Getting into print in the sciences

Wednesday July 15

Ross H Crozier

First,

Introductions!

Faraday: Work Finish Publish

Slight change: Begin Finish Publish

Meaning: It’s all one process. Research isn’t ‘done’ until published.

No guarantees! All I can do is raise issues for you!
Begin

Think ahead to make this the best possible research in its area.
The better it is the better the publication

But… what is “the best possible project”?
Generality [for this area]
Solving important long-term problem
Or identifying new ones not seen by others.
E.g., new technologies might yield opportunities not open before.

Begin

Usually, you’ll need $$$
So, you’ll put in a research proposal!

How?
Read the instructions.
Think about it for months beforehand
[Don’t leave it all to the last minute!]

Begin

Consider…
Be enthusiastic - if not you, who?
Balance details against vagueness
Be clear
Show that you can do the work
Timetabling
Be expansive - a big though practical project
Otherwise, if your budget is cut…
And, if you can
Collaborate
[Agencies are very keen on this]
Begin

Some secret instructions...

Albert Szent-Györgyi
Dionysians
& Apollonians

Finish

Some queries and scenarios...

How do you get the best from collaboration?
You've been cut 30% - what to do?
You asked for 5 years and got 3... what now?

Plan a grant proposal
Managing things - cuts, collaborators...
Brief statements of findings & problems

Tea and coffee break!

Starting to publish...

Who should be an author?
A potentially rancorous question
[and one on which views may change with time...]

People can honestly differ on this - best 'be generous'
Points system?
'Many hands make light work'
You don't really lose by adding people
depending on...

Authorship order
Conventions differ between fields!
Starting to publish…
Writing the manuscript!

Assemble your
   background
   methods
   findings
   conclusions

Not sure which is which?
   One thought at a time…

Starting to publish…
Writing the manuscript!

Check the journal’s guidelines
   Editors get annoyed if you don’t
Write the first draft!
   Of course using EndNote or something similar

Co-authors - ethics
   all must agree to be included
   some journals want statements of responsibility
   circulate draft, get agreement

Strange things do happen … don’t let them come from you!

Submitting the manuscript

Obey all guidelines

Include enthusiastic letter briefly outlining importance
   Stress: Novelty and Importance of your work.
   Suggest appropriate reviewers

Maybe… list inappropriate reviewers
Participants - Worries
[Hypothetical] examples
Thoughts
Queries

Selecting a journal

The meaning of the Impact Factor & similar indices

Impact Factor

The journal impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which the "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular year. The impact factor will help you evaluate a journal's relative importance, especially when you compare it to others in the similar field.

The impact factor is calculated by dividing the number of current citations to articles published in the two previous years by the total number of articles published in the two previous years.

Immediacy Index

The journal immediacy index is a measure of how quickly the "average article" in a journal is cited. The immediacy index will tell you how often articles published in a journal are cited within the same year.

The immediacy index is calculated by dividing the number of citations to articles published in a given year by the number of articles published in that year.

The immediacy index is useful in comparing how quickly journals are cited. Because it is a per-article average, the immediacy index tends to discount the advantage of large journals over smaller ones. However, frequently issued journals may have an advantage here, because an article published early in the year has a better chance of being cited than one published later in the year. For comparing journals specializing in certain subject areas, the immediacy index can provide a useful perspective (see below for further discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Impact Factor</th>
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<td>2021</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>5.34</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Immediacy Index</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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Which is “The Top Journal”?

What’s happened?

And… what is the median impact factor?

Unexpected?

Selecting a journal
Try very hard to find an ISI-listed one
But think about comparing like with like

You can easily beat ISI at this, e.g., Behavioral Ecology with IF > 3
Selecting a journal

Things may be stable…

… or not

[and WHY not??]

Selecting a journal

There can be some surprises

What’s happened?

Definitely an effect of small sample size!
Problem: 2-year records!

This year: effects of competition?

BAMNH must be dropping sharply to usual level

Selecting a journal

Kinds of journal reviewing processes

[Only reviewed journals 'count', but what counts as reviewing?]

Some - Editorial board members do it all
May mean more dedication, less expertise

Most - Editor or Associate Editor selects reviewers
Much more breadth, sometimes less care
Modern problem: ‘Reviewer fatigue’

Selecting a journal

Handling review reports

“Expert” approach - evaluation of comments
Ed or AE make own, informed, directions

Mechanical - ‘Majority vote’ of reviewers
“Please attend to the comments…”
Not likely to reward innovation

Nature & Science are different
Two-stage process - first, biggest, cut is for interest
then reviewers check the science
Very broad readership
It all means - striking reports, enthusiasm
rapid turnaround
Selecting a journal

But usually all power rests in Editor
[or Editor in Chief]

Others recommend to the Editor

e.g., Molecular Ecology
AE sends complete roundup to Ed
Evaluates reviews, says if recommends against them

Your chance to compare possible journals
What to do about reviews?

Handling … rejection
    cruel lack of sympathy
    stubborn blindness to your insights

Reviewers can be irresponsibly harsh
    - Anonymity can be abused
    - Editor should protect you, but may not

You might want to just
    - Put the review in the desk drawer for a bit
    - But not too long - Journal wants speedy reply

Range of reviews

“Both reviewers liked your paper and found no flaws. I’ve sent it to the printer”

    Very rare… but possible.

“The reviewers liked your paper and recommend publication after minor revision. I agree, and would be pleased to see a revision in which the following points are attended to. With your revision, please send a letter detailing your responses to these points.”

    Good news! Your paper is accepted!

Range of reviews

“The reviewers have recommended publication of your paper after revision, and I agree. Please respond to all their comments and detail these responses in a letter accompanying your revision”.

    Still very good news, but a lot of work is likely… reviewers can be disorganized in their remarks.

“But the reviewers report that this paper is not publishable in its present form, but a version revised in accordance with the reviewers’ comments might be publishable.”

    Still good news! But there are no promises…
Range of reviews

“From the reports of the reviewers and my reading of your ms, I have to recommend to the Editor that this paper is not publishable in this journal, although a different ms incorporating new findings might be.”
   You’ve lost this one, but maybe in future…

“From my reading of the ms, and the reviewers’ reports, I regret to have to tell you that this paper is not publishable in this journal. I hope that the comments will help you in gaining publication elsewhere…”
   That’s it, start again elsewhere

Range of reviews

Very rarely…
“Both reviewers found serious flaws in your paper and I therefore regret to have to tell you…”

But you see that the reviewers disagree! You could try arguing this one.
In responding… it’s a lot of work, but not nearly as much effort as already spent, therefore:
   Answer all the required points fully
   Be calm
   If rejecting suggestions, say fully why
Sometimes, 1 of say 3 reviewers is just wrong/stupid
   You can try making a forceful response
   [praising the other two for their wisdom]

What if at first you don’t succeed?

It’s not the end of everything
   If papers always accepted, perhaps you are not ambitious enough!

You WILL get it published!

Could think of a ‘journal path’
   Eventually you will find a willing outlet
   Persevere!