

# How to target journals

Dr. Steve Wallace



# Outline of speech

- ◆ Review journal guidelines to determine what kind of papers journals are looking for.
- ◆ Avoid two things in a paper that always make reviewers angry
- ◆ Use an academic social network to increase your chance of acceptance
- ◆ Identify journals with rising and falling impact factors
- ◆ Cite references politely to earn better reviews.
- ◆ Identify the three types of academic journals
- ◆ Select and target journals while identifying those where you probably won't be accepted.

## Collect a pool of potential journals for each article

- ◆ For each paper, collect a pool of potential journals.
- ◆ 1) Do not submit two papers to the same journal in two months, especially if the two articles are related.
- ◆ 2) Editors prefer to publish two articles by different authors.
- ◆ 3) Better for your CV

# Collecting your pool

- ◆ Keywords
- ◆ Relatedness metrics
- ◆ References
- ◆ Scopus
- ◆ Aims and scope
- ◆ Editor's letter
- ◆ Reviewing the journal

## Send your research where you have the highest probability for publication.

- ◆ Sometimes journals have biases and preferences
- ◆ Subject matter: Empirical, Theoretical papers?
- ◆ Check past issues of the journal. How many Chinese names can you find?
- ◆ Preferences are known; biases are difficult to detect.

## Practice

# Pick journals like you pick stocks

- ◆ Do homework on journals.
- ◆ Submit paper to a journal with a rising impact factor and higher acceptance rates. avoid declining journals with low acceptance and diminishing impact factor.
- ◆ Could cause the journal to be removed from the SSCI and SCI ranking.

# Practice

## Identifying journals with rising impact factors

- ◆ Good specialty journal's impact factors are rising.
- ◆ General journal's impact factor, except for a few at the top, are expected to decline
- ◆ In general journals, "readers are confronted with a decreasing probability of finding at least one important article in their field." (Holub, Tappeiner, and Eberharter, 1991).
- ◆ In the 1970s, the top ten journals in every field were general journals.
- ◆ In the 1990s, half of the top ten journals were specialized journals.

# How do journals compare to each other?

- ◆ *Journal Citation Reports*, published annually by the Institute for Scientific Information in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, provides statistical information about all established journals.





# Total Citations

- ◆ Total Citations (TC) is the number of all citations papers in the journal during a year. A large TC may indicate a journal's dominance in the field.
- ◆ A large TC is also characteristic of multidisciplinary journals (such as *Nature*) and journals catering to broad fields (such as *Journal of Geophysical Research*).
- ◆ A small TC may indicate a journal's weakness or less frequent publication. However, it is also typical for narrow-specialty journals even of high quality.

# Cited Half-Life

- ◆ Cited Half-Life (CHL) is the number of journal publication years going back from the current year which account for 50% of the total citations received by the cited journal in the current year.
- ◆ It indicates the age of its average cited articles. A large CHL may imply longevity of the published information.
- ◆ However, a relatively small CHL may reflect a journal's emphasis on cutting edge research and its timeliness.

# Impact Factor

- ◆ Impact Factor (IF) is the ratio between the number of all current citations of source items published in a journal during the previous 2 years to the total number of articles that the journal published during that time.
- ◆ It can also be viewed as the frequency with which the "average article" in the journal has been cited in a particular year.
- ◆ It is also believed to be a fair quality measure that "tends to discount the advantage that large, frequently issued, older journals have over smaller, less frequently issued, newer journals" [McDonnell, 1997].

# Practice

## Approach different types of journals

- ◆ Sending all papers to top journals is risky
- ◆ Sending all papers to low-quality journals is unsatisfactory
- ◆ Quantity and quality important.
- ◆ Having three papers in different journals is better than three in one journal, if the relative quality of the journals is the same.

# Questionable publishing outlets

- ◆ Chapters in edited volumes
- ◆ Non peer reviewed academic journals
- ◆ Graduate student journals
- ◆ Note journals
- ◆ Review journals
- ◆ Local journals
- ◆ New Journals
- ◆ Electronic journals
- ◆ Non SCI journals

# Preferred publishing outlets

- ◆ Regional journals
- ◆ Newer journals
- ◆ Interdisciplinary journals
- ◆ Field journals
- ◆ Disciplinary journals



# Problems of Journals

**Association journals:** Editors change every few years, and usually accept more papers from colleagues and friends. Since the editors are chosen from a few major institutions, they get a larger share of publications. They are **subsidized by associations**. (AER, Econometrica, IEEE, ACM)

**University journals:** Universities protect their own interests. Will often have a stated preference for their own teachers' and students' papers. **Subsidized by universities**. (HBR, MIT Sloan)

**Commercial journals:** Least likely to have preferences or biases. **Subsidized by reader subscriptions**. (Blackwell, North-Holland, Elsevier)

# Reviewing journals (1)

- ◆ Is the journal peer reviewed?
- ◆ Is the journal in the recommended publishing outlet category?
- ◆ Does the Journal have a solid reputation and reputable publisher?
- ◆ How old is the journal?
- ◆ Is the journal carefully produced?
- ◆ Does the journal come out on time?
- ◆ Are the authors published in its pages diverse?



# Reviewing journals (2)

- ◆ Does the journal publish more than five or six articles a year?
- ◆ Is the Journal online or indexed electronically and where?
- ◆ Does it take a long time to get published once you submit your manuscript?
- ◆ Is the Journal going through a transition?
- ◆ Who reads the Journal?

# Matching your article to the journal

- ◆ Does the Journal have a upcoming theme or special issue on your topic?
- ◆ Does the Journal have word or page length limits you can meet?
- ◆ Does the style of your article match the journal style?
- ◆ Do you know any of the journal editors?
- ◆ How does your journal require articles to be submitted?

# Things to ask the assistant editor

- ◆ How many submissions a year does your journal receive?
- ◆ What is your journal's turnaround time?
- ◆ What is your journal's backlog?



# Elements of a query letter to the Editor

- ◆ Address editor by name
- ◆ Any human connections
- ◆ Why he should be interested
- ◆ Display a knowledge of the journal
- ◆ Your title and abstract
- ◆ Article's length
- ◆ Not been published before
- ◆ Grants or awards
- ◆ Potential problem to tease review

# Emeraldinsight Journals

Emma Hollindrake, *External Relations Assistant*

- ◆ “Don’t forget that you can always e-mail an editor outlining your proposed paper (sending just the abstract is best) to see if they think your paper is suitable (if you have three possible journals, send the outline/abstract to all three Editors!); they are usually more than willing to offer advice and will often suggest an alternative journal if they feel their journal is not the best one for your paper.”

# Query letter to editor

- ◆ One of the best things you can do to improve chances of acceptance
- ◆ Four responses
  - ◆ “Send it in” – time pressure
  - ◆ Mini review with little problems
  - ◆ Negative response
  - ◆ No response

# Keep a record of your publications

- ◆ Some effective researchers use a “research log” to:
- ◆ 1) Know when to send a reminder to the editor
- ◆ 2) Prevent resubmission of a rejected paper to the same journal and
- ◆ 3) Avoid multiple submission of several papers to the same journal within a short period of time.

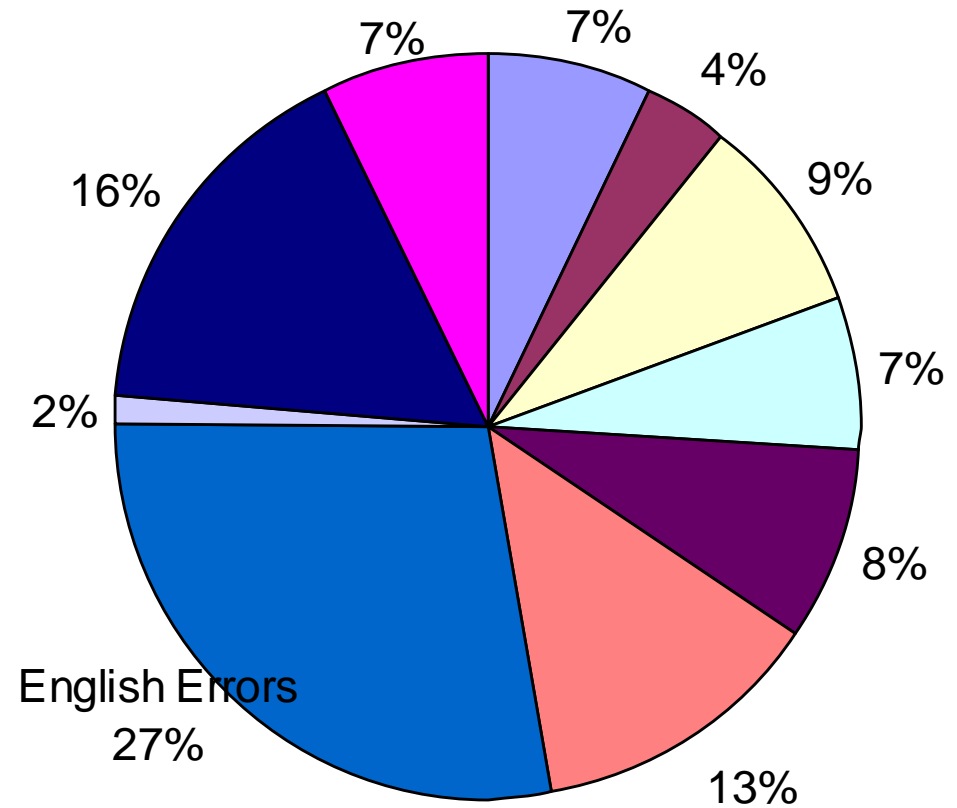
# Submission guidelines: Worth the trouble

- ◆ Following the Instructions to Authors reduces the chances of the manuscript being rejected by the journal editors even before the process for peer review.
- ◆ Editors don't like to see a paper that has been correctly prepared for a competing journal



# Reasons for major revision or rejection of Taiwanese journal papers

- Faulty methodology
- Inadequate references
- Poor quality supporting figures
- Outside the scope of journal
- Not enough contribution to field
- Authors did not follow manuscript instructions
- Poor writing style and use of English
- Title not representative of study
- Subject of little novel interest or not generally applicable



# How to understand the Journal's Instructions to Authors

- ◆ The Instructions to Authors contain the journal's expectations about:
  - ◆ the type of articles accepted
  - ◆ the required format for each type of article
  - ◆ type of illustrations (photographs/tables/figures)
  - ◆ language
  - ◆ publishing charges (if any)
  - ◆ any other instructions about the journal

# Topic of submission

- ◆ First article of new editor
- ◆ Last article of the year
- ◆ Aims and Scope



# Types of articles acceptable to the journal

- ◆ Letters to the Editor,
- ◆ short communications,
- ◆ full-length research papers,
- ◆ review articles



# Pre-submission letter to the editor

◆ Required or not?



# English Level

◆ British or American English



# British vs US spelling

- ◆ Generally, American journals require US spelling and British journals require British spelling, but many accept either form *as long as the spelling used is consistent*



Haematoma vs hematoma

Analysed vs analyzed

Labelling vs labeling

Behaviour vs behavior

# Formatting style for the main text

- ◆ Most journals set a limit on the
- ◆ **number of words**
- ◆ **number of pages**
- ◆ **font size** (10-, 11-, or 12-point size)
- ◆ **line spacing** (usually double-spaced).
- ◆ **right margin** or **unjustified**.
- ◆ **single column** or **double column format**
- ◆ **page numbers**
- ◆ Some journals such as **Nature** provide templates to be used for formatting the manuscript.



# The format for the title page

- ◆ Journals differ in their requirement for the title page.
- ◆ Most journals specify that the title page should be typed on a separate sheet of paper and should include the
  - ◆ **title of the article**
  - ◆ **author's name**
  - ◆ **academic degrees**
  - ◆ **address and university or institute**
  - ◆ **word count**
  - ◆ **name of the person for correspondence**

# The format for the **abstract**

- ◆ The journal specifies the **number of words** permitted (usually from 250–350 words), the **content** expected in the abstract, whether the IMRAD **format** needs to be followed, whether it needs to be typed on a separate sheet of paper.

# The number of **keywords** required

- ◆ Keywords are required to help find of the article by search engines on the Internet.
- ◆ Most journals specify the number of keywords they require, ranging from **5** to **10** in number. They are usually included after the abstract.

# The format for the references

- ◆ The **style** to be followed when writing the references with examples for:
  - ◆ cited papers
  - ◆ cited books
  - ◆ cited book chapters



# The format for tables

- ◆ The Instructions specify the
- ◆ **number of tables permitted**
- ◆ **the method to be followed for numbering**
- ◆ **word count limit for the titles of tables**
- ◆ whether a **hard copy** of the tables is required
- ◆ Most journals request that **tables be numbered in the order in which they appear** in the paper and that the position of the table in the text be clearly mentioned.

# The format for the figures and photographs

- ◆ **number of figures and photographs.**
- ◆ **black and white** photographs or **color**
- ◆ **The size of the figures,**
- ◆ **captions and numbering**
- ◆ **file formats** accepted,
- ◆ **publication charges,**
- ◆ **hard copy** of figures and photographs is required
- ◆ whether **figures** and **photographs** should be **embedded** in the text file or submitted as individual files, or embedded at the end of the text file.
- ◆ whether the photographs should be printed on **glossy** or **matt paper**.

# Instructions about equations, Units, and statistics

- ◆ Most journals provide instructions on math and equations in the text
- ◆ rules for writing Units (usually SI Units are recommended)
- ◆ guidelines on presenting statistics



# Style guide for symbols

- ◆ Most journals specify styles to be used for:
  - ◆ **abbreviations and**
  - ◆ **symbols**
  - ◆ **drugs**
  - ◆ **brand names of drugs**
  - ◆ **microbial names**



# Method of submission acceptable to the journal

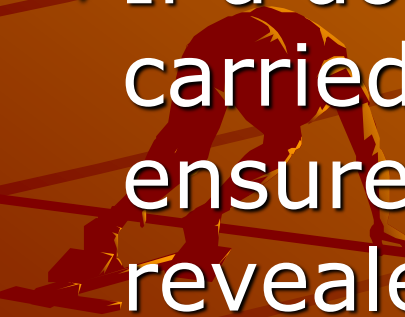
- ◆ Submission of the manuscript can be on **paper**, on a **compact disc**, or **electronically**.



# Manuscript file formats

- ◆ Commonly requested in MS Word or WordPerfect,
- ◆ Some journals accept submissions in **LaTeX, PDF, EPS, Text, Postscript, or RTF** format.
- ◆ If a PDF document is accepted for publication, a Word or WordPerfect document will be required.
- ◆ Some journals specify **file sizes** (individual files usually should not exceed 1 KB) and **file naming**.
- ◆ These should be followed carefully, to avoid delays in the review process or rejection

# Type of review process followed

- ◆ The journal usually mentions the process followed for review of the submitted manuscript.
  - ◆ If a double-blinded review is to be carried out, authors are requested to ensure that their identities are not revealed.
- 

# Publication charges

- ◆ Some journals may charge for all the pages but others may publish a fixed number of pages free and charge only for publishing any pages over this number.
- ◆ Color photographs are charged for, as well as illustrations/figures exceeding the permitted number.

# Cover letter requirements

- ◆ Journals such as JAMA, which provide very comprehensive Instructions to Authors, even specify what is required in the cover letter accompanying the manuscript.



# Cover Letter

- ◆ Don't send a letter saying little more than "*please find my manuscript attached*". Your paper does not look important
- ◆ The cover letter is your chance to talk to the editor of your target journal.
- ◆ Explain to the editor why your findings are important and why they should be published

# Cover Letter

- ◆ *General rules for cover letters:*
- ◆ Address to an editor by name
- ◆ Provide your **title** and **publication type**
- ◆ Provide a **brief background, rationale** and **description of results**
- ◆ Explain the significance of your findings and why they would be of interest to the journal's **target audience**
- ◆ Check the journal's instructions to ensure that all requirements have been complied with
- ◆ Provide corresponding author details

# Waiting for the Journal's decision

- ◆ Causes of quick rejection:
- ◆ Back-log
- ◆ Previous paper on subject
- ◆ Editor doesn't like topic or style





# Types of Journal acceptance

- ◆ **Pure accept:** almost never happens
- ◆ **Revise minor problems and resubmit:** signs of this are the editor mentioning a certain date for publication, adding references, developing conclusion, or defining terms.
- ◆ **Revise major problems and resubmit:** chance of acceptance 50%. Sometimes will go back to reviewers sometimes to editor. Signs are the editor won't say the article is conditionally accepted.

# When should you start contacting the editor?

- ◆ After three months once a month
- ◆ Four months twice a month
- ◆ Six months every day
- ◆ The longer the review takes, the less chance you have a publishing-reviewers may be negative
- ◆ Internal fighting in Journal
- ◆ You may want to consider withdrawing to another journal
- ◆ Editor's feedback is key in making this decision

# Reminder e-mail to editor

- ◆ “I’m just e-mailing to inquire about the status of my article titled \_\_\_\_\_, which I submitted to your journal on ( date ).”
- ◆ Don’t get angrier over time, just keep sending the same e-mail more often
- ◆ Sometimes editors appreciate the reminder

# Editor's letter for a major revision

- ✦ "Enclosed please find the reviewers' report on your paper. One reviewer has minor recommendations for revision, the other has fairly substantial recommendations. Although their reports are very positive about your paper, they also include helpful suggestions for improving the paper, especially regarding\_\_\_\_\_. Because of the reviewers concerns, I cannot accept the paper in its present form. I can offer, however, to send a revised version of the paper back to the second reviewer, should you wish to read work your argument substantially in line with these reports and resubmit the paper to us. I am sorry to have to convey what I know will be disappointing news, but I do feel strongly that with careful revision this essay could be accepted for publication in our journal."

# Editor's letter for major revision

- ◆ I am sorry to have to return your manuscript because it falls outside our guidelines. However, we would like to invite you to resubmit your article. In order to conform to our guidelines, you would need to be formulate your article to clarify your thesis and re-situate the piece within a more scholarly background. Thank you for considering our journal and we look forward to hearing from you.

# Rejected but can resubmit

- ◆ Comes with reviewer comments
- ◆ Editor may say it will be treated as a new submission
- ◆ Editor's letter can be difficult to decode



# Reject but resubmit

- ◆ Editors don't really expect to see your paper again
- ◆ Maybe they are just being polite
- ◆ If reviewer comments are helpful, you may consider it



# Rejected but can resubmit

- ◆ Enclosed please find the reviewers reports on your paper. They agree that you have a very promising idea, but that serious revision is necessary. In particular, they would like to see \_\_\_\_\_. Given their concerns, I cannot accept the paper for publication *in its current form*. Should you feel able to address our concerns and submit a substantially revised version of the paper, I would be glad to ask the reviewers to read the paper again.



# Rejected but can resubmit

- ◆ “Given the reviewers reports, we cannot accept your paper for publication. Should you choose to revise the paper thoroughly according to the reviewer’s substantial recommendations and submit it again to us, we will send it to new reviewers.”

# Rejected but can resubmit

- ◆ “Although the reviewers thought the article was strong, they have noted some serious flaws that must be addressed before the *article is publishable*. Please see the attached for the reviewers suggestions.”



# Rejected

- ◆ “Is not publishable”
- ◆ “Is not ready for publication”
- ◆ “Cannot be published at this time”
- ◆ “Does not meet our standards for publication”
- ◆ “Is not right for us”
- ◆ Positive language is not a sign of a second chance

# Rejected paper

- ◆ “I’m sorry to return your article, but our submission guidelines require that articles reveal something new and demonstrate a thorough grasp of previous criticism on the topic. Your submission lacks this dimension and therefore we cannot consider it further at this time.”

# Rejected paper

- ◆ “Thank you for offering us your manuscript we have read it with interest and regret that we cannot accept it for publication. We hope that the attached readers report provides helpful advice as you revise your paper for publication in another journal.”

# Rejected by editor

- ◆ “good luck”
- ◆ No peer review
- ◆ Very fast
- ◆ Reasons: backlog, too many articles on topic, reviewers report to hostile,
- ◆ Don't ask for report just move on to plan B.

# Everyone gets rejected

◆ Your options:

◆ Abandon the article.

◆ Send the article with no changes to another journal.

◆ Revise the article and send it to another journal.

◆ Protest the decision and try to resubmit the article to the rejecting journal

# Avoid the journals which consistently reject your papers

Temporarily avoid journals which always reject you

The editor still remembers bad comments about your papers.

Wait until a new editor is appointed.

If you think there is prejudice on the basis of sex, race, or nationality, you may consider using initials instead of spelling out the first and middle names.

First and middle names, as well as last name, often reveal the sex, race, or nationality of the authors.


You may write your full name after the paper is accepted.



# For More Information

◆ [www.Editing.tw](http://www.Editing.tw)

◆ [www.seminars.tw](http://www.seminars.tw)

- 
- ◆ Michaelson, Herbert, *How to Write & Publish Engineering Papers and Reports*, Oryx Press, 1990. Chapter 6 discusses abstracts.
  - ◆ Bob Bly, *Research papers for dummies*, Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2004
  - ◆ Kwan, a *Publishers Handbook*, University of Illinois <http://www.roie.org/>
  - ◆ Robert W. Bly, *The White Paper Handbook*, Thomson, 2006
  - ◆ How to write and publish an academic paper in 16 weeks
  - ◆ How to attend, speak or present a poster at an academic conference
  - ◆ How to speak confidently in public in 18 weeks – by Steve Wallace