



The Geographical Society of New South Wales Postgraduate Event 2018 - Q&A on Publishing

Thank you to our three panellists, Natascha Klocker (Senior Lecturer in Geography, School of Geography and Sustainable Communities, University of Wollongong), Claudio Minca (Head of Department, Geography and Planning, Macquarie University) and Dallas Rogers (Senior Lecturer within the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, The University of Sydney) for their valuable insights.

Thank you to our Student Representative, Sophie-May Kerr (University of Wollongong), and our Executive Officer, Bronwyn Bate for their note-taking on the day.

Planning and Writing Papers

What's the best way to plan research papers from a study?

- It is important to know which community of academics you want to speak to (ask yourself who you cite and read and who you want to read your work). As yourself, 'What kind of impact you want to have?'
- Make sure your writing sits inside the research process. It is part of the process and you should be writing at all stages throughout your candidature.
- Start planning your writing early in your PhD Candidature with the team you are working with. The 'write up' doesn't have to be scary and separate.
- Your PhD is a traineeship in academia and writing.
- Journal articles are a different product to the thesis.
- When you receive reviewer comments, don't take it personally. Leave for 4-5 days and come back to it. A lot of the time there are more positives when you look at it a second time.
- It is a good idea to sole author at least one paper during your PhD. However, there are differences across disciplines (i.e. Sole authored is common in human geography, scientific papers are different might have 15+ on a paper).

When should a supervisor be a co-author?

- Ensure you are clear early on with your supervisors who owns what, particularly if you are part of a larger project. Discuss what you are all planning to write from the data set, plan and map who will contribute what and what the contributions will look like from each party.
- If a supervisor/s wants you to add them as a co-author on a paper, consider the following questions:
 - What is the time investment they have put into the paper? Consider how far your supervisor/s are in their own career path. Are they taking time



away from their own career to significantly support your writing? This may constitute co-authorship.

- Has your supervisor/s been contributing to theoretical thinking, writing and re-writing along the way?

Pros of co-authoring:

- When you are low in energy, the other person might not be.
- You are accountable to someone.
- Co-authorship offers different expertise and experience writing for different academic audiences. This offers different learning opportunities.
- If you want an academic job the best thing you can do is have sole authored papers. However, if you publish with someone who has a high track record you might end up with more citations.
- Healthy, small groups of co-working teams can be beneficial.

Deciding on which journal to target?

- Look at what you've been reading, what has been influencing your thinking – think about targeting this journal.
- Find a journal that has some conversation about your topic i.e. need to engage with the debate in the journal – this shows respect towards journal and its contribution to knowledge in a particular area.
- Do you decide which journal to target a paper before you begin writing or after you have written the paper? Each panellist has a different writing process. Some need to have an idea where they are going to send a paper before writing too much to know if it fits the journal and contributes in that space. Although, for some who find the argument comes out as they write, it might not be possible to target a journal before writing.
- At the end of your first year as a PhD candidate make a publication plan but be flexible. Plans change over time.
- Word count can play into the decision about where to send a journal article.

What are some things you should/shouldn't do when submitting to a journal?

- Always keep the journal editor happy – during peer review, your email etiquette and tone matter. Be polite and courteous at all times. Don't approach a journal with a sense of entitlement.
- Adhere to the specific formats and word count (word count is important) outlined by the journal.
- Always ensure your paper fits within the aims and scope of the journal.
- Edit! Be mindful of typos and formatting – attention to detail is important.
- Abstract is highly important because it is often the first thing reviewers will read. Before you start to write, make sure you know what you want to say – don't try to fit too many points in.



Navigating the review process

Responding to comments/referee reports

- If there are conflicting comments from reviewers then you can note this in your response to editors – i.e. couldn't address this point, or this is the way I chose to respond.
- If there is a fundamental change – highlight the things that the reviewers are saying and highlight how you have addressed this.
- Try to take on and engage with every comment from the reviewer/s. When you can't engage with a comment in the way that the reviewer has asked – explain why – respectfully. For example, 'I appreciate this comment, however I don't think that is relevant to this argument, because in this paper we are trying to do XYZ'
- The editor is the person you need to convince (don't annoy them).
- In some instances, you can look at how referees have framed comments and can embed this into your own work (without plagiarising).
- Use a checklist for addressing comments (a table can be extremely helpful). A checklist also makes the editor's job easier.

When to let go of a paper/harsh reviews

- Bad reviews – could mean that you have picked the wrong journal. Panellists discussed how they have experienced one journal hating a paper and another loving it.
- If you are rejected and submit somewhere else, you could get the same reviewer so make sure you have made changes before re-submitting. If you have done nothing from the previous reject, this could be an issue for the reviewer.
- Look at the reviews and see what you can take from it – it is a good opportunity to make the paper better.
- The myth is that everyone is submitting papers and getting published – the failures are a normal part of the journey. It is common for reviewers to request major changes before they recommend an article be published.
- Australian Geographer is a good 'incubator' for ECRs and PhD students.
- Consider bringing on a co-author rather than chucking the paper out entirely.

Promoting publications

What comes after your paper is published?

- Academics are public intellectuals and should promote themselves and their work as such.



- You should do everything you can to promote the article and engage in conversations from it.
- A Conversation article, media release and social media (i.e. Twitter) are ways to promote your article.
- It is good practice to write long, medium and short summaries of your work (i.e. a Conversation article and a single Tweet will both have different impacts and draw in different audiences to read your work).
- 50 free downloads offered by the journal can be beneficial.
- Get the work out to other academics – i.e. conferences, emailing directly.
- Email hyperlink to recent work.

The Nature of Publishing

How come publishers are the only people who get paid for this work when they do the least?

- Not an easy question to answer!
- If you want an academic career, you need to be submitting papers even if you don't like the model.
- In some ways you are paid for it.
- You can democratise access to your work by creating ways of doing things outside of this system – i.e. blog posts, podcasts etc. which have open, free access or choosing to publish in open access journals.

Recommended references

Evans D. Gruba P. & Zobel J. (2011), *How to write a better thesis*, Melbourne University Publishing.

Clark, R.P. (2013), *How to write short: Word craft for fast times*, Little, Brown and Company, United States.