

Getting Your Work Published: Advice for New and Developing Scholars

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Abstract: Academic writing and publishing are skills that are vital to the success of new scholars; however, existing writing supports are limited in terms of supported languages and genres (Strobl et al., 2019). To optimize these kinds of support, institutional units need to exist in tandem with non-institutional supports, such as peer-to-peer collaboration (Gopee & Deane 2013). Writing skills associated with research articles also need to be discussed in greater detail and receive a greater share of support (Strobl et al., 2019). Such support would benefit all graduate students (Ma, 2019). The authors of this manuscript have come together to offer advice and considerations to early-career scholars looking to publish for the first time. These include building confidence, publishing with peers, understanding diverse journals, developing one's writer's voice, and pursuing diverse publishing opportunities.

Keywords: Publishing, Writing, Graduate Education, Early Career Scholars

Introduction

Academic writing and publishing are skills that are vital to the success of new scholars. Yet, research has demonstrated that writing support is limited in terms of supported languages and genres (Strobl et al., 2019). Studies have explored how institutional units, such as academic writing centers and departments, need to exist in tandem with non-institutional supports, such as peer collaboration and student-oriented writing groups, in order for optimal effectiveness regarding support (Gopee & Deane, 2013). Furthermore, the writing of research articles, which is critical to the success of new scholars, receives far less attention in institutional units dedicated to writing support as compared to more traditional essay writing structures (Strobl et al., 2019). Some supports beyond the traditional academic venues do exist, such as blogs run by university libraries and graduate schools (Shuttleworth, 2020; University of Nebraska Lincoln, n.d.).

This disparity creates unique learning needs for graduate students and thus the need for greater one-on-one support arises; however, these are quite resource-intensive (Ma, 2019). Additionally, while some of these needs can be met through targeted support focused on grammar, syntax, and style, these skills are often eclipsing the development of more nuanced writing strategies such as self-monitoring (Strobl et al., 2019). Self-monitoring in this context can be described as the “writer's ability to think about the effectiveness of the writing strategies used, during or after writing” (Strobl et al., 2019, p. 46).

With all of this in mind, the authors of this paper have come together to discuss their own publishing experiences as early career scholars and to offer advice and considerations to graduate students looking to publish for the first time. All four authors come from unique backgrounds with varying degrees of publishing experience. Harrison is a K-12 educator, a sessional instructor at the University of Calgary and St. Mary's University, and the English Managing Editor at the *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education (CJNSE)*. He has sixteen peer-reviewed publications, including “Finding What is Real By Making Believe: Performing Student Literacy Experiences,” which was published in *The English Journal* and awarded the 2022 Arts Researchers & Teachers Society Outstanding Publication Award. Pamela, a K-12 educator and sessional instructor at the University of Calgary, has recently started gaining more publishing experience and this article is her second publication. Laura is a pre- and in-service teacher educator with Ontario Tech University. She has a rich research background, having published/co-published 16 peer-reviewed journal articles, 12 book chapters, and 13 conference proceedings over the past ten years. From 2021-2022 she was an associate editor for one of Ontario Tech University's newest academic journals, the *Journal of Digital Life and Learning*. Kashif, a post-secondary educator and sessional instructor at the University of Calgary, has vast publishing, editing, and reviewing experience. His most recent publication was a co-edited volume *Policy Development in TESOL and Multilingualism: Past, Present and the Way Forward* published by Springer Nature. His forthcoming co-edited volume *Handbook of Multilingual TESOL in Practice* will also be published by Springer Nature. Kashif also serves on the editorial board of several journals and a book series. With these varying degrees of publishing experience in

mind, the sections that follow discuss building confidence, publishing with peers, understanding diverse journals, developing a voice through writing, and how to pursue diverse publishing opportunities.

Some Considerations and Challenges When Publishing

One of the first, and perhaps most important, things to remember is that writing for academic publication is a process and even experienced authors need to maintain and explore new writing strategies (Strobl et al., 2019). As the managing editor for the *CJNSE*, Harrison shared that publishing involves revisions and rewrites as editors bring new considerations to the forefront of an author's mind. It is important to not take this feedback too personally as it is often intended to be growth mindset oriented, especially in graduate student-run journals which often involve processes for peer mentorship (Gopee & Deane, 2013). Each journal also has its own distinctive set of submission criteria and guidelines to be aware of. For example, the *CJNSE* allows submissions for research articles, position papers, literature reviews, and book reviews that must not exceed 5000 words, are authored by graduate students, and must successfully undergo a process of peer review (Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education, 2022).

Harrison suggested that first-time authors should try and publish in a graduate-led journal first. It helps to develop both the author's confidence and skills through the mentorship process. Choosing to begin one's publishing journey in a graduate journal also has the added benefit of providing order to the chaos of the publishing process. This is something that Pamela identified as a barrier for her early on as an emerging scholar. She felt that publishing was not within reach for many reasons, including not knowing where to start, what to publish, and where to publish. Pamela is not alone in these concerns as many graduate students enter their programs with limited publishing experience or publishing support needs (Ma, 2019). However, as Laura pointed out, even those with experience can become overwhelmed because there is always a multitude of tasks to complete and action items vying for her attention. Kashif added that confusion about what to write about, where to get started, and how to publish can frustrate many emerging scholars. We hope that our advice that follows helps to welcome our readers into the world of academic publishing and encourages them to submit some of their manuscripts.

The Importance of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence - that is, trusting in one's abilities - is an integral part of publishing. It is a common phenomenon among emerging scholars to lack a sense of confidence (Devlin & Radloff, 2014; Zotzmann & Drake, 2021). The process of conceptualizing a topic, conducting a study, writing a paper, sending it to a journal, and responding to reviewers' comments requires the confidence to believe in one's ability to choose an interesting topic, draft a coherent paper, submit it to a relevant publication venue, and respond to the feedback provided by the journal. The multiple stages of article writing involve varying degrees of fear of failure, trial, and error; however, the key is to be determined, confident, and enthusiastic about the objectives for developing a paper and getting it published at the end. Even when authors fail to publish their work, it still helps emerging scholars to learn about article writing and publication processes.

All four authors of this article agree that self-confidence is very important in publication. For instance, Kashif's experience of publishing his first peer-reviewed paper reveals that an author's confidence is tested during long processes of submission (e.g., meeting journal guidelines like formatting, word count, and style), revision (responding to reviewers' extensive feedback), rejection (failing to meet journal/reviewer expectations and aiming for a different journal), and acceptance of an article (waiting for the work to eventually come out in publication form). It took Kashif three years to publish his first paper, which required determination, dedication, and self-belief that the study is worth publishing. Pamela's anecdote of publishing a literature-review-based paper on her doctoral thesis topic also points to the struggles of an early-career author and how maintaining confidence throughout the process is necessary. After targeting a journal in her field, she invested time in reading previously published papers in the journal, drafted her own paper, shared it with her colleagues and supervisor for feedback, revised the paper so it aligned with the feedback and journal guidelines, and eventually published it in the target journal. Similarly, Harrison's fear about the significance of his master's thesis topic and lack of prior experience in publishing reflects the frustration that many early-career or novice authors experience. This lack of experience often discourages many students from even trying to publish. However, as Harrison learned, through reflection, confidence, and persistence one can identify the gaps in

their skills and expertise, work hard to fill these gaps through training and experience, and take initiative to start publishing.

The first draft of a paper often requires editing, structure change for a better flow, addition/subtraction of details, and sometimes rewriting specific parts to develop a better argument. As a confident author, one should be ready to take up these challenges because they are part of publishing in quality journals. As one develops and attains the necessary self-confidence to publish, one can start supporting new and aspiring authors by joining editorial boards of journals, reviewing articles and book chapters, and providing workshops and training for their peers.

Finding the Balance Between Individual and Collective Writing

The benefits of collective writing – that is writing with two or more colleagues - as we have experienced with this article, are many. Collective writing greatly reduces the workload while providing opportunities to share ideas, and feedback for improvements. In addition, authors can learn from each other, and it helps with the isolation that many graduate students experience as a result of being immersed in their studies. It also makes the editing and revisions process lighter. Writing with a partner or a team can also push one beyond their comfort zone and can “multiply your intellectual resources” (Lambert, 2013, p. 48) resulting in work that you would have not been able to achieve on your own. Laura added that collective writing also increases motivation and keeps one accountable to someone else. She often sets up mini-deadlines and check-in sessions with her writing partner(s) so that they have dates to work towards and soft deadlines to keep them moving forward. Keeping the momentum going, even if the progress becomes slow due to busy schedules, is key to keeping the writing alive.

Another form of collective writing is that with a book editor. Kashif had a very positive experience working as a co-editor for his first volume (Raza et al., 2021) and observing how the editors can support and co-develop a chapter with an author(s). He felt that book editors are comparatively the most supportive colleagues in the publishing industry. They work with chapter authors from abstract submission to the planning, writing, and finalization of their chapter. This presents a wonderful opportunity for emerging scholars to familiarize themselves with the publishing process while being guided by an expert in the field. Calls for book chapters can be based upon invitation (often when you are recognized in the field) or open to everyone interested in the topic. Although one’s supervisor or colleagues can be of great help in availing an opportunity to contribute to an edited volume, one can also look for book chapter calls on social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, by emailing editors who publish edited volumes in an area of interest, or by exploring websites of publishers to see which projects are open for contribution.

Harrison cautions that it is important to develop ones writing both individually and in a group. He shared that writing with peers is beneficial because it is a shared responsibility; however, emerging scholars must also take the time to write on their own. As emerging scholars grow as researchers it is important to develop their own voice within the research, which is often achieved through writing. Of course, one can seek feedback from their supervisor, committee members, and even fellow graduate students, but according to Harrison, this is an area where emerging scholars have to situate their writing within their own field of study in a way that has meaning to them.

Understanding Journals Within Your Field of Study

One of the most important parts of the publication process is first understanding the journals within one’s field of study (Bowling, 2013; Driscoll & Aquilina, 2011). It is essential to know where one is heading with the work, and, naturally, it is much easier to get published when one’s work seamlessly aligns with the journal’s scope and submission requirements. There are a number of ways to become familiar with the journals, their guidelines, and to streamline the submission process.

If emerging scholars already have some familiarity with the common journals in their field, Laura shared that it can be helpful to start a journal database to record the names of the most common journals and to add to this as one becomes more familiar with the other journals in the area. Including headings such as: journal aims and scope, word limit, journal ranking, and style used (i.e., APA, Chicago, Harvard, etc.) allows one to record the most pertinent information they would need to know related to publication requirements and it serves as an exercise in doing focused

research of the journals. This research can be motivating as it follows a structure or method for information gathering and there is also an end product - the journal database - as a result of this research. While this exercise allows one to become more familiar with journal requirements, it also serves as a quick reference guide later, when writing the paper. Laura also shared that the database is also useful for those who have presented at a conference and wish to turn the conference proposal or presentation into a full-length journal article. Emerging scholars can scan the list of journals, find the most thematically relevant one, quickly see the publication parameters, and structure and craft the paper, from the beginning, in the exact style of the journal.

Another way to become more familiar with the journals in one's area of study is simply to start reading them (Baveye, 2016; Driscoll & Aquilina, 2011). Harrison shared that he published his MA research in *The English Journal* which was a publication that he was familiar with as an educator. He had been reading the publication for years and had a fairly developed understanding of the tone, content, and audience of the journal. Harrison was drawn to it because of the focus placed upon teachers and the practical uses of theory in classrooms. He also knew that the publication was popular among secondary ELA teachers who were the audience for his work.

Another strategy is to research upcoming special issues of journals. Harrison explained that while researching the general submission requirements (such as article length) to one journal, he also happened to notice an upcoming special issue in his research area of arts-based education. As a result, Harrison decided to focus his submission on the special issue criteria as he knew it would reach a specialized audience. He was successful with publishing in that journal, which speaks to the importance of knowing your audience (Pierson, 2009). To increase the chances of getting published in a certain journal, we recommend trying to publish in a journal one has some level of comfort with and understanding about. If one has read widely in that journal, they will better be able to align to expectations while also building from previous research published within that journal.

If a journal is beyond one's scope or experience, find a peer within the same graduate program who has published there or a faculty member (supervisor, trusted professor, or committee member) who can also offer advice and guidance (Moos, 2011). Try not to go into the process uninformed - even emailing the issue's editors or the journal itself can be a great way of learning more and having any questions answered.

In sum, become familiar with the journals in a particular area by researching them, compiling a quick reference database, reading articles in those journals, and becoming highly familiar with the writing style, structure, and focus (Griffiths & Norman, 2016). The combination of these strategies will set one up for success in the publication process.

Developing One's Area of Expertise in Writing

Developing expertise in a particular area requires finding one's niche, or place in the literature. Authors should write what they are passionate about, something that keeps nagging, or the theme that keeps coming back. Or, as Lambert (2013) describes it, choose a topic that builds upon your motivation. Emerging scholars may find that early in their studies they do not have much to say, or that they are "not ready yet", and that is ok. One also may be overwhelmed by course work, family, and work commitments which can influence publishing efforts. Another strategy is to review all the papers previously written during coursework. Is there a paper that really resonated? How could the paper be turned into something that can be published? Think not only of original research articles, but also position papers, literature reviews, and book reviews. Finding your place takes time and evolves over the course of one's studies. Pamela's research interests evolved over the course of her studies. This required her to reposition herself and seek out other disciplines her research intersected with. Finding one's niche does not mean limiting oneself, but it provides emerging scholars with a place to start and grow from.

On the other hand, Kashif entered his doctoral studies with a clear focus. While having developed a niche for himself, Kashif also reminds us that the audience of a piece of writing should be kept in mind before and during the stages of drafting and publishing. He suggests focusing on specific topics or areas that target a particular audience, such as teachers, administrators, students, policymakers, or researchers. For example, Kashif's research interests are language policy and Teaching English as a Second language (TESOL), and his work has focused on teacher development and the challenges faced by English language teachers in teaching English. In order to address this topic, he wrote about the characteristics of a specific student population, expectations and perceptions of teachers and

students in language education, and ways to adapt teaching strategies to accommodate student needs (see Raza, 2020; Raza & Coombe, 2020). Using a narrow research focus can also help one decide what format of writing (journal article, book chapter, magazine entry, blog, commentary) will be the most appropriate for sharing knowledge and where this should be published to reach a targeted audience. In addition, after Kashif and colleagues published their first volume on policy development in TESOL and multilingualism (Raza et al., 2021), Kashif decided to publish the takeaways from the volume in multiple languages (Arabic, English, Finnish, French, and Urdu) to reach out to the readership in their own languages (Raza, 2021). Kashif explained that while one can keep their focus on specific topics, they will be able to create a connection between their previous, current, and future work, as well as collaborate with other researchers in the field with similar interests and, thus, become a recognized scholar in that area.

Lambert (2013) refers to the style of research work described by Kashif as building a programmatic line of research. In addition to gaining recognition in one's area, as Kashif has done, it is also an efficient way to publish more articles because you are already immersed in the literature. Developing an area of expertise is an important aspect of one's publishing journey. Emerging scholars should feel free to write about a variety of subject matters but are encouraged to keep in mind that the more one immerses themselves in a particular topic and audience, the more opportunity they have to hone their voice and make a meaningful contribution to their field of study.

Considering a Wide Array of Publishing Opportunities

Publishing can start from anywhere and in any format (Duffy et al., 2017; Moos, 2011). Although there is a tendency toward publishing full-length articles in top-tier journals or with highly ranked publishers because of pressure from employers, supervisors, colleagues, or institutions, other venues and formats should not be excluded from consideration. Kashif suggested that these can include short articles for magazines, newsletters, blogs, webpages, newspapers, book reviews, reader responses, brief reports, commentaries, and many more. In addition to being shorter in length, such writing pieces have higher chances of acceptance and faster publication. Additionally, they are freely available most of the time, thus, offering better accessibility and readership for one's work.

Unfortunately, unless one is publishing in open access journals, which sometimes come with a publication fee, readership and access to academic journals is oftentimes limited to students and faculty. It should be part of our goal as educators to disseminate our research as widely as possible beyond the academy to practitioners, parents/guardians, students, and the general public. If publishing a journal article is one's preference, however, one may wish to consider starting with a conference proposal (Duffy et al., 2017). Conference proposals are usually condensed versions of full research papers (Elsevier, n.d.). Laura explained that, from her own experience, it is often more manageable to start the publication process with a conference proposal. Writing a four-page proposal is oftentimes much less daunting and time-consuming than sitting down to write a 30-page paper. However, the process of thinking through each section of the research paper and writing out the key elements is the first step in conceptualizing a full paper.

In addition to the above, presenting the paper at a conference provides an opportunity to receive feedback – either during the submission process or the presentation. Peer feedback on the proposal can help strengthen one's writing and communication so that the research is clearly positioned and the throughline, from the research questions to the theoretical framework, methodology, findings, and discussion, is strong. Critical conversations and exchanges during the conference presentation can also prompt further reflection and deeper thinking on important issues involved in the research that an author may wish to include in a full-length paper (Duffy et al., 2017).

Finally, if emerging scholars are unfamiliar with the conferences that focus on or include their area of research, we suggest they speak with their supervisors and professors about what particular conferences are a 'must' in their field. Many conferences still offer virtual formats that have increased accessibility, especially for distance education. Virtual or hybrid conferences (those that offer both the face-to-face format and the virtual format for presentations) can help cut down on the costs associated with attending conferences. Many conferences also offer different formats of presenting, including poster presentations which allow emerging scholars to practice presenting in a lower-stakes environment. In a poster presentation, one stands beside their work in a room of colleagues who are sharing their work in the same way. Viewers circulate in the room and stop by to read the different posters and to have informal conversations with the presenters about their work. This is in contrast to presenting to a room of people. Options to include visuals and videos are becoming increasingly common. Pamela suggested that if an emerging scholar is not

yet ready to present, a good place to start would be to simply attend some conferences in their area, or even volunteer at conferences to immerse themselves in the experience. There are a variety of ways to begin one's publishing journey, and it is important to explore all options and the benefits and considerations of each.

Discussion: How Do I Begin to Publish?

As a new scholar, try and take on roles in editing or copyediting at the journal level. You can join journals such as the *CJNSE*, which have a graduate student focus (and are run by graduate students), or you can aim to work in journals coordinated by faculty. Just remember that graduate student journals are focused on the mentorship process. *CJNSE*, for example, offers professional development and networking for all its associate and senior copy editors so you can learn a lot by joining those communities.

You will also want to ensure that you attend and present at conferences. The best way to start if you have limited experience is within your institution. Connect with your department or the graduate students' association to find out the dates for their next conference. Presenting within your peer group takes the pressure off and provides a great opportunity to share your work. Connect with your supervisor or professors to learn about the major conferences in your area of study. Working on a conference proposal and presentation engages you with your work on a different level. Questions from conference attendees during your presentation often add valuable insights to your topic which enhances your work. If you are not ready to present yet, make sure you attend conferences to become familiar with the setup or find ways to volunteer at a conference to immerse yourself in the experience.

It is also important to develop the resilience needed to receive critical feedback from peers, as this will be a common occurrence. For example, scholarly journal articles are rarely accepted without any revisions, so seeing the work through (sometimes many rounds of) revisions will pay off. Even well-established scholars receive their fair share of rejection notices and revisions. The process of peer review is important because it can strengthen the quality of work being published. It is, however, helpful to develop the critical analysis skills needed to determine what feedback is most relevant to the work and what feedback is less relevant or helpful. Like anything, the peer-review process is not perfect – sometimes reviewers are chosen because their expertise is tangentially related, and sometimes they are chosen because more qualified individuals were unable to review the work. Sometimes reviewers also have their own agenda in their feedback, pushing their own work/publications, or they are juggling many items on their to-do lists. For some reviewers, being busy makes the process of empathizing and using diplomatic language more time-consuming. The review, as a result, may come across as harsher than intended or necessary. Reviewers are people and people are flawed. This is where skills related to the critical navigation of feedback are particularly important. Providing a well-written response as to why you are not making certain edits is an acceptable practice. As a result, read feedback critically and know where to bend and where to hold firm.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Academic writing is a skill that can be difficult for emerging scholars to obtain due to limited support (Strobl et al., 2019). However, as this article has demonstrated there are a variety of ways in which emerging scholars can embark on a publishing journey. These include getting familiar with the different journals available, as well as other publishing opportunities such as blogs and newspaper articles. Volunteering at journal, whether run by graduate students, faculty, or associations, is a great way to become familiar with the publishing process. Emerging scholars are also encouraged to present at a conference – a conference proposal can be less daunting than a full journal submission. Reach out to peers and colleagues and try writing a paper together just like we have done here. It helps to break up the task and learn from each other in a collaborative learning environment. Ask your supervisor or a trusted professor for advice on what and where to publish, and seek out opportunities within your institution. Last but not least, the publishing process starts with you. Self-confidence is the foundation of getting your work published. Trust in your abilities to navigate the publishing process.

Our final words of advice: Harrison hopes that emerging scholars who have not yet published give it a try - the worst thing that can happen is that it gets declined, however, even in that case authors get useful feedback to apply in the future. Writing is an iterative process that is key to the growth of scholars, but it can be difficult for new authors

to put themselves and their work out into the world. Pamela felt these anxieties, which she admits were mostly self-imposed, due to a lack of confidence and a good portion of self-doubt as English is not her first language. At the end of the day presenting at conferences, receiving peer support, and reaching out to supervisors (or another trusted mentor and/or graduate student peers) can all help emerging scholars step out into the publishing world. Kashif's advice is to look beyond journals. Journals are only one of the many venues where you can publish your work. Emerging scholars can start with magazines, newsletters, blogs, discussion boards, edited volumes, and similar platforms to share their work. This will build your writing skills as well as your understanding of editors' and reviewers' expectations. Laura recommends developing a growth mindset in relation to feedback. As a new scholar it is important to develop the resilience needed to receive critical feedback from peers, as this will be a common occurrence. As Pamela said, if you find yourself in her situation with limited publishing experience, start small and take advantage of the many opportunities your institution offers. Good luck, you can do it!

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge the Language and Literacy specialization at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. The discussions within this article emerged out of work done within the specialization during the *Language & Literacy EDSA Speaker Series*. More information about the specialization and the speaker series can be found here: <https://werklund-langlit-edsa.weebly.com/>

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