Choosing the Right Journal for Publication

Publications are key if you want to pursue a research career, but choosing the right journal to publish your work can be challenging.

What comes first, the article or the choice of journal?

Whether you should choose a journal for your article or write an article for a specific journal is a matter of personal choice. But the choice of journal will influence the length and style of the paper. Even if you write a general article (or rewrite a rejected manuscript!) you will need to tailor it to the journal you submit to.

Use the resources you know about:

Take care to select a journal that publishes articles that have a similar or complementary methodological approach to yours; qualitative work will not necessarily sit well in quantitative data-heavy publications, for example. Be aware of ‘special issue’ journal editions, as these may dovetail with your research more closely than a general issue.

Look at your references; is there a common journal in your particular area which is often mentioned? If a journal commonly publishes work in your chosen area, then it is more likely to accept your publication as well.

Look into the type of article the journal publishes. For example, if you want to publish a Review Article, find out whether the journal publishes these. If you wish to present a case study or a theorem, ensure that the journal you are targeting actually publishes the type of manuscript you wish to write. Also look at length of manuscript restrictions and time it takes to publish if time is of the essence.

Audience:

Think about your audience and purpose behind publishing. If you are publishing to help further an academic/research career, you will be more interested in the journal’s impact factor (see below). If you wish to publish to share practice with fellow practitioners, you will be more interested in finding a journal which is widely read in your profession. Last but not least: look at journals you read yourself! If you frequently read a particular journal, then it is more likely that your colleagues will as well. Speak to your supervisors and peers to ask their advice about suitable journals.

Journal Impact Factors:

Particularly for academic/research career publications, one of the primary considerations is a journal’s Impact factor. Investigate Journal Impact Factors and other new journal impact measures available in Scopus to determine the most influential journals in your field.

High profile (and high impact) journals will tend to require a lot of results but have tight word limits, asking for a condensed writing style. These journals also receive a higher volume of articles submitted and thus reject more. It may be worth submitting research to a high impact journal first and resubmit somewhere else if it gets rejected.

Other questions to consider for academic publications:

- What databases and citation sources list the journal?
- What is its actual and perceived rejection rate?
How often have you seen it cited?
Does the NSFT or associated institute subscribe to it?

Open Access Journals

Open Access Journals are those which are free at the point of use for readers, and offer the chance to have your work seen by the widest audience. Only look for journals which offer a peer-review prior to publication as this will ensure that your paper is considered a good quality piece of work.

Also look at who funded your work: Most funders (including the NIHR) require you to make your articles open access. Make sure that the journal you choose allows you to publish in the way required by your funder - you may need to pay OA publishing charges (although some journals are subsidised), and this should have been included in the original funding application. The directory to search Open Access Journals can be found here: http://www.doaj.org/

Costs:

Do the journals you are considering impose page charges for illustrations etc? Do you have funds to cover these charges?

- Consider the 'short communication' format as a possibility, rather than a full length research paper.
- If you wish to publish in an Open Access Journal, then there may be additional costs involved.

Researching Suitable Journals:

Draw up a shortlist of preferred titles and research them thoroughly to make sure to:

- Confirm the journal really is suitable for your proposed contribution
- Check the types of articles published, Study the types of title, sub-headings and graphics used
- Read carefully the Journal’s 'Instructions for Authors' guidance and tailor your paper to their requirements
- Sample the length of some papers

Once a suitable Journal has been chosen:

Stick exactly to the author guidelines set down by journal editors, including style, referencing, word limits, and modes of submission. Consider approaching journal editors to test their interest in the article you intend to write before submission – some journals offer an early remit review.

Submitting to multiple journals:

Don’t under any circumstances send the same article to two different journals at once. Wait until one rejects it before sending it to the other. If editors find out your article is under consideration by another journal, they will reject it without sending out for review.

Alternative ways to Publish:

Conference presentations (verbal or poster) can be a useful forum for testing interest in your theory or argument, and seeking feedback. Consider any opportunities to do book reviews and conference proceedings – these give the useful experience of going through the publication process and raise your research profile.