

# Playing the Publish or Perish Game: Guidance for Doctoral Students and Early Career Faculty

Daniella Smith<sup>a</sup>, Yunfei Du<sup>a</sup>, Denice Adkins<sup>b</sup>, John Budd<sup>b</sup>, Maria Cahill<sup>c</sup>, Vanessa Reyes<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of North Texas, United States

<sup>b</sup> University of Missouri, United States

<sup>c</sup>University of Kentucky, United States

<sup>d</sup>East Carolina University, United States

Daniella.Smith@unt.edu, Yunfei.Du@unt.edu, AdkinsDe@missouri.edu, BuddJ@missouri.edu, Maria.Cahill@uky.edu, Reyesv23@ecu.edu

## ABSTRACT

“Publish or perish,” or the idea that one must consistently publish to succeed in an academic career is a well-known adage within higher education (Schaberg, 2016). Specifically, Bond (2023) shares that publications are promoted as a path to career success. The scholarly output of professors simultaneously affects the reputations of the professors and their institutions. Similarly, doctoral programs often require students to publish before they graduate. When applying for academic positions, having publications beyond the dissertation is seen as a strength by prospective employers.

Although publications are viewed as a strength, Huang (2021) discusses some challenges doctoral students have with publishing, including a lack of understanding of the publication process. Many students who are in master’s degree programs may complete a thesis. However, the thesis process diverges from journal articles because the publication procedures differ.

Huang (2021) further notes that the pressure to publish in high-quality, well-known journals is another challenge. These journals are identified as the best because of the rigor involved in their peer review process, and they typically accept fewer papers per year. Finally, journal publications are a competitive process, and the inability to complete a publication on time can cause anxiety among students.

Researchers have called for an evaluation of publishing practices in academia. For example, Saxena, Godfrey, and Yannessa (2023) explain that publishing expectations can lead to the production of low-quality publications and an increase in unethical behaviors such as plagiarism. Moreover, inexperienced writers may seek to validate their research by relying on the willing acceptance of predatory journals (Mertkan, Aliusta, & Bayrakli, 2022). These journals flood the internet with low-quality papers that do not adhere to rigorous peer-review standards. Consequently, inferior research that has not been vetted is often repetitively cited.

Since navigating the publication process is a skill that must be gained, Dyke (2019) suggests that it is necessary to teach early-career academics how to manage the rigors of publication expectations. Dyke asserts that learning to manage stress and time is essential for successfully publishing. Also, new scholars must be taught how to explain their research's benefits and potential impact. Dyke further argues that publishers can play a crucial role in teaching publication skills. Instead of relying solely on universities, publishers can develop courses to clarify the process of writing publications. These courses can include content about basic writing and editing skills and submitting revisions.

The panel recognizes that publishing is indeed not a game. However, it is a necessary component of career progression at many universities. Therefore, in response to library and information science doctoral and early career professionals' scholarly publishing professional development needs, this panel seeks to advise about strengthening writing skills and clarifying the peer review publishing process. This panel will include expert editors and editorial board members with over a century of combined scholarly publishing experience. Attendees will participate in a discussion of the peer review process and receive suggestions for efficiently writing and submitting journal articles. The panelists are Drs. John Budd and Denice Adkins (co-editors of JELIS), Yunfei Du (editorial board member of JELIS), Maria Cahill (co-editor of School Library Research), and Vanessa Reyes (co-editor of The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion). The moderator will be Dr. Daniella Smith (editorial board member of Public Library Quarterly).

### **Program Format**

This interactive program will include polls to increase audience engagement and an online whiteboard to collect questions for the discussion after the presentation. The program format will be as follows:

1. Session introduction: The moderator will introduce the session by sharing the presentation objectives and research about publishing in academia..
2. Panel introduction: Each panelist will introduce themselves and their experience with scholarly publications.
3. Topic Discussion: The panelists will answer questions related to the following topics.
  - a. Understanding the peer review process: The presenters will share the peer-reviewed process used by the journals and the pros and cons of the peer-review process.
  - b. Implementing strategies for publishing quicker: Panelists will provide suggestions for streamlining the publication process.
  - c. Submitting revisions and options for addressing comments: Our experts will discuss their expectations for article revisions and the do's and don'ts of getting an article published after revisions have been requested.
  - d. Preparing content for peer-reviewed journals: There is a difference between casual and scholarly writing. The panelists will discuss the differences and provide examples of their expectations regarding the content of peer-reviewed publications.

- e. Identifying appropriate journals: The panel will suggest how to determine the best journals for their research areas and how to avoid predatory journals.
- f. Identifying publication tools and resources: Authors curate tools and acquire skills that help them navigate the publication process. The presenters will share their favorite tools and resources.
- g. Making writing enjoyable: The panelists will discuss embracing writing and making publishing fun.
- h. Final words of advice and questions: The session will conclude with audience questions and final panelist thoughts.

## References

- Bond, C. (2023). Revisiting publish or perish. *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice*, 31(1), 1-2.
- Dyke, G. (2019). Does the early career 'publish or perish' myth represent an opportunity for the publishing industry? *Learned Publishing*, 32(1), 90-94.0
- Huang, Y. (2021). Doctoral writing for publication. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(4), 753-766.
- Mertkan, S., Aliusta, G. O., & Bayrakli, H. (2022). Pressured to publish: stories of inexperienced researchers. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 35(3), 603-615.
- Schaberg, C. (2016). Publish or Perish? Yes. Embrace It.: That academic mantra doesn't have to be a threat, or a gloomy mandate to live or die under. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/publish-or-perish-yes-embrace-it/>
- Saxena, S. G., Godfrey, T., & Yannessa, J. F. (2023). Publish or perish: time for a rethink? *Qeios*. <https://doi.org/10.32388/fpzjpk>

## ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

education; students; publishing; curriculum; continuing education.

## AUTHOR KEYWORDS

early career publications; doctoral student publications; publish or perish; scholarly production; writing.

Copyright 2024 by the authors. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.alise.2024.1742>