Publishing a Review Paper

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Presentation Outline

1. Preliminaries
2. Paper key points
3. Publishing process
4. Referee reports
5. The Decision
6. Conclusion

Preliminaries

Deciding whether to publish

- **Why publish?**
  - to add knowledge to your field
  - to advance your career
  - to see your name in print!
- **Have I got something worth publishing?**
  - Does the work add *enough* to existing knowledge?
  - Is it of interest to others in the field?

Preliminaries

Deciding where to publish

- Conference proceedings, book chapters and journals
- 26,000 journals – how to choose?
- Different strategies
  - topic and journal coverage (check website)
  - Is it peer-reviewed?
  - Most appropriate readership
  - Prestige
  - Length of time from submission to publication
  - Highest ‘impact’

Preliminaries

Deciding where to publish

- Journal impact factors
  - An impact factor attempts to provide a measure of how frequently papers published in a journal are cited in the scientific literature.
  - Calculated as the average number of times an article published in the journal in previous 2 years has been cited in all scientific literature in the current year.
  - So, if there were an average of 1000 citations in 2007 for 100 articles published in a journal in 2005 and 2006, the impact factor would be 10.

Preliminaries

Deciding where to publish

- Most journals have impact factors that are below 2.
- Journals with impact factors above 4 tend to be regarded as having a high impact factor, and those above 10 are stellar,
  - e.g. Nature = 28, TREE = 12, J. Applied Ecology = 4.5, MEPS = 2.3, Journal of Environmental Economics and Management = 1.6, Environmental and Resource Economics = 0.9.

Publishing Key Points

What Editors look for in a paper

- Quality
  - good science: well planned, well executed study
  - good presentation
- Significance and originality
- Consistent with scope of journal
- Demonstrated broad interest to readership
- Will it cite?
- Well written ‘story’
- Author enthusiasm

Publishing Key Points

Attracting the Editor

- There are lots of opportunities for rejection!
- Remember: your paper is competing with many others for the attention of editors and readers
- Title
  - Brief, interesting and accurate
- Abstract
  - Attract readers to your paper
  - Aim for 4 sections: why, how, what and implications
  - Include important keywords for searching
  - Make it clear and easy to read

Publishing Key Points

Writing the Paper

- Strong Introduction
  - Engage the reader
  - Set the scene, explain why the work is important, and state the aim of the study
- Clear, logically organised, complete Methods
  - Provide enough information to allow assessment of results (could someone else repeat the study?)
- Results
  - Be clear and concise; avoid repetition between text, tables and figures
- Relevant Discussion
  - Start strongly – were aims achieved?
  - Discuss significance and implications of results

Publishing Key Points

Organisation of the Paper

- Review papers must contain at least three basic elements:
  - an introduction or background information section;
  - the body of the review containing the discussion of sources; and,
  - finally, a conclusion and/or recommendations section to end the paper.

Publishing Key Points

Organisation of the Paper

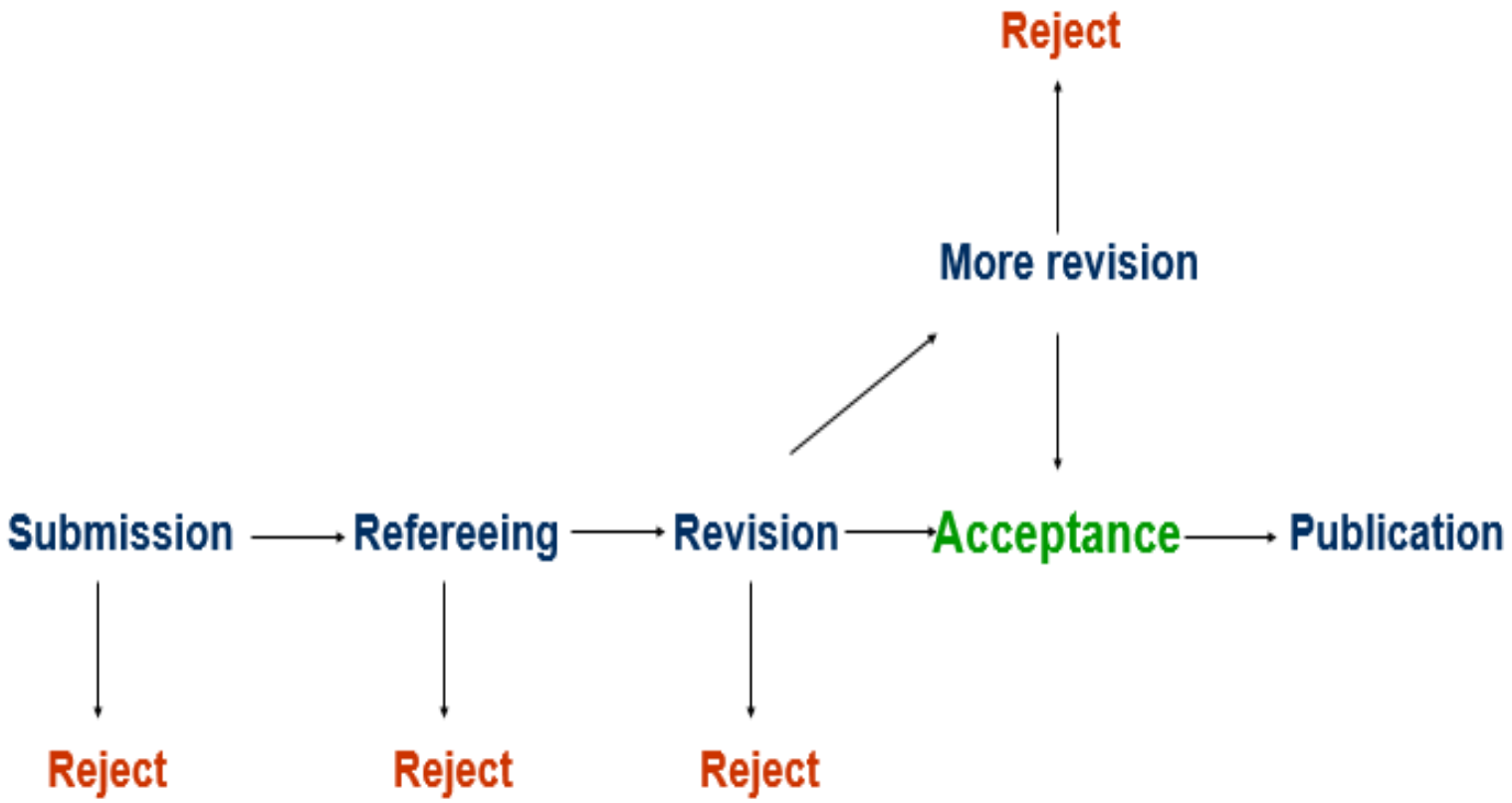
- **The introduction** should provide the reader with the scale and structure of your review. It serves as a map.
- **The body** of the review depends on how you have organised your key points. Literature reviews should be evaluative and not merely descriptive. For example possible reasons for similarities or differences between studies are considered rather than a mere identification of them.
- **The conclusion** of the review needs to sum up the main findings of your research into the literature. The findings can be related to the aims of the study you are proposing to do.

Publishing Key Points

Organisation of the Paper

- Review papers should comprise the following elements:
  - An overview of the subject, issue or theory under consideration, along with the objectives of the literature review.
  - Division of works under review into categories.
  - Conclusions including general observations, open areas for research, and conclusive comparative statements.

Publishing Process



Publishing Process

Before you submit

- Internal review
  - Ask your peers to read it to get an alternative perspective
  - Ask someone outside your field to read it
- Read the Notice to Authors
  - Follow format and submission instructions
- Write a covering letter to the editor
  - Should clearly explain (but not overstate) the scientific advance
- Submit with the consent of all authors and to only one journal

Publishing Process

After you submit: Referees

- Referees are crucial to quality control – they play a vital role in the scientific process
- Selection criteria
  - Knowledge of the field, expertise, reputation
  - Specific recommendations
  - Editor's experience of referee's style
  - Reliability
- Referee selection: two or three referees
  - Referees hand-picked for each paper
  - Use cited references, keyword searches, related papers
  - ISI Web of Science, web (Google Scholar), journal/publisher databases
  - Editorial Board member recommendations

Publishing Process

After you submit: Review

- Good reviews provide the editor with the information on which a decision can be based
- The best are *insightful*, *articulate* and *constructive*
- They tell the editor:
  - What is interesting about the paper
  - How the results are significant
  - What contribution the paper makes to the field
  - What can be done to improve the paper
  - If the paper is not publishable and why

Referee Reports

Responding to Referee Reports

- Read the editor's letter first for instruction
- Take a deep breath: proceed to the reports
- Put them aside for a day, or two, a week…
- Re-read reports and discuss with coauthors …
- Revise paper and prepare response document
- Remember –
  - Even comments that seem aggressive or ignorant can be helpful
  - Always view this as a chance to improve the paper

Referee Reports

Responding to Referee Reports

- Well organised
  - Address common themes at start
  - Use a ‘quote and response’ OR numbering system of points raised by each referee
- Informative
- Provide full explanations
- Do not overlook or ignore any points
- Assertive (and polite)

Referee Reports

Responding to Referee Reports: Good Example

Referee:

"Abstract – too long and too little about rationale; some repetition and some jargon presented without explanation (e.g. SL and age-0)"

Author:

"The rationale behind the study has been established at the beginning of the abstract (L29-32). The abstract has been shortened to 200 words and all jargon except age-0 has been removed (we don't agree that this term will confuse readers as it is commonly used). However, we have defined age-0 in the Introduction (L62 revised MS)"

Referee Reports

Responding to Referee Reports: Good Example

Comment # 1 from Reviewer 1: *The authors provided a good survey on the literature. The manuscript is well written, though there are too many unnecessary abbreviations.*

Response: Thanks for the positive feedback and observation. The use of too many abbreviations have been corrected in this revised version.

Before Revision: For example, before revision we had the first paragraph having several abbreviations, namely WMCS, QoS. The paragraph read thus:

As the need from Wireless Mobile Communication System (WMCS) users rapidly increases there is need to address the problem of inefficient communication and sometimes poor Quality of Service (QoS) associated with wireless mobile communication in some areas.

After Revision: After the revision, that same paragraph now has only one abbreviation and it read thus

As the need from wireless mobile communication system users rapidly increases there is need to address the problem of inefficient communication and sometimes poor Quality of Service (QoS) associated with wireless mobile communication in some areas.

Other abbreviations have also been removed in the remaining parts of the document. Hence, this observation has been addressed in this modified submission.

Referee Reports

Responding to Referee Reports: Not so good Example

Referee:

"The presentation is not particularly clear, nor concise. I feel the paper would benefit from being shortened, with more emphasis on the new conclusions and differences from previous works."

Author:

"As it is clearly apparent that you have not properly read or understood the paper, comments on clarity are irrelevant. The paper has been shortened."

Referee Reports

Responding to Referee Reports: Not so good Example

Referees:

Two three-page reports with many fixable, but major, criticisms.

Author:

"I have changed the MS in line with the referees' comments."

The Decision

Accept, Review, or Reject

- Questions going through the editor's mind:
  - How good is the science in this paper?
  - Is an important issue/area of study being addressed?
  - Is the experimental design appropriate and adequate?
  - Are the analyses appropriate and competently done?
  - Has the study been put in context?
  - Does the paper contribute significantly to the literature?
  - Does the paper tell an interesting story?
  - ***Will it be read and cited?***

The Decision

Accept, Review, or Reject

- **Remember** –
- **The editor will make a final decision based on how well the referees' reports have been dealt with, so …**
- Revise with care
- Respond fully to each of the referees' comments
- Present cogent and complete arguments if you have not followed a referee's recommendation
- **Make the editor's job as easy as possible!**

Conclusion

- Writing for successful publication means
  - having a well designed, original study to write about
  - selecting an appropriate outlet/journal
  - knowing what you want to write
  - writing clearly
  - making the story interesting
  - highlighting the significance of the results
  - responding carefully and positively to referees' reports

Conclusion

- Tips for getting published
  - Read many papers, and learn from both the good and the bad ones.
  - The more objective you can be about your work, the better the work will ultimately become.
  - Good editors and reviewers will be objective about your work.
  - If you do not write well in the English language, take lessons early; it will be invaluable later.
  - Learn to live with rejection.

Conclusion

- Tips for getting published
  - Understand what makes good science and what makes good science writing: be objective about them.
  - Start writing the paper the day you have the idea of what questions to pursue
  - Become a reviewer early in your career.
  - Decide early on where to try to publish your paper.
  - Quality (not quantity) is everything.

Thank you

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