



PUBLISHING JOURNAL ARTICLES

LUCINDA BECKER • PAM DENICOLO



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SUCCESS IN RESEARCH

The Success in Research series has been designed by Cindy Becker and Pam Denicolo to provide short, authoritative and accessible guides for students, researchers and academics on the key area of professional and research development.

Each book is written with an eye to avoiding jargon and each aims to cut to the chase of what readers really need to know about a given topic. These are practical and supportive books and will be essential reading for any students or researchers interested in developing their skills and broadening their professional and methodological knowledge in an academic context.



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This book is dedicated to all the research students and colleagues who have been so generous in telling us about their endeavours and sharing their tribulations and triumphs so honestly. A community of scholars is a wonderful thing.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Lucinda Becker, an award winning Senior Lecturer and Teaching Fellow in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Reading, has spent her career committed to enhancing the skills of undergraduates and research postgraduates. She has written numerous successful study skills guides for students. As a professional trainer she also works throughout the United Kingdom and Europe, devising and delivering training in communication and management techniques, principally to lawyers, engineers and scientists.

Professor Pam Denicolo, a chartered constructivist psychologist, found her early research commitment to generally improving learning and teaching in Higher Education focusing progressively on the needs of graduate students, their supervisors and other professionals seeking to develop their practice. Her passion for supporting graduate students and other early career researchers is demonstrated through her numerous successful doctoral candidates and her leading roles in national and international organisations such as the UK Council for Graduate Education, the International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching, the Society for Research into Higher Education Postgraduate Network, the Impact and Evaluation Group and other working groups of Vitae, and the QAA Doctoral Characteristics Advisory Group, all of which have resulted in many publications, presentations and workshops.

Cindy and Pam worked exuberantly together for many years managing and developing the Graduate School at the University of Reading and providing a substantial contribution to its Research Methods, Generic Skills and Doctoral Supervisor training.

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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

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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.

(Continued)