Transforming a Paper or Chapter into a Publishable Article

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Session goals

• Understand the **differences** between a seminar paper or thesis/dissertation chapter and a journal article
• Understand how to **target a journal** for your work
• Understand what journal editors, reviewers, and readers want
• Understand the **moves that journal articles make**
• Plan your **next steps**
First, what’s your goal?

- Do you already have a paper or chapter that you would like to transform into a journal article?
  - Are you mainly trying to write a better paper? Or adapt your paper to a particular (new) audience? Or both?
- If you haven’t yet decided on what to try to publish, have you written a paper or chapter that your professor, advisor, or classmates have responded well to?
Different situations, different criteria

Professor or thesis/dissertation committee members ask:
• Does it answer the “so what” question and make a worthwhile contribution to relevant scholarly conversations?
• Does it demonstrate you have acquired the advanced research and writing skills needed to do publishable research: from doing thorough research to analyzing your objects of study to marshaling these materials into a coherent argument?
• Do all parts of the thesis or dissertation fit well together?

For journal article reviewers,
• the question of fit [with a larger work] is off the table;
• the demonstration of skills is simply a necessary condition;
• whether the article answers a “so what” question and makes a worthwhile contribution to a relevant scholarly conversation is what they put the greatest premium on.

Adapted or quoted from Transforming a Dissertation Chapter into an Article
Different features

Chapter (monograph-style thesis/dissertation) or seminar paper:
- Reviewed by select committee members or, for seminar paper, by one professor
- Manuscript format imposed by graduate school or professor; no or longer word limits
- Usually, lengthy research of literature
- IRB approval (if applicable) described in detail
- All methods described at length and copies of all tools used
- All findings presented

Journal article:
- Reviewed by several unknown reviewers
- Manuscript format pre-determined by journal (sections and word limits)
- Succinct research of literature
- IRB (if applicable) usually described in a few sentences
- Essential method/tool information included (and referred to concisely)
- Selected findings presented

Adapted or quoted from How to Write a Journal Article from a Thesis
What research journals publish

Journals publish contributions to the field, including research that

• “approaches new evidence in an old way”
• “approaches old evidence in a new way”
• “pairs old evidence with old approaches in a new way”

Scope out a target journal

Analyze the aim and scope of several journals. Which journals are more likely to be interested in your topic and, in particular, your angle on your research? Which are the best fit for your work?

Example: Journal of Pragmatics
Additional considerations

• **Who reads this journal?** Knowing whether it’s a broad/generalist journal or a highly specialized journal will help you understand who the readers are, which will affect how you write up your paper.

• **What quality of research do they publish?** Is your research of the same quality?

• **What is the journal’s reputation?** Reflect on the likelihood of your work getting into the journal, and discuss this with your supervisor, colleagues and peers.

• **Does it use a double-blind peer review process?** This can be a good sign of a high quality journal.

• What are the word or page limits? Can you condense your work into this number of words?

• Do they give any indication of their **acceptance rate** and the time it takes review and publish an article? If your dissertation requires publication, this may affect your choice and planning.

• **Do they require authors to pay to publish?** This can be a sign of a predatory publisher, which you should avoid. However, some open access journals now require a fee, which you can apply for **university funding** to cover.

Adapted from Australian National University, “Targeting a Journal”
What editors and reviewers value

In order to reach other scholars in your field, you need to get through to the editors and reviewers of the journal you’ve selected, who stand in for the journal’s readers.

What do they value?

Photo by Bernd Klutsch on Unsplash
What editors and reviewers value

- Informative, focused, relevant title
- Abstract that sparks readers’ interest
- Clear key message (argument)
- Clear contribution of something relevant and/or new to the field (significance/“so what?”)
- Firm grounding in relevant scholarship, theory, and methodology (e.g., succinct and effective literature review and methods sections)
What editors and reviewers value

- Persuasive presentation and explanation of evidence (selected findings) and their significance
- Well-written, appropriate style/discourse for the field
- References matched to journal’s style
- Presentational aspects that conform to journal’s “house” style (e.g., structure, headings/subheadings, tables, and figures)
Does your article make the right moves?

Use the CARS model—create a research space (CARS)

Move 1: Establish a territory
• Describe the field you are entering and give an overview of research

Move 2: Establish a niche
• Identify a problem or gap in the field you described in Move 1

Move 3: Occupy the niche
• Explain how your work is the ideal extension of research in Move 1, in order to address the gap identified in Move 2.

Let’s identify these moves in the sample article
Conduct a thorough genre analysis

• Where and how does the author articulate the key message/contribution?
• Where and how does the author raise the research questions or aims?
• How much of a literature review does the article provide?
• How are methods described?
• What kinds of language is used? Is it very discipline-specific, do they use a lot of signposting (e.g. firstly, secondly, thirdly), what concepts do they explain in detail?
• How does the paper emphasize the key message in the analysis and conclusion sections?
• How long is each section of the article?

Adapted from Targeting a journal - ANU
Take the next steps

• Based on the journal you choose, revise/transform your existing paper or chapter.
• Refine your main idea and clarify your contribution.
• Review relevant literature. What scholarship do you still need to review to demonstrate how revised/narrowed focus contributes to the field?
• Tie your evidence and analysis/discussion to your key contribution.
• Adapt the structure and presentation for your chosen journal.
  • If revising a chapter, considering what to take out and what to leave in.
Further steps

1. Ask for feedback by discussing and sharing your draft with colleagues/peers, advisors, and other trusted readers.
2. Judith Anderson Herbert Writing Center
   - Appointments: [utk.mywconline.com](http://utk.mywconline.com)
   - Graduate Student Writing Help
   - ESL Writing Center
3. Revise, using the feedback you received.
4. Polish at the sentence level for correctness and appropriate style for your discipline.
5. Send out your article!
6. Revise and resubmit based on feedback from reviewers.
Questions?

Please share your feedback and indicate interest in a follow-up workshop: https://forms.gle/TyKGxW8Dke84EVQ8

Attend other GPSAW 2023 events: https://gradschool.utk.edu/graduate-student-life/gpsaw-week/
Academic Phrasebank. University of Manchester, phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/
Australian National University. “Journal Article Writing.”
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