

Turning a Paper into a Publishable/Published Manuscript
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So you have a good class paper, one you or your professor thought could turn into a publishable manuscript? What do you do next? Below I document the process of turning a class or conference paper into a published manuscript, with a serious attempt to make visible or demystify the seemingly invisible aspects of publishing.

1. Identify a list of possible journals for submission.
 - You should begin by looking at your reference list. If you find yourself citing one or two journals a lot, it is likely those journals would be good homes for your paper.
 - Come up with a list of at least five journals, rank ordered by your most to least desirable locations. You'll submit the paper to those journals in that order. Having the order in advance will help guide you after the inevitable rejection letters arrive.

2. Revise your manuscript.
 - First determine the journal's submission guidelines. Most journals have websites; if not, find a recent issue of the journal and look in the inside cover. Format your paper to fit the guidelines exactly. You do not want to give the Editor any reason to reject your paper outright.
 - Revision includes not only clarifying your ideas and content, but also focusing on length, reference style (internal and reference list), headings, and abstract length, and any other specifications the journal's website notes including whether to append a title page (and its content).
 - Have someone else read your formatted manuscript prior to submission. Take their comments seriously and revise once more.

3. Submit your manuscript.
 - Adhere to the guidelines exactly. If the journal only wants paper submissions, then don't send via email. If they require a CD version, send it. Some journals have submission fees. Make sure you double check this before sending in your submission.
 - Always create a cover letter. Make sure to note that the paper has not been previously published nor is it currently under review at any other journal. If you feel it is appropriate, you may suggest possible reviewers for your manuscript. You certainly have the right to list people who would not be good reviewers for your manuscript (people on your committee, for example).
 - All journals send some notification of receipt. If you don't hear from a journal that your manuscript was received in a reasonable amount of time (2 weeks), contact them to make sure your manuscript was received.
 - Each journal has a different timeframe for review. The Editor will tell you how long to expect to wait to hear a decision. Do not contact them before that time period has expired. You may want to wait an extra month longer than they suggested just so you don't seem *too* eager. But you do have the right to ask where your paper is in the process if you have waited twice as long as the Editor said you should for a decision.

4. Respond to the journal's decision.
 - You will likely have one of two decision letters: revise and resubmit or rejection.
 - If your manuscript was rejected, look at the reviews. If they are gross misrepresentations of your paper, ignore them and submit to the second journal on the list you created earlier. If they are valid constructive comments, make some of them and submit to your second journal, following the process described above.

- If you were given the opportunity to revise and resubmit your manuscript, you have some work ahead of you. You will need to revise the manuscript and then create a memo to the Editor and reviewers documenting the changes you made. You must be attentive to reviewers concerns; the Editor wants you to take their comments seriously. Your memo should make it easy for reviewers to see how you addressed their concerns, including referencing the page numbers where you made the changes.
- An R&R does not mean you will eventually receive an acceptance. It does mean your manuscript still has a fighting chance to be published where you submitted it. If your revision is ultimately rejected, follow the procedures above; make changes as necessary and send it back out.
- You also have the right not to accept the journal's offer to revise and resubmit. If the R&R suggestions seem like they will take your paper in a direction you don't want it to go, decline the opportunity to revise and resubmit. Send to the next journal on your list.

5. Co-Authored Publications

- All of the suggestions above are predicated on your paper being a sole-authored paper. Co-authored papers can be much more fun to write, but also come with their own hazards.
- Be clear from the outset about what the order of authorship means. ASA has guidelines on this in the Code of Ethics. Generally this is about inception of the idea and the amount of effort to get the paper through the publication process.
- Be cognizant of one another's strengths and build on them. But be reasonable in your expectations. And be comfortable revisiting order of authorship as the project progresses. You may have expected to spend a lot of time and energy on a paper but life happened. Co-authorship is a commitment; treat it as you would any other commitment. If your priorities change, tell your co-author.
- Faculty members are great co-authors, as are other graduate students. But only co-author with someone you know you can work with for an extended period of time. If you are lucky, the process will take a year from beginning to acceptance. So know you will need to be able to work with that person for at least a year, but likely two or more years.

5. Other Thoughts

- Every paper has a home. Some are comfortable in McMansions (ASR, AJS), while others are fine in a 60's style ranch (a lower tier journal). But every quality paper will have a home. You just need to be ready for an uncertain housing market.
- Don't let the reviewers or editors force you to lose sight of your idea. The paper and its point are yours; changing the focus of your paper simply to get published may have short term gains but is in reality intellectually disingenuous.
- Learn how to be a reviewer; it actually helps you become a better writer! Many journals have a "Reviewer-in-Training" program so you can learn how to review manuscripts. The benefit of this is that you can see how more established scholars reviewed the same manuscript you reviewed, thus giving you insight into the editorial process. An unintended consequence is that editors learn your name and could be favorably disposed to your work later on (but that's how all social capital works, yes?).