

How to publish a world class paper



- Christine Cooper
- Co-editor Critical perspective on Accounting

Who is Christine Cooper?

- Accounting academic
- Professor at Strathclyde University
- Co-editor Critical Perspectives on Accounting



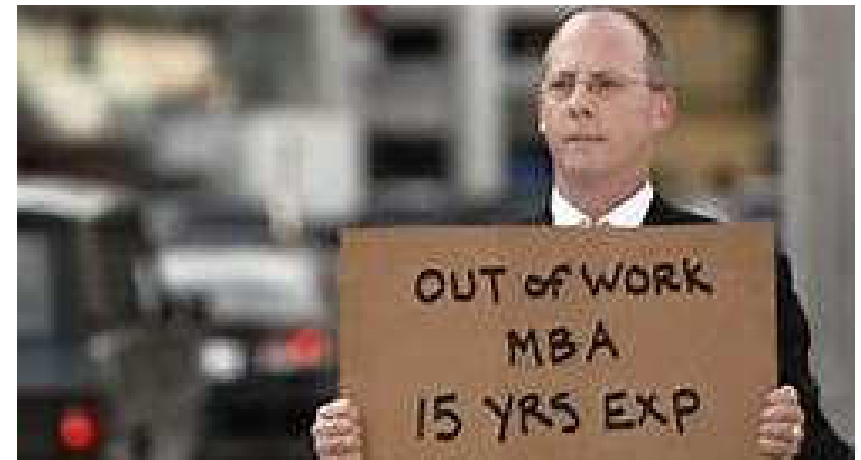
The first step towards publishing a world class paper is to write one

- This is dealt with soon
- But first.....



Reasons for publishing

- Keeping your job/promotion



Reasons for publishing

- Becoming part of the research community – going to conferences etc
- (Conferences can be “misleading” – everyone can seem so strong and confident)



Reasons for publishing

- “Respect”/mirror - seeing our name in print
- (We all desire positive reflection)



Reasons for publishing

Developing our understanding of the field

This can significantly inform and animate our teaching activities.

I think that researchers make the very best teachers.

Reasons for publishing

- Making a difference? (This is a personal preference.)
- Questioning taken-for-granted assumptions?
- Therapy?
- Pleasure?



Understand the context -- The academic field

Totally incomprehensible to those outside of it?

Very strange power of “big names” especially journal editors.

Editors have significant power.

Do editors care about your reasons?

Editors have pressures too – they suffer from “illusio” and strive to enhance their positions

This is why they can’t simply publish their “friends” work

The editor's perspective

They understand your reasons for wanting to publish

But they won't give you an easier time because you are their "friend".

(Remember we are "social animals")

The editor's perspective

It is harder to reject a paper in a “worthy” area.

In part at least, this is because of citations

The editor's perspective

- Citation indices

CITED REFERENCE INDEX
References: 81 of 88

Buttons: Select Page, Select All, Clear All, Filter Results

Select References	First Author	Cited Work [Cited Reference: 71, 72]	Year	Volume	Page	Article ID	Citing Article	Cites Received
☐	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	1547		1	
☐	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	1549		1	
☒	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	3043		1	←
☐	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	3049		2	
☐	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	416		3	
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☒	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	2403	10.1021/ja00260a002	57	←
☐	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	3047	10.1021/ja00260a003	29	
☐	WOODWARD JR	J Am Chem Soc	1981	73	3048	10.1021/ja00260a004	28	

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The editor's perspective

- Maintaining rankings



The editor's perspective

- Comments from fellow academics



The editor's perspective

- Rejections have become a “measure” of a good journal.



Back to actually writing that paper-

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Biggest mistakes when starting a new paper

- ☐ Looking for a “quick hit”.
- ☐ High quality research is VERY time consuming!
- ☐ With some papers you get an easier ride than others. But there is no magic.
- ☐ That said there are some things which seem to help ----

The things that really help--

- ☐ If possible present at conferences.
- ☐ This really helps to clarify your story/iron out any problems.
- ☐ Someone in the room might be a reviewer. (This doesn't mean that you have to take on board every comment made on your paper).
- ☐ If an editor is in the room they will be concerned about whether people find this an important/interesting paper. (Gossip about good papers)

The things that really help--

- Don't have too many "stories"
- If possible – just have one.



The things that really help--

Reading the literature (the “experts” are likely to review your work).

But don’t write a PhD style literature review in an academic paper. (This is a surprisingly common mistake). It makes an academic paper too unbalanced.

Draw upon literature which informs your research. (So that you are sure that you are writing something new.)

The things that really help--

For many world class papers you need
a theory – or strongly considered
methodology is essential

Don't read theory "second hand" and
think you can "wing" it.

Eg Bourdieu habitus and rules.

The things that really help--

Don't make unsubstantiated claims.

Eg my Gretna paper – the reviewer scoffed at my depiction of the board rooms during matches in which demotions could occur.

So be careful to explain your sources.

And be careful of your sources
(newspapers, the internet and so on).

The things that really help--

- Write about your subject
- So, if it is an accounting paper – write about accounting
- Think about your audience.



The things that really help--

Write clearly – authoritative and extremely polished.

We are all different in terms of our linguistic abilities – for some people it takes longer than others.

It takes me AGES and AGES.

“Sell” your manuscript.

- Explain that you have REALLY done something new and interesting
- It is very disheartening as an editor to receive papers that haven't animated the author(s)
- Have some passion



“Sell” your manuscript.

Explain what is
challenging/interesting/important in your
work

“Sell” your manuscript.

Explain how your work is related to a
current "hot" topic

Or a neglected but important one

“Sell” your manuscript.

Set out some solutions/policy implications and so on.

Back to dealing with the editor and reviewers

Submitting a manuscript

I don't really concentrate at all on cover letters.

I do concentrate on strong introduction and conclusions. (Like ice cream lists).

I also look carefully at the bibliography - sometimes to help me think about reviewers. So make sure it is complete and error free.

When the editor receives it

- High number of submissions + many of dubious quality



When the editor receives it

- STRESS for editors
- I HATE rejecting papers.
- Friday is my “CPA day”
– but I try to send off rejections on Monday.
- But.....



When the editor receives it

Reviewers are the most precious resource of a journal!

They have huge pressures on their time!

They will think badly of a journal which is sending very poor work out for review – it will make it seem as if the journal doesn't have enough high quality submissions.

So pressure on editors to desk reject.

When the editor receives it

As an author, you **HAVE** to try to ensure that your paper is sent out for review.

So don't send a paper before it is ready in the belief that you will get another chance to iron out any weaknesses, or, on the grounds that you have to change it anyway.

Desk rejects

Submission of papers which are clearly out of scope

These ones I DO reject on a Friday. I feel that they have no respect for me or my journal.

Desk rejects

Poor quality English

I know this is very tough on researchers who aren't native English language speakers.

I know that it is a HUGE hurdle.

Desk rejects

- “Tutorials”
- If someone wants to learn about (for example) Michel Foucault, they can either read Foucault’s own work, or, at the very least, a Foucauldian expert.
- This doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t clearly explain how Foucault’s theoretical position informed your research. (So balance is important)



Desk rejects

- Submissions which look like book chapters.
- There is a place for book chapters but they aren't the same as refereed journal publications.



Desk rejects

Resubmission of rejected manuscripts without revision (more about this later)

Even if “uncorrected rejects” are sent for review these manuscripts are frequently sent to one of the reviewers which previously rejected them. Of course these reviewers will not change their mind.

If you are rejected

- Don't feel too badly - you are in the 90% majority.
- But it hurts.
- A lot
- Have a drink, go for a run, eat lots of chocolate, dust yourself down



Revise and Resubmits

If you receive a revise and resubmit, the next thing to do is to

Revise and Resubmits

- Have and drink (at least metaphorically)
- Then
- Have another drink



Revise and Resubmits

You should feel happy

Someone has given you something to work on.

But--

Even very constructive comments are difficult to take on board.

Revise and Resubmits

Read the reviews once

Then wait a few days (or weeks) and read them again.

With a “clear head” start the revision.....

How to revise a manuscript

Carefully study the comments and prepare a detailed table. This will help with resubmission. The editor may also have given you a “steer” – put this in your table.

How to revise a manuscript

Inadequate response to reviewers is SUCH a common occurrence and will lead to a reject decision!

Don't just change a few sentences.

If the reviewers suggest further reading – take it seriously – don't just find a place to stick it in the references.

How to revise a manuscript

- Revise the whole manuscript and not just the parts the reviewers point out.
- Reviewers will respect a very thorough revision.
- They will appreciate significant extra work.



How to revise a manuscript

Don't let the reviewers "knock you off course"

If they haven't understood what you are trying to do – it is your job to make it clearer.

You don't have to do everything they say but you do have to explain very carefully why you aren't doing something which they have suggested.

Rejection after a revise and resubmit

- Gosh this hurts
- You have more invested in the paper
- It is common practice in some journals to give papers a chance but will reject if rewrite doesn't produce significant improvements.



What to do with a rejected paper

- Be a little self-critical
- You have to make the very tough decision as to whether or not to give up and move on.



What to do with a rejected paper

Try to understand why
the paper was rejected



What to do with a rejected paper

- ☐ You have received the benefit of the editors and reviewers' time; take their advice seriously!
- ☐ They may well be wrong; but on the whole they aren't stupid.

What to do with a rejected paper

- ☐ Re-evaluate your work and decide whether it is appropriate to submit the paper elsewhere.
- ☐ If so, begin as if you are going to write a new article. Read the Guide for Authors of the new journal, again and again.

What to do with a rejected paper

- ☐ NEVER just send a rejected paper straight to another journal.
- ☐ AT LEAST make sure that it is grounded in the work of that journal.

Acceptance - checklist

- ☐ Attention to details
- ☐ Check and double check your work
- ☐ Consider the reviewers' comments
- ☐ English must be as good as possible
- ☐ Presentation is important
- ☐ Take your time with revision
- ☐ Acknowledge those who have helped you
- ☐ New, original and previously unpublished
- ☐ Critically evaluate your own manuscript
- ☐ Ethical rules must be obeyed
 - – Nigel John Cook Editor-in-Chief, Ore Geology Reviews.

A few technical details--

- ☐ Pay attention to word limits.
- ☐ Never submit the same manuscript to two journals.
- ☐ Be VERY careful about plagiarism.
- ☐ Make sure that you follow the journal citation and referencing styles alongside other specific journal requirements (eg footnotes/endnotes and so on)

Overall – How to write and publish a world class paper

- There are no “tricks” – except long and hard work!
- Write something which enhances insights into your particular field.
- Excellent theoretically informed empirical work is normally a “winner”
- Write with underlying passion (even when using academic writing style)



- Ačiū!





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