



## Publishing in Discipline-Specific Non-Library Journals for Promoting Information Literacy

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### ABSTRACT

Academic librarians tend to publish in traditional “library” journals rather than journals directed at other academic disciplines, thereby missing the opportunity to inform and educate a key audience. This article alerts librarians to publishing opportunities in discipline-specific academic journals in the Arts & Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences, both as a means of promoting information literacy (IL) and effecting outreach to faculty. Selection criteria are defined and discussed. The results of the study are presented by discipline in table format with data on each journal including publisher, affiliation, publication frequency, review time, acceptance rate, and ranking indicators.

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### INTRODUCTION

Most librarians tend to publish in librarianship journals. This approach seems completely appropriate for librarians that focus their research efforts on library management, collection development, and technical services. Academic reference librarians, however, should consider publishing in journals directed at the academic disciplines they serve. By exercising the option of submitting their research to non-librarianship journals, the academic reference librarian can choose from a wider variety of journals and, more importantly, open doors for communicating information literacy (IL) skills to a targeted audience — namely the teaching and research faculty who are in a position to invite a librarian into the classroom for bibliographic instruction.

### LITERATURE STUDY

In a 1989 editorial, Moffett opined that “what we write is seen by almost nobody, but other librarians. For all our meetings, conferences, and pre-conferences, for all our committees and task forces, our journals and yearbooks, are we any better understood by our clients in whose behalf we labor?” (Moffett, 1989, p. 609). Kornegay stated that “the ideas which we present in our journals are often interesting to other librarians, but consider how useful and effective much of our writing

could be if it were read by another academic audience — the college teaching faculty” (Kornegay, 1990, p. 1033). Kornegay went on to identify three categories of journals as possible candidates for librarians to publish — issue orientated journals, which report on news and trends in higher education (e.g., *The Chronicle of Higher Education*), teaching-practice journals (e.g., *College Teaching*) and subject-specific journals, which address the pedagogy of a subject and comprise the largest category (e.g., *Teaching of Psychology*) (Kornegay, 1990). According to Bruce, “it has been evident that little of the literature is appearing in mainstream higher education journals or discipline-based journals, suggesting that the transformation of the information literacy agenda from a library-centred issue to a mainstream educational issue is only beginning” (Bruce, 2001, p. 113).

Previous studies containing lists of potential non-library journals were from the early 1980s for the Arts & Humanities (Kenney, 1983) and the Social Sciences (Kenney, 1984), while in the 1990s for the Sciences (Weimer, 1993). Other studies have searched information literacy content across discipline-specific pedagogical journals with conclusions that most of the content contained little information about libraries and that few articles were actually written by librarians (Jacobson & Valley, 1992; Stevens, 2007; Still, 1998). A bibliographic guide to non-library and information science journals was also published in 2000 by the American Library Association (ALA), however much of that information is now outdated (Library Instruction Round Table, 2000). The Association of College & Research Libraries updates a short list of pedagogical journals from non-library academic fields every three years (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010).

This article presents an updated list (Table 1) of journals that provide publishing opportunities for academic reference librarians in the

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disciplines — Arts & Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences. Before selecting a journal for article submission, an author should consider and prioritize several criteria (Bennett, 2010; Boellstorff, 2011; Cunningham, 2004; Henson, 2001; Holmes, Hodgson, Nishimura, & Simari, 2009; Klingner, Scanlon, & Pressley, 2005; Nihalani & Mayrath, 2008; Northam, Yarbrough, Haas, & Duke, 2010; Shidham, Pitman, & DeMay, 2012; Thompson, 2007). These criteria are discussed below.

## INITIAL SELECTION CRITERIA

### AUDIENCE AND SCOPE

Understanding the journal's audience is crucial when deciding where to submit a manuscript. Some journals focus on a specific subject area or theme, while others are intended to appeal to a broader audience. A manuscript will be rejected quickly if it does not fit within the scope of the journal. Moreover, it is important that the themes of the manuscript coincide with the nature of other articles in a particular journal. For example, an article about a 'librarian's outreach approaches in a biology class' might be regarded with more acceptability in a journal whose scope focuses on education in biology, whereas an article about a 'librarian's outreach approaches to science classes' may be more appropriate in a general education journal. To increase the likelihood of submitting to a relevant journal, it can be helpful to examine the journal archives to ensure an article topic is of interest to the readership.

Another aspect to consider is the type of manuscripts a journal accepts (e.g., a research or review article, short communication, perspective or opinion paper, etc.). If a journal accepts only empirical research studies, it is probably not the best place for reference librarians to submit a manuscript. The content and scope of a journal is generally stated in the 'Instructions for Authors' section of the journal's web page.

### PEER-REVIEW

Many journals put articles through a review process. Peer-review is considered an indicator of journal and article quality. An article published in a peer-reviewed journal is usually more highly regarded than other types of publications. Peer-review can be anonymous (i.e., blind review) or open. Reviewers evaluate the manuscript and make a recommendation to the journal editor: accept without changes or with minor changes, major revision or rejection. Very often, peer-reviewed publications are required for academic promotion and tenure. All non-library journals recommended in this study utilize a peer-review process.

### JOURNAL INDEXING

The visibility of a journal's content is enhanced when it is indexed in a general or subject-specific database. When a journal is indexed in a database, its content is searchable by the academic community at large. This increases the chances that the articles get cited. Database indexing can also affect other bibliometric data such as the article's citation counts, *h*-index, and the number of article PDF downloads. Such information may be used for evaluating an author's research productivity during promotion or tenure. All non-library journals identified in this study are indexed in one or more databases.

## OTHER SELECTION CRITERIA

Once the issues of journal scope, database indexing and peer-review status have been considered, the librarian-author is encouraged to consider other criteria before submitting a manuscript for review: publishing body, publication history and frequency, peer-review process and review time, manuscript acceptance rate, and objective ranking indicators. The relative importance of any of these criteria can vary based on academic discipline, the preferences of a promotion and tenure

committee, or even the academic institution. Librarian-authors are encouraged to evaluate all relevant criteria before making a final journal selection.

## AFFILIATION

Subject-related journals are frequently published by associations or societies that have a serious interest in the journal content. Members of these organizations, generally from academia and industry, share an interest in the developments and trends of their field. For example, the *Journal of Engineering Education* is published quarterly by the American Society for Engineering Education in partnership with ten other societies and associations worldwide. Presenting at conferences or publishing in journals hosted by associations and societies provides an opportunity for reaching to the broader subject community. By publishing in discipline-specific non-library journals, librarians have an opportunity to reach the broader subject community, much as they can stay informed about changes and trends in a discipline by attending subject-specific conferences (Tomaszewski & MacDonald, 2009).

## PUBLICATION HISTORY

The length of time a journal has existed may also be a factor for consideration. It can take years for a journal to become recognized in its field, but once a journal is established and highly regarded, it is read by a larger audience. It can be more difficult to get an article published in an established journal. On the other hand, newer journals often need articles to fill a publication and thus may be more accepting during the review process. However, they are probably read by a smaller audience. New journals also need time to acquire ranking indicators and to become indexed in databases.

## PUBLICATION FREQUENCY

Publication frequency refers to the number of times a journal is published per year. If an article is accepted in a journal that publishes only once or twice a year, it will take more time for the article to appear in print.

## REVIEW TIME

Speedy publication can be an important consideration for an author when deciding where to submit a manuscript. There are two major wait-times during publication - the time from 'submission to acceptance' and the time from 'acceptance to publication.' According to *Cabell's Directories*, the "Time to review is the amount of time that passes between the submission of a manuscript and notification to the author regarding the results of the review process" (Cabell Publishing, 2012). The time taken from acceptance to publication varies, depending on the journal. Journals published annually usually allow more time for the review process. Since they are published only once a year, the time from acceptance to publication is definitely longer.

Other factors such as method of submission (i.e., online submission protocol or snail mail), nature and length of manuscript, number of reviewers, time of year, and total number of manuscripts submitted to the editor may all influence time variations from one journal to another or one article to another. The time frame for publication becomes longer if the reviewers require significant revisions to a manuscript. The recommendation to 'revise and re-submit' is the start of another time-consuming process. If a journal rejects the article, the determined author will need to repeat the entire process with a different journal.

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