

Publishing in an Academic Journal Editorial, Summer, 2023

Introduction

For the past year, as co-editors, we have spoken about how to mentor and coach new and experienced academics on the best and most efficient way to publish their research and ideas, both with us and with others if their work is not a good fit for IJEDE. In doing this reflection, we have talked to other editors, colleagues who have lots of publishing experience, and of course, our editorial board. We also found this wonderful piece by our colleague, Dr. Michele Jacobsen, University of Calgary. In 2006, she was the editor of our sister journal, the *Canadian Journal of Learning and Teaching* (CJLT).

Once we read what she had written, we realized her words from almost 20 years ago remain current today for the academic writer, although delivery of that work – paper journals versus digital content – has changed in the intervening time. We reached out to Dr. Jacobsen and she graciously gave us permission to use the core meaning of her piece, and adjust her words to fit our journal and editorial process. In this editorial, we describe for writers seeking publication in IJEDE how the process works, what parts of the process they can



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control, and how we work as a team to ensure their work reaches a wide audience, as part of disseminating their research.

Please read the editorial carefully. It can help you format and frame your work toward the best possible outcome – to have your work published.

– Michelle and Diane

The Process

The specific information prospective authors tend to want and often need to ready their work for submission to a journal often goes beyond general author guidelines. We typically receive several inquiries every month from prospective authors who want to align their work to the specific publishing practices of this journal. In this section, we offer some recommendations, in the form of questions asked by authors aiming to publish in an academic journal and our answers as the editors of this journal. We always advise authors to become familiar with the specific submission guidelines of the journal to which they send their work. Information about submissions to IJEDE is provided on the [IJEDE website](https://www.ijede.ca/index.php/jde) [https://www.ijede.ca/index.php/jde].

Who Reviews Your Manuscript?

The editor, or designate from the editorial team or board, conducts the initial editorial review. If the submission is judged suitable for peer review, the editor selects two to three peer reviewers who will receive the blinded

manuscript for review. The IJEDE relies on a pool of approximately eighty peer reviewers, including the editorial board, who represent a broad range of research expertise and experience in e-learning and distance education. Occasionally, we invite a peer review from a scholar who is cited in the manuscript's reference list. We recommend that authors become familiar with the members of the editorial team and editorial board, and to be careful to cite all academic work correctly and in context. Although the peer review process is strictly anonymous, for both the authors and peer reviewers, the range of scholars who may receive a paper for peer review include members of the editorial board, other e-learning and distance education researchers with specific expertise in the areas addressed in the manuscript, and scholars whose work is cited in the manuscript.

How Long Does It Take to Get Your Work in Print?

This can be a tricky question to answer because several factors impact the review, revision, copyediting, and publishing process. For example, for IJEDE, we aim to complete the manuscript review process within two months. It often takes two weeks for editorial review, and a minimum of four to six weeks for peer review. However, since the advent of COVID, the timeline for receiving two peer-reviews has often been extended. Factors that can impact this target are editor workload, manuscript quality, and reviewer availability and turnaround time. Well written and interesting manuscripts tend to get out for review and are peer reviewed more quickly than weaker manuscripts. Depending upon the time

of year, the editorial team and peer reviewers may take more or less than the recommended time to complete their review.

What Is Involved in a Peer Review?

Peer reviewers are asked to provide feedback in four to six weeks. However, depending on the time of year (beginning, middle, or end of semester), the quality of the manuscript, and the reviewer's academic workload, the peer review might take more or less than four to six weeks. If an article is submitted and sent for review during high academic workload seasons, which can occur any time between September and April, then a peer reviewer may require more time to provide feedback.

We have found that a high-quality manuscript elicits a very quick turnaround from peer reviewers, while the reverse is true for a poorer quality manuscript. For example, an excellent manuscript that recently published in IJEDE was peer reviewed within four weeks and published within three to four months. Several other manuscripts were in peer review for more than three months and were ultimately rejected. Why? The excellent manuscript was well organized and spotlessly copyedited upon submission. It introduced key points, elaborated upon them, and summarized them in the discussion. Research methods and results were thoroughly described, defended, and detailed. The conclusions followed logically from the analysis and research questions.

The rejected articles tend to lack clarity, suffer from poor organization and sloppy editing, and do not effectively communicate key findings. A weaker

manuscript can be a burden for reviewers to read and provide meaningful feedback on, and therefore tends to take longer to make it through the peer review process.

Once Accepted, How Long Before the Manuscript Is Published?

Once a paper is accepted for publication, additional revisions and changes may be required, which we aim to have completed in four to eight weeks. Two factors that impact this timeline are author turnaround time and editorial review. Depending upon the extent of revisions requested, authors may require more or less time to complete the changes. Copyediting and the layout process take approximately four to six weeks. Factors that impact this process are quality of graphics and tables, length and language of articles, proofing by authors, and minor revisions and turnaround time by authors.

All factors considered, when the publishing process is working smoothly, it often takes an average of six months to get from initial submission to print. For example, the articles published in the Special Issue, Winter 2023 issue took an average of six months to be published. However, several factors can impact the time it takes to get an article in print. In contrast to the previous example, the average rate for the present issue has been six to fifteen months from initial submission to publication for the seven articles in the issue. To support improving this rate of publication, in 2022 IJEDE began using a continuous publication model. With this model, papers (and issues) are published once the papers have been reviewed, edited, and proofed, rather than waiting for all of

the articles in the issue before publishing. This continuing publication model prevents papers that take longer to be processed from holding up the publishing of other works in the same issue.

How Can I Increase the Chances That My Work Will Get Published?

This is a good question that can be answered several ways. Aside from the obvious, such as conducting interesting and timely research that contributes to the discipline, seeking a match between the type of research and the journal, and submitting several well-written articles for publication per year, it is important that authors are persistent in the publishing process and confident in the value of their work.

Perseverance and ego strength can pay off. IJEDE, during the editorial review process, may need to return your manuscript for revisions (minor or major), and on occasion editors will ask the author to resubmit the revised manuscript. However, approximately 75% of the invitations to resubmit an article are ignored. There are a few possible reasons why an author might choose not to resubmit, such as selecting a different journal, lacking time to make revisions, disagreeing with the editorial decision or recommendations, and feeling embarrassed. We recommend that authors always resubmit when invited to do so. Both parties have already invested a great deal of time in the review process. *We urge authors to consider an invitation to resubmit as a serious indication of the journal's interest in the manuscript.*

Every effort is made to provide helpful, thoughtful, and tactful feedback when an article is sent back for revision. However, it can be disconcerting to receive a critique of one's work, no matter how thoughtful and well intended the editor and reviewers are with their comments. An author may be embarrassed that their work received critical feedback from reviewers. Dr. Michele Jacobsen (2006) credits her colleague, Bryan Hiebert, with the term "ego strength," which she interprets to mean an ability to turn feedback on one's writing into a helpful learning experience. Authors with ego strength have the determination and confidence to revise and resubmit their manuscript.

It is worth repeating that in most cases, when a paper is revised according to the reviewer and editor recommendations, and resubmitted, it gets published. Our recommendation is to take editorial and reviewer feedback seriously, but not personally. Incorporate the requested revisions, and resubmit your manuscript as quickly as possible. When you do resubmit your article after revisions, please list the changes you have made and provide good reasons for any changes you refused to make. If you choose not to resubmit, please let the editor know your intentions so they can close the file on your paper.

Recommendations

In closing, we offer the following advice to prospective authors who want to increase the chances of getting their work published.

First, read and follow the specific submission guidelines on suitable topics and manuscript categories, and specifically incorporate these in your paper.

When in doubt, contact the editor prior to submission with specific questions related to your paper and the author guidelines for the journal.

Second, invite a critical colleague to review the quality and organization of your manuscript prior to submission. You can impact, and usually shorten, the time it takes for a journal to review your work by conducting an initial peer review yourself. Authors should select a reliable colleague, preferably an expert in the topic, who will read the manuscript carefully and offer meaningful, thorough, and useful feedback. It is not helpful to select a friend who may hesitate to give you anything but positive feedback.

Third, make a good first impression with clean referencing, spelling, grammar, and punctuation. You can increase the chance that your work will be sent for immediate peer review by doing a thorough and ruthless copyedit of the manuscript prior to submission. It is obvious when an author has failed to take the time to copyedit and fine-tune a manuscript. In most cases, the decision to reject a manuscript prior to peer review is based on a lack of clarity or logic in argumentation, vagueness about the manuscript category, or lack of adherence to our length and APA style guidelines. (Common reasons for a manuscript being rejected include: too short, too long, sloppy with referencing, poor grammar and structure, and unsubstantiated claims). Reviewers often comment on how lack of clarity impedes their ability to clearly analyze the merits of the research study being presented.

Fourth, become familiar with the members of the editorial team and editorial board, and be careful to cite all academic work correctly and in context. While the peer review is anonymous, the range of scholars who may review a manuscript include members of the editorial board, other educational technology researchers with specific expertise in the areas addressed in the manuscript, and scholars whose work is cited in the manuscript.

Fifth, resubmit your revised manuscript when invited to do so, and do it quickly. Persevere in the publishing process and be confident in the value of your research. Consider an invitation to resubmit your manuscript as a serious statement of interest in your work. Adopt a positive versus a personal approach to critical feedback and use the review as an opportunity to revise and improve your manuscript. Most articles that are revised according to recommendations and then resubmitted get published. Authors who ignore an invitation to resubmit are missing a good chance to get their work published. Be persistent, develop a thick skin, and keep revising and resubmitting your work until it gets published.

Our final recommendation to authors is this: Be patient, be polite, and be considerate. The review process involved in bringing a manuscript to print is done by academics who generously donate their time and expertise. Please resist contacting the journal every week to ask about the status of your manuscript. A quality review process does take time and can be impacted by several factors beyond the editor's control. Please resist being rude to the

editor or the peer reviewers who have taken the time to examine and comment on your paper. It is appropriate to thank your fellow scholars for reviewing your paper and for making recommendations on how to improve the manuscript. If your article is rejected, it is appropriate to defend your work in the spirit of academic discourse and debate, but please swallow your pride and resist sending a blistering note to the editor about how you and your work were misunderstood and unfairly treated. Instead, attempt to learn from whatever feedback you receive and avoid burning any bridges with a journal or editor.

We look forward to your submissions and to working with you on your manuscript.

Sincerely,
IJEDE Editors

(Reprinted and modified with permission of the original author, Dr. Michele Jacobsen, CJLT editorial, Spring 2006, 32-2.)
