

A Special Feature: Writing for a Refereed Journal

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Introduction

At the University of the Philippines, research and publication are imperative in pursuing the University's goal of "contributing to the growth, dissemination and application of knowledge" (1984 Revised Code of the University of the Philippines, Chapter 1, Art. 2). It is U.P.'s responsibility "to ensure high academic standards in its primary functions of instruction and research. Extension and other activities must be supportive of these functions" (Chapter 1, Art. 6). Hence, along with teaching, faculty members are expected to undertake researches which will generate new knowledge and updated information to support their teaching. Subsequently, publication of the research results is encouraged.

For UP faculty members, coming up with refereed publications is a vital requirement during their stay in the University. Publication in a refereed journal or book in addition to teaching and extension activities are the bases for promotion and academic recognition of UP faculty members. The minimum qualifications of faculty members with rank of Assistant Professor and higher include "undertaking research and creative works and publication in reputable refereed journals/books" (Faculty Manual Update, 2005). Furthermore, "refereed publications (journal article, book, or book chapter)" is a source of evidence in measuring the research performance of faculty members (Faculty Manual Update, 2005). The Up-or-Out and Tenure Rules require a "refereed publication with the faculty as sole or lead author" to qualify for tenure (1194th Meeting of the Board of Regents, 2005).

Very recently, the Research, Extension and Professional Staff (REPS), the academic non-teaching sector, was also required to come up with published materials as a prerequisite for professional promotion. The University's recognition of the REPS as an academic sector obliged them to follow the publication requirement mandated on faculty members. Producing published materials therefore, is a must not only for faculty but for REPS as well.

There are three major reasons for undertaking a scholarly publication as a major activity in an academic setting. First, it expands the body of knowledge of both the writer and the readers with the new findings and results of the research conducted. Second, particularly for those in the teaching profession, it expands the relationship of research to teaching by using the knowledge gained to impart new and updated information. Third, it develops critical thinking skills as the writer applies the theories, analyzes the results and draws conclusions in the conduct of research (Witt, 1995).

Yet, getting an article to be published, particularly in a scholarly journal, is tedious. The process a writer has to go through before an article is accepted requires countless time and effort. Manuscripts are required to undergo review or refereeing, and most often, the writer would be required to do major revisions or sometimes worse, the article would totally be rejected. One may also assert that writing for publication in a refereed journal requires certain skills and expertise. Hence, this is not very encouraging for many.

Nevertheless, it is equally rewarding for the writer once she/he sees her/his article in print. And like any other skill, writing for publication can be developed. Familiarity with the publication process would be the initial step in gaining confidence to try to produce a publishable material. A positive attitude to comments and criticisms from the referees as well as from other readers is also very vital to successfully come up with a scholarly publication. This is particularly important in writing for a refereed journal.

With the foregoing in mind, it is deemed proper to write about the steps/stages in the publication process and give helpful tips on "getting published." This paper will focus its discussion on "how" an article is published in a refereed journal, including some instructions on writing a publishable material, the refereeing process, rewriting/revising and presswork.

It will however be limited to printed publications and will not include the more modern way of publishing by electronic imprint where even refereed materials can be accessed thru the internet. It does not also intend to delve into the argument on giving premium to international publications vis-à-vis local publications. Hence, articles written in Filipino are covered in this process.

The information integrated in this paper are based on written materials on the topic and experiential accounts of the publication process by the Research and Extension for Development Office (REDO), the publication arm of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD).

The Publication Process

Scholarly publications are expected in the academe. These include journals, monographs, and books which contain research data, reviews of literature, tutorials, case studies, and other types of materials that have lasting relevance. Published information may become outdated or proven inaccurate but the important thing is that the manuscript presents the "current state of art or knowledge at the time of its publication" (ASHA, 1993).

Journal articles are usually based on actual researches done. The journal becomes the venue for sharing the research conducted and its results to a wider audience. At the University of the Philippines, most colleges and units have their own journals and usually welcome materials prepared by external writers. The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research Development (OVCRD) publishes three (3) refereed journals: the Humanities Diliman, Science Diliman, and the Social Science Diliman. Other journals in UP Diliman, to mention a few, include the *Kasarinlan* of the Third World Studies of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, the *Review of Women's Studies* of the University for Women's Studies, the *Philippine Review of Economics* of the School of Economics, the *Plaridel* of the College of Mass Communication and the *Philippine Journal of Labor and Industrial Relations* of the School of Labor and Industrial Relations. They accept materials from outside contributors. A completed research therefore can always find a possible publication outlet which considers the subject within its realm.

Particular guidelines are set by the publishing unit which should be consciously followed in preparing the document for publication. The guidelines may vary according to the policies of the publishing unit. Some publishing colleges/units strictly stipulate specific requirements which include the length of the article (number of words), format of the title and body of the manuscript including the margins, illustrations, tables, footnotes and bibliography.

The editor, upon receiving a material for publication initially assesses if it conforms to the set guidelines. He also "looks for the minimum level of readability and appropriateness of methods utilized" (Witt, 1995).

Substance or content and writing style are the two most important considerations of a good publication material. A scholarly manuscript should contain accurate, updated, comprehensive and relevant information as well as demonstrate logic and clear thinking. More specifically, research reports should be clear on its scientific methodology and statistical analysis, reviews of literature should be comprehensive, accurate and relevant, tutorials should be clearly and accurately presented and case studies should be unique and have significant contribution to the subject study (ASHA, 1993). For a research article, a clear discussion of the methodology is very important to show that the study was conducted in a scientific manner and meticulous analyses of findings was done (Niederhauser, et.al 2004).

Below are the qualities of a good manuscript. This is derived from Bartol and quoted by Calfee and Valencia of the American Psychological Association as the 13 flaws that commonly lead to a need to revise or to outright rejection of a material:

- adequate literature review, not too much, not too little
- appropriate citations that are relevant to the topic
- clear introductory section that facilitates presentation of issues
- clear research questions or description of the topic of investigation
- adequate sample description
- adequate description of methodology, sufficiently detailed for replication
- adequate account of measures, with known instruments
- unquestionable statistical analysis
- appropriate statistical techniques

- well crafted discussion which is more than repetition of results
- discussions and conclusions within the boundaries of findings
- good writing style
- reasonable length

An article which passed the editor's initial assessment is then forwarded for refereeing or peer review. All academic journals are required to undergo this. Peer review is defined as "the assessment by experts of the material submitted for publication and is a critical component of the publication process in all major journals as it serves to validate the quality of literature published in them." The process is particularly expected to identify defects on originality and scientific credibility as well as writing style. Important information which are lacking shall likewise be detected (Gitanjali 2001).

Referees/reviewers are usually chosen because of their expertise in the subject. Those who have published works on a similar topic, much more if their work is cited in the manuscript, are most likely to be selected. Moreover, a reviewer should possess a critical mind and the ability to communicate clearly, as well as be fair in her/his assessment. She/He should have a good academic background and is updated with the current developments in her/his particular field of interest. It is also important that she/he has the interest as well as adequate time to do the review (ASHA 1993; Gitanjali, 2001).

Referees focus their assessment on the literature review, the contribution to existing knowledge, the methodology, results, conclusions and other implications. More specifically, in reading the manuscript, the referees look for relevance, importance and interest to the readers.

One form of peer review is the "double blind" refereeing where the reviewer/referee and the writer are unknown to each other. This is expected to promote objectivity and assess the manuscript solely on its merits, as well as allow the reviewer to be open and candid on her/his comments. Sometimes the "single blind" refereeing is employed where the reviewer knows the writer or the writer knows the reviewer. This happens when the writer suggests possible referees for their articles upon the request of the editor. There are also a few cases where both the writer and the referee know the identity of each other. Gitanjali (2001) gave some additional favorable points for this last type such as "promoting accountability, encouraging civility, and generally improving the quality of the paper."

Generally, one to three reviewers/referees are chosen for each manuscript. A reviewer is usually given 4-6 weeks to do the review. If the reviewer feels he cannot finish the task during the given period, she/he is expected to inform the editor so that another reviewer can be chosen to go over the manuscript. The decision of the reviewer may be one of the following: 1) outright rejection; 2) revise and submit for reconsideration; 3) conditional acceptance or accept with major revision; and 4) outright acceptance or accept with minor revision (Calfée and Valencia, n.d.; CITE, 2004; Witt, 1995).

Very few manuscripts are published as they are initially submitted. The reviewed articles are sent back to the editor who will, in turn, discuss the result with the writers.

Outright rejection of an article most often results from flaws in the substance and/or methodology employed. Deficiencies in substance may be due to unclear research problem, inadequate theoretical foundation or insufficient tying up of information and drawing of conclusion. Methodological problems include inaccurate sampling and inappropriate statistical design and analysis. In such cases, the writer should not be totally discouraged and take the "judgment" as a learning experience. She/He may opt to rewrite the manuscript based on the comments given and submit to another publication group. Depending on the viewpoint of the editor and referees, a rejected article may still be published (Calfée and Valencia, n.d.; CITE, 2004).

Manuscripts which are advised to be "revised and resubmitted" are likewise found to have areas which need significant improvement. The referees however, may have found some positive qualities of the paper which merit a chance to be published. Writers should give serious attention to the referees' comments in revising their article. The article will again go through another round of review to assess if the revised material can be considered for publication (Calfée and Valencia, n.d.; CITE, 2004).

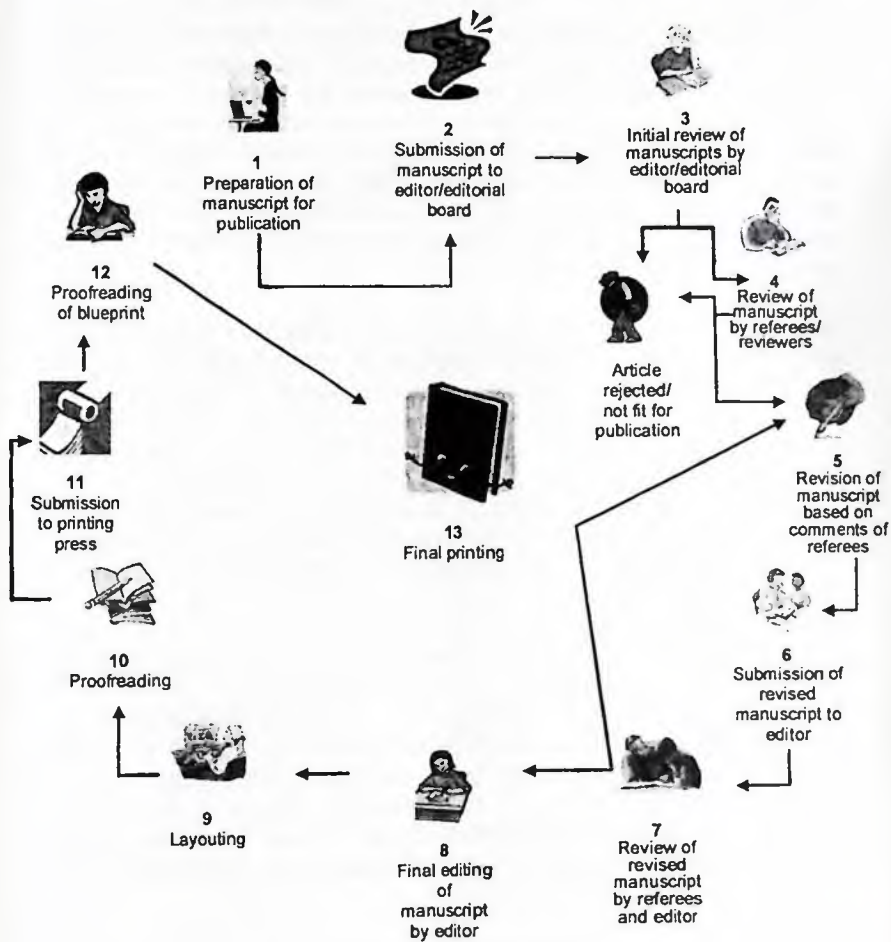
Conditional acceptance of a manuscript needing major revision means the chances of being published is more likely. However, this will still require a review in the key areas of the paper while addressing the comments of the referees conscientiously and thoroughly (Calfée and Valencia, n.d.; CITE, 2004).

Well written scholarly works merit outright acceptance or acceptance with minor revision. After dealing with some minor points, the manuscript is ready for publication (Calfee and Valencia, n.d.; CITE, 2004).

In revising the manuscript, it is very necessary that all the comments are carefully taken into consideration. Unclear points should be discussed with the editor and properly tackled. Should there be comments which the writer considers as irrational or unreasonable, these should likewise be taken up with the editor. Consultations with colleagues will also be helpful to ensure that changes made clearly respond to the points under clarification. Before submitting the revised manuscript, the writer should meticulously go over the paper and make a final check including the spelling and format.

After all the articles are revised, reviewed, edited and accepted for publication, layouting, proofreading and final printing follow. The production staff takes charge of these remaining stages which likewise need extra careful attention. With the meticulous supervision of the editor, the copy for final printing should have a neat and clear layout free from misspelled words and "text runs." Proper choice of a printing press should consider the quality of the finished product, printing cost and capacity to deliver on time. A blueprint before the final printing is necessary to ensure an almost error-free finished product.

From the foregoing discussion, the major steps in producing a refereed journal is illustrated in the following:



Journal Publication Process

The CSWCD Experience

The following is an account of the processes the CSWCD went through in producing the CSWCD Development Journal. The Journal is published annually by the REDO, the publication arm of the College. The information included in this account are taken from the publication records of the office and personal account of the author, a University Researcher and currently in charge of the publication activities of the office. Former publication officers of REDO were also interviewed and past issues of the journals were reviewed in tracing the historical composition of the editorial board and the processes followed.

The CSWCD Development Journal features articles written by faculty and staff, research results as well as student papers. The first issue was produced in 1996. It featured researches on social development which were undertaken by faculty members of the College. The next issue contained papers on social work practice, the changing concept in community development, feminist migration and impact of agricultural programs. These early issues were open to articles prepared by faculty members from the three (3) academic departments: the Department of Social Work, Department of Community Development and Department of Women and Development Studies. Later on, each department and the REDO were assigned to take turns in taking charge of each issue from setting the theme, writing and editing the materials.

At present, the editorial policies and procedures of the College are under review. Meanwhile, the College Executive Board (CEB), composed of the Dean, the College Secretary, the Department Chairs and heads of offices, serves as the editorial board of CSWCD publications. It is noted that the CSWCD holds the copyright for all publications of any department/unit or office of the College.

Articles are initially screened by the issue editor before these are forwarded to the referees for refereeing. Ideally, an article is reviewed by two (2) referees, with at least one coming from other Colleges or outside institutions. The referees are chosen primarily because of their expertise on the topic. While "double blind" refereeing is preferred, there were cases when single blind refereeing had to be employed as when the writer suggested possible referees for their articles. A

refereeing form is provided to the referees to assess the article on whether it is: 1) fit for publication; 2) needs minor revision; 3) needs major revision; or 4) not fit for publication. Each article was reviewed according to quality of research, originality, depth of insights, social relevance and style.

A sample of the refereeing form being used by the CSWCD is shown in the Appendix. This is sent to the referees/reviewers together with the original manuscript and a request letter. The accomplished form is returned to the editor and becomes the basis for accepting or rejecting the submitted manuscripts.

The referees are given two to three weeks to review the article. Afterward, the original manuscript is returned to the editor with the corresponding comments and corrections together with the accomplished refereeing form bearing the evaluation of the referees. Revisions are done by the respective writers based on the comments given. Should the referees consider the article not fit for publication, the paper is not included. It is therefore deemed practical that more papers are considered for refereeing to ensure more publishable articles. The revised materials are reviewed and edited by the editor before forwarding to REDO for layouting and press-work.

Layouting, including proofreading, takes about two weeks. Simultaneously, the printing press is chosen based on the price quoted, quality of output and capacity to deliver on the needed period. A blueprint is available in five (5) working days after the material is given to the printing press. The blueprint is again proofread for any overlooked typographical errors and "text runs". The corrected "camera ready" material is sent back to the printing press for final printing. In 10 working days, the final output is delivered.

Conclusion

While coming up with a published refereed article is not an easy task, it is undoubtedly both personally and professionally rewarding to see an article published. It is also through published materials that academicians particularly, both as writer and reader, expand their body of knowledge which is vital in the pursuit of their profession.

In conclusion, a list of DO's and DONT's in writing for a refereed journal is enumerated below. These guiding points summarize the publication process discussed in this article and are meant to aid writers in producing publishable materials. These are gathered from existing materials on coming up with a good material for publication.

DO's

1. Be confident that anyone can write and publish. Each one has fresh and unique ideas even on the most common topic. There will always be the right journal which will find one's ideas interesting and worthy of publication. Talking to an experienced author who can give advice and tips on how to publish will greatly help (Mee, n.d.).
2. Take time to produce a good manuscript. One needs to give extra time and effort to produce a publishable material. A good material should be well thought of, relevant, and comprehensive (Mee, n.d.).
3. Bear in mind the three (3) major qualities of a good technical paper: clear, concise and coherent. The sentences should be simple, understandable and direct, i.e., not wordy, ambiguous, redundant and should be of moderate length. Use tables and graphs to supplement, instead of duplicate what has been stated in the text. Idioms and unnecessary jargons should be avoided (Hanson, n.d.).
4. Critique your own work. Read and rewrite several times, if needed. Strict attention should be given to good grammar and correct spelling. Proof-read the manuscript well. Typographical errors indicate an incompetent author (Mee, n.d.).
5. Ask colleagues to read and assess your article. Be open to their comments and integrate these in revising the article before submitting for publication (Calfee and Valencia, n.d.; Ross, 2006).
6. Follow strictly the guidelines set by the editorial board. Some journals are very particular about details, which if not followed, could negatively affect the referee's assessment of the manuscript even before it is read. Abide by the prescribed format, work within the required number of pages and be prompt with deadlines (Ross, 2006).

7. Acknowledge and cite sources of data accurately (Ross, 2006). Follow the prescribed bibliographical and annotation format meticulously. Enclose directly quoted passages in quotation marks. Avoid plagiarism.
8. Be persistent in having your manuscript published. Work on the suggestions of reviewers and incorporate the revisions in the final paper.

DON'T's

1. Be offended or discouraged by the comments of the referees/ reviewers. Openness to criticisms/comments from the referees is very vital in coming up with quality publications. Do not take the comments as something meant to insult or put the writer down. Rather take these as constructive remarks which are given merely to help improve one's work. A positive attitude will help inspire and motivate the writers to revise their manuscript promptly and look forward to see it printed (Ross, 2006; Tackett, n.d.).
2. Be obliged to follow all the suggested changes by the referees. Study them well and if you find merit in your ideas, be firm with your arguments. However, acknowledging the comments and politely talking about these with the referees are imperative (Tackett, n.d.).
3. Take a "not fit for publication" assessment from the referee as the final evaluation of one's work. This does not mean that the paper is totally worthless. It is possible that the paper is not within the referee's area of interest or there are other unrelated factors which affected the referee's judgment. Take it as a learning experience. You may opt to rewrite the manuscript based on the comments given and submit to another publication group. Depending on the viewpoint of the editor and referees, a rejected article may still be published (Tackett, n.d.).
4. Submit the same manuscript to more than one journal at the same time. Also refrain from submitting an article which has already been published earlier.

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