when you should take them into consideration.

Let’s look at ‘impact’ first. The inverted commas around that term are deliberate, indicative of both the importance this word has acquired in recent times and the complexity of interpreting it within the context of the REF. The idea itself is relatively simple: academic research output will be judged (and therefore, through the REF, funds will be allocated) in part by the impact it can be proved to have. In short, this means that, wherever possible, the research presented in a journal article, and the way that it is presented, must be shown to have an effect (cultural, economical, intellectual or educational) both within and beyond academia.

In some areas, this was always a reasonably easy task, as research led naturally to a benefit for the economy or could be shown, with little effort, to have an impact beyond the walls of higher education institutions. In other areas it is very much more difficult, but it still must be addressed. For the foreseeable future, it would just not make sense to ignore it.

If you are coming to the idea of impact anew, you might find it daunting, so here are some guidelines to help you:

- 1 Rather than ‘bolting on’ the idea of impact once you have written the article, consider it in the early planning stages. This does not necessarily mean altering the content, but it might mean highlighting certain aspects of your research over others.
- 2 Consider impact in terms of *where* you publish. An article which you originally intended for a small, select publication might well have more impact if you were to consider submitting it to a different journal.
- 3 Think of your audience. No journal article is set in stone. You may be able to launch from one article to another, the second focusing on one aspect of your research which you feel sure will deliver more impact.
- 4 Understand the impact framework of your department. The research leaders in your department will be creating a research narrative for the REF, and impact will be part of that narrative. By working in conjunction with colleagues you may well find that your research fits nicely within a wider research grouping, which is being used to prove impact for your department’s research output.
- 5 Seek advice. You will not be expected to work through this challenge on your own. There will be experts in your institution who will have studied the requirement documentation for impact carefully, and will be able to guide you in this area, so forget the idea of working in isolation to produce your perfect article: seek advice early and often.
- 6 Try not to panic. If you are not working in an area where impact is obvious (that is, your research is likely to produce patentable ideas, or have a direct impact on the world around you), you might be tempted to throw your hands up in despair, or to simply assume that nothing you have done so far is worth pursuing. This is not going to be the case. You will not need to abandon your plans for an article, nor will you need to produce something radically different from your first intentions. You simply need to factor impact into your thinking about the article.
- 7 Stay positive. As scholars we are all enthusiastic about our research, but the imposition of impact as a criterion can too easily lead us to assume that we just cannot compete, cannot produce anything from our research which is relevant to the need for impact. This leads, understandably, to a negative view of the process (which is just about bearable) but also, potentially, to us feeling negative about our research (and this certainly is not to be tolerated). You are dedicating years of your life to your research, so it must be important to you. All that the impact requirement is doing is asking you to reveal its importance to others and to show, where you can, that it is of benefit to the wider community. If you see this as a positive challenge it will make the whole process easier.
- 8 Be open to sharing. You may be used to disseminating your research in a narrow field of experts, and there is great pleasure to be gained from this. You are communicating with like minded individuals and enjoying the

challenges and benefits that this brings. However, this does not mean that you should be exclusive in your approach. Considering other outlets for your research, as we will suggest several times in this guide, can also bring benefits, as you see your work being considered more widely and having an impact on those who may not be in the tight circle of experts, but who will nevertheless benefit from the work you have done.

The REF is an integral part of lives as scholars, and it must become an embedded feature of your planning; this can be to your advantage. The process by which research output is judged in this way allows you to consider your work in the context of the wider world of academia, and to boost your career as a direct result of your publications. Periodically, your department will be judged on its publication performance (amongst other things, such as the vitality of the research environment) and you will naturally want to be part of this process. You will want to ensure that your publications are 'returned' as part of the REF submission, so you will want to do your best to ensure that you put the best face of your research forward.

If you were regularly producing excellent articles in leading journals in your area, along with a monograph and some chapters in prestigious publications, you could assume that you would be lauded within both your department and the REF process. However, for most of us it is more a case of being selective and using our time wisely to create output which will be of most benefit to our careers at every stage.

The REF makes judgements about the *quality* of your research and this is important. Although one would expect to see high quality research in a leading journal, this does not mean that it does not exist, in abundance, elsewhere. This means that, from your perspective, you should not assume that only a leading journal will do. Given the level of submissions to leading journals, and the inevitable level of rejection just because of the sheer volume of submissions, it is worth seeking advice on the strategic placement of your article.

Judgements are made by REF panels, and each panel might take a slightly different view of how to assess research excellence, albeit within the overarching guidelines of the process. With this in mind, it makes sense for you to talk to the research leaders and managers in your department to get a better idea of the view they are taking as to what will be most beneficial in terms of your department's submission.

The REF requires you to submit 'outputs', it does not specify that each output must be a huge monograph which is going to be the leading text in its field for years to come. It would be pleasing to produce this, of course, but again you must be canny with your time and effort and seek advice on which type of publication best suits the current position of your research and the other demands upon your academic life.

You will notice that in this discussion of impact and the REF we have urged you repeatedly to seek the advice of others, and this is perhaps the most important

guidance we can offer. Every single academic institution and department, throughout the world, will take a view on this, based upon the strengths of the department and the variety of research being carried out within it. This is to your benefit: use the expertise around you to help craft the best possible journal article not just in terms of your research, but also in a way that produces maximum impact: not only the impact defined by the REF, but also the impact on academia that you want to make in your career.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Open access opportunities

www.uk.sagepub.com/sageopen.sp
www.eprints.org/openaccess

Web of Knowledge (citation and journal database)

<http://wok.mimas.ac.uk>

Higher Education Funding Council for England

www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/

Research Councils' Websites

www.rcuk.ac.uk
www.ahrc.ac.uk
www.esrc.ac.uk
www.epsrc.ac.uk
www.bbsrc.ac.uk
www.mrc.ac.uk
www.nerc.ac.uk
www.stfc.ac.uk

Researcher Development Framework

www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234301/Researcher-Development-Framework.html