**Workshop on Getting Published**

**Tuesday, November 13, 12:40 – 1:30 p.m.**

***Two established researchers, who are also reviewers, offered their tips on how to get published. Then participants shared their questions and tips.***

**Dr. Meg Carrington,** Physicist, Canada Research Chair in Systems and Modelling, researcher in particle and low temperature physics, numerical and analytical studies in non-equilibrium field theory, finite temperature field theory and transport theory; a reviewer.

Meg’s notes:

1) choose the journal to submit to

impact factor high is harder

more general is harder and higher readership

start high-ish and move down if necessary, judge how much value your paper has and how much time/strength you have

2) website gives estimate of time until decision and allows you to follow through refereeing

should still send inquiry emails, letters - in 2 weeks and then every week, articles- after the first month and then every two weeks.

3) when you submit you can request that someone not be the referee - no comment or explanation is necessary - try not to do it often

- some people "acknowledge" people they don't want as referees - I don't do this.

[If you add this person in the acknowledgements in your paper, then they will not be asked to be a referee for you. But this is a bit sneaky, and may be seen as so.]

4) referee reports

it's hard to read critical reports

- always read them carefully and think honestly if there are ways to improve the paper

- this is separate from deciding if you actually want to make the changes

- i ask myself first how would I rewrite if I had infinite time and energy

- allow the brain to conceptualize change without interference from the part that's screaming I don't have time for this

- sometimes it turns out to be not as hard as you first think

- can acknowledge the referee, with or without his name. [You may wish to acknowledge the referee if some comments have been a huge help – you could either mention the referee anonymously in the acknowledgements section, or you could ask the editor for the reviewer’s name and mention them by name.]

- some reading between the lines is necessary

overview:

a) some rejections are essentially acceptances, conditional on minor changes

- sometimes the referee says \*to the editor\* that changes are optional and he doesn't want to see the paper again

b) sometimes major but reasonable changes are requested

c) sometimes you're asked to do so much additional work it's almost a new paper

d) sometimes the referee has totally misunderstood what you did and his comments are garbage

e) sometimes the referee rejects on a fundamental level, the method or the idea itself

in the first 4 cases I would reply:

reply should be always polite and grateful for help and comments, etc

make a list - include ALL points raised by the referee and do as much as you possibly can to comply

- if you make 90% of the changes he asks for you can cheat a bit and fake compliance on a few points

- make some token change and point it out as a (fake) response to something he objects to

minor ones - do what he says and include on the list where the change was made

- make small organizational changes even if you feel it makes the paper worse

- I make all changes of wording the referee wants, even if I don't like them

major ones

A - extra work

anything that takes a couple of weeks I would do if I think the referee is essentially promising to accept it if the change is made

if longer, comment that it's a good point, add something in the text or conclusion saying interesting future work, tell the referee that you're working on this now and wish to include it in a future publication - this usually works unless the paper is very light

B - he thinks you've overstated your conclusions, you claim to have "proven" something, he says you've only given an argument and he doesn't find it convincing - i try to rewrite to satisfy him because:

- the important thing is to get it published - if people can read it they will decide for themselves what it's worth

- it's very unlikely you'll change his mind, would involve his admitting he had miss-understood something which people almost never do

case d):

- referee has misunderstood your work and written a lot of crap about what an idiot you are when he's the idiot

- I think you should never respond with anger or rudeness - there is no way the referee will admit that he's an idiot

- respond with more detailed explanation, some line recognizing that what you've done is complicated and not easy to understand, make some token changes in the text which are part of your main list to indicate that others could also be confused (he's not the only one who's too stupid to understand you)

case e):

- referee isn't an idiot (has basically understood you) and he does not like something fundamental, your method or your idea itself

- very unlikely he'll change his mind

- if you're convinced that you are right - switch to another journal

[If you are convinced you are right, you can request a new referee, but he/she sees the initial report from the other referee. ]

- can request another referee but he'll see the report of the first

SUMMARY:

1. I hate to argue with referees, I have not done it often, but I’ve never found it to be productive.

2) anything you've done which is new/original and correct should be published - there are small start-up journals that will publish anything

- by the time you get the reports you're working on something else which is fascinating and you don't want to go back and plug holes in an old project or make changes you don't like

- never decide it's not worth it and quit - finishing things, dealing with the crap it takes to get published, are part of a researchers job

Renee Robinson: Have you ever won an argument with a reviewer?

Meg: Does not believe she has ever won, although she tried 4 or 5 times.

Renee Robinson: She did defend her statistical method once and did get published. A second time, there was a poor comment, and she got published then too. She noted that in her area, it doesn’t necessarily go back to the initial reviewers; the editor may make the final decision.

Meg: That is not the case in her area (physics).

It is different in the different disciplines.

**Sheila Scott,** Professor in Music Education, researches in Student Assessment and Inquiry-Based Music Education, reviewer for two journals:

She responded to the theme of “Top Five Hints for Getting Published”. She noted that some of her points were the same as Meg’s, but that would just reinforce them, so presented all she prepared.

She publishes in Education Journals and in Music Education Journals. The paper is submitted to the editor who sends it out to three reviewers. Sometimes the editor makes the final decision herself.

Her points:

1. Reach for the top:

What are the top journals in your discipline?

What are the top journals related to your work and how you perceive your work?

It is rare for someone to have every article accepted on first submission; start at the top and go to the next on your list if the work isn’t published in the journal of your first choice. She aims first for international blind review, and selects her first and second pick of journals.

1. Successful publication record is NOT due to chance or luck – do your homework.

Target Journals

* Purpose/Mission - What is the purpose or mission of the journal?
* How does your work contribute to this purpose/mission?
* Audience - What group/s form the target audience?
* What writing style/styles are used to reach this audience?
* Formatting - What is the style/guide for referencing in that journal?
* Submission - What are the limits on the length of paper, the length of abstract, how many key words to give, and so on …
* Theme issues - Are there upcoming themed issues that your work fits into?

As a reviewer, if she feels a particular submission doesn’t suit their journal, she will suggest other journals to the researcher.

Follow the rules for submission – see their website. If you don’t follow their formatting, etc, they will likely assume you don’t really want to be published in that journal.

1. Systematically deal with requested revisions

* Stay calm and Focused
  + Keep a copy of the original submission.
  + Get the “easy stuff” out of the way first.
  + Ask editor for assistance if reviews are contradictory.
  + Track significant changes even if not requested to do so.
  + Don’t’ compromise your professional expertise/beliefs for the sake of publication.
    - Resubmit with a rationale of why it is not possible to make a change that you think isn’t warranted or as you see as wrong.
    - Look for another publisher if the compromises expected from an editor/editorial board don’t fit with your own perspectives of your work.
* Resubmit promptly or inform the editor if you choose not to resubmit. You may wish to be published in that journal again, so be considerate. If delayed, contact the editor and say why. Ask if okay? Or if perhaps in a future journal?

1. Be patient: Publication can be a long process. In the mean time, begin on subsequent work while waiting for a response. Have other projects on the go and keep working on them.
2. Don’t take “rejection” personally.

* Many factors go into editorial decisions.
* If unsuccessful with a certain manuscript and/or publication, move on.

Allison: Re-iterated that you should track changes. It is NB because it is hard to reconstruct the original submission. She overwrote her original submission with her revisions once, and learned the hard way, when she had to try to compose the original manuscript again, so could say what changes were made, and why.

Karen Remple: For a research project with several dimensions, how much should go in one article? Should you try for ten papers? Or one long paper?

One response: Does the funding agency have rules on whether the final report goes just to them, or can be published? Check that. Do acknowledge the funding agency in the paper.

Karen: Her current research is on homelessness and youth, with nine to ten factors/variables. Other responses: Consider whether focusing on just one variable gives a true picture. Consider what others will learn from the paper. What is the limit for papers in that journal? Nowadays on-line journals may allow longer papers. One said the limit used to be 20 pages, but when a 23 page paper was submitted, was okay for on-line. She asked the editor. Think of the reviewers/editor – a 120 page paper is too long to review.

Allison: Perhaps one key article, as a summary, plus several spin-offs, with more detail/explanation on each factor, and point readers to them.

Meg: She has seen a paper with Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3. Or put some details in the appendices.

Renee: She submitted one with Part 1 and Part 2, the first on client and on system outcomes; she kept the quality of life stuff separate for Part 2..

Allison: Check out themed issues: may allow more than one article on a topic from one person, or from the lead researcher and other researchers. She has also seen Parts 1 and 2 in different issues.

Colette: How do you write/submit if you might put ideas into a book later? She is writing pieces on Canadian opera.

Marion: If published as articles, depends on the copyright of the journal. You may get the journal’s permission, if they are acknowledged. Check it out.

Marion: Derek Klonowski writes articles on business case studies. He said “to get promoted to full professor, must write a book”. He said “find a gap in the text book arena in your area; contact the rep. Say “what I would like is this, but can’t find it”. She did this. Rep went to the acquisition editor. They negotiated, she wrote the prospectus and it went to peer review, editorial board said yes, and ball was rolling.

Allison: Send out book prospectus first and secure a publisher; shop the idea around at conferences. Can spin off articles from book or into a book. May be okay if not word for word the same.

Meg: She has know of people who published one idea a few times, changed it a bit, but is not really ethical. Can get a reputation for that – not good. Could do a long and a short article, for example.

Marion: if funding agency says they alone have access to the “original report of the research” what do you do?

Karen: How old of data can still be milked?

One response: Send out and let reviewers and editors decide. Ask “how relevant is it today?”

Nancy: in the HIV field, researchers were busy travelling the globe and gathering data and didn’t publish for a long time. She felt that was quite irresponsible.

Marion: Ask editor if data too old, before writing.

Meg: In her area, you must write first, because it must go to reviewers to be evaluated.

Organized by the Brandon University Women’s Research Network (BUWRN):

Sessions designed by and for female faculty, to assist with their research process.