



GETTING RESEARCH PUBLISHED: AN A TO Z OF PUBLICATION STRATEGY. ELIZABETH WAGER. ABINGDON, UK: RADCLIFFE PUBLISHING; 2005. 152 PAGES. SOFTCOVER \$42.00. ISBN 1-85775-687-8.

In *Getting Research Published: An A to Z of Publication Strategy*, Elizabeth Wager has used her in-depth experience in medical publishing to write a book for readers who are pursuing publication of their research and for others involved in the medical-publishing enterprise. The extent of Wager's experience is evident in the array of publication-related topics—all tied to the mosaic known as medical publishing—that she has covered to create a book that has something to offer most people involved in medical writing and research. It's a bit messy and uneven, but it's a good walk in the publishing park.

The main challenge of *Getting Research Published*, as the author acknowledges, is its organization. More a subjective inventory of terms and phrases relevant to medical publishing than an actual strategy, the book is a heavily notated alphabetic index. "One problem with an A to Z format is that you need to have some idea of what to look for", says the author in the prologue, and that is why she added an overview section (Part One, comprising the first five chapters) to precede the A to Z index (Part Two). For those seeking to understand today's standards, resources, and issues, reading *Getting Research Published* without knowing what you're looking for still yields valuable information, interesting opinions of the author, and confirmation of best (and worst!) practices. However, for readers looking to solve or prevent a problem when undertaking the publication process, Wager's assessment of the book's organizational difficulty seems true.

The overview in Part One is succinct and written in a style that reflects Wager's direct experience. The first chapter, "Step-by-Step Guide to Publication Strategy", gives a 20-step list of the entire publication process. The list is logical and offers both common sense (such as Step 4, "Agree responsibilities [sic] for preparing and reviewing the publication") and a grounded procedural reference (Step 10, "Prepare the submission package"). It also speaks to the parts of the publishing enterprise that often are undocumented (Step 12, "Wait patiently"; and Step 15, "Wait patiently [again].")

The book is moderately biased toward the

particular needs of clinical-research publication, as is evident in the second overview chapter, about planning for the publication of multi-institutional research studies. Wager recommends the inclusion of a publishing expectation and plan in the development of a clinical-trial protocol. That action both codifies the plan and enhances the likelihood of eventual publication, and her suggestion is excellent advice. Wager does the medical-publishing field a service by prescribing the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) as the standard-setting body and its standards as the ones to use. In fact, Wager advises that readers challenge journal authorship criteria that contradict the criteria established by the ICMJE.

Wager's experience as an author who clearly has been kept waiting many times is evident in the overview chapter, "How Long Will It Take?" She advises, "There are two tricks to publication planning. The first is to make the plan as detailed as possible. The second is to be as pessimistic as possible." She provides broad time estimates (some amusing) for various publishing activities, including a table for the presubmission publication stage, one for abstracts (two stages are identified: Speedy and Sluggish), and one for how long journals take (stages defined from Rapid to Dinosaurs, the latter of which includes most specialty journals, Wager writes). Today's technology notwithstanding, *Getting Research Published* demonstrates that good management of the issues of quality, collaboration, and publication venue remains a key to favorable and timely responses and to the overall experience of the publishing enterprise.

Researchers' practice of including medical writers as part of the publishing experience and their selection as participants are the focus of their own overview chapter. Particularly resonant with the recent debate about the appropriateness and value brought by professional medical writers as part of a medical article's writing team, this chapter outlines the author's view of the advantages and disadvantages of their involvement. The coverage of the topic is helpful not only for those involved in decision-making on this

issue but also for medical writers who find themselves challenged by various arguments and perceptions as they work to enhance their profession.

The cautionary tale in the final chapter of Part One—an example of what can go wrong—is overcomplicated in demonstrating that a lack of planning and communication results in disaster. The conclusion of the tale—namely, to use a publication strategy to prevent disastrous events—is the message of the entire book. *Getting Research Published* helps readers to develop such a strategy by offering case studies and outlines in the brief overview section.

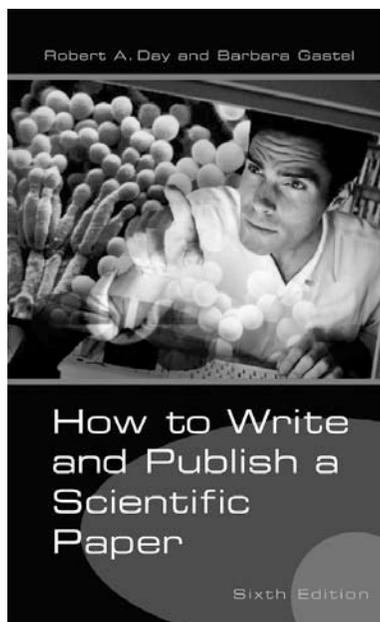
The meat of the book is the useful A to Z index of key terms, where readers are provided the bricks with which to build their publication strategy. Key terms and phrases included here are identified in boldface both in the overview section and elsewhere throughout the book. The terms and phrases are always engaging and sometimes grounded in publication rigor (such as *copyright*, *permissions*, and *Uniform Requirements*) and sometimes subjective (such as *expectations*, *hot topics*, and *vicious reviewers*). The latter terms, in particular, are geared more toward browsing than toward specific problem-solving, and this again speaks to the organizational chal-

lenges inherent in the structure of the book. But in their totality, the terms represent the valuable experience and knowledge that the author, someone long engaged in the processes of getting research published, shares with her readers.

As described by Faith McLellan in her foreword, *Getting Research Published* “is a kind of guide to the perplexed” that can help researchers to obtain “a better informed, easier and altogether more pleasant path to publication.” In fact, anyone involved in the medical-publication enterprise will come away from reading this book not only better informed but with a sense of the expansive community that works to create, evaluate, and distribute quality research to dedicated audiences. *Getting Research Published* makes a valuable contribution to the continuing dialogue of this community.

Deb Whippen

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HOW TO WRITE AND PUBLISH A SCIENTIFIC PAPER, SIXTH EDITION. ROBERT A DAY AND BARBARA GASTEL. WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT: GREENWOOD PRESS; 2006. XV + 302 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$75.00, SOFTCOVER \$29.95. ISBN 0-313-33027-1 (HARDCOVER), 0-313-33040-9 (SOFTCOVER).

The sixth edition of *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* asserts in its preface that scientists are measured and known by their publications. These publications are an important dimension of careers. The expediency with which results can be published assists scientists in receiving the rewards of their work, including acknowledgment and funding. Clear submissions to the appropriate publisher certainly are essential for those seeking publication. Like its predecessor editions, the current, sixth edition of *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* is an invaluable resource for scientists and science writers.

For more than 30 years, Robert A Day, a professor emeritus of English at

the University of Delaware, has provided practical assistance in preparing scientific manuscripts through this book. The current edition adds Barbara Gastel—associate professor of veterinary integrative biosciences, humanities in medicine, and biotechnology at Texas A&M University—as a coauthor. *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* has been expanded (by 15 chapters) and restructured (into eight sections) as well. Several new chapters cover approaching a writing project, other writing opportunities (such as opinions, books and book chapters, and writing for the public), and writing style. And six new chapters can be found in a new section on other types of scientific writing. Some content of the previous edi-

tion has been updated and condensed as appropriate, especially regarding electronic submissions and ethics in publishing. Users of previous editions will still find the cartoons and humorous examples for which *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* is known.

The initial discussion of defining and approaching manuscript endeavors provides a framework for experienced writers as well as newcomers to the field. Those chapters are valuable to review if you are assisting a scientist who needs direction with his or her manuscript project. The sections on preparing text, tables, and figures will be familiar to those who have seen a previous edition, and the content will be known to most writers; in these chapters, the authors present references to further information, as they do throughout the book. In those sections, the book could be viewed as just a “how-to book” or “cookbook”, labels humbly self-assigned in its preface, but its value to a reader truly seeking guidance is as a resource and launching pad to obtain further information. The authors respect their readers throughout with careful and clear discussion that is “professional to professional” rather than “for dummies”.

The next section is a valuable introduction to publishing a paper. The descriptions of the submission, review, and publishing processes provide concise portrayals that contain practical advice and valuable insight. The sections that follow, on other writing for publication and conference communications, also contain advice and insight with sensible strategies. The section on scientific style provides an overview for scientists who may need a refresher and some direction in handling style conventions.

The final section, on other topics in scientific communication, contains a chapter on writing a thesis, and the remaining chapters are new. The chapters on writing curricula vitae, grant proposals, and progress reports provide insight into the persuasiveness required in scientific writing; these two chapters also reinforce the idea that effective writing is necessary to support science. Writing and requesting recommendation letters are the subjects of another new chapter, which highlights the authors’ ability to bring clarity to what may on the surface seem to be an easy writing task. The remaining new chapters in this section concern working with the mass media, providing a peer review, and seeking a scientific-communication career.

How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper is a versatile resource for science writers of varied experience. Writers new to the field will find it indispensable for planning and writing, and they will discover more about their duties and groundwork to learn more about them. Experienced writers will find a clear, focused discussion that can be used in working with scientists and other writers. If you have an older edition of *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* on your shelf, it is time to place the latest edition next to a trusted colleague.

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