



The  
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Research &  
Innovation  
Services.

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# Doctoral Times.

The Newsletter for Doctoral & Higher  
Research Degree Students

## Welcome

*Welcome to the latest edition of the Doctoral Times.*

*This edition's theme is publishing and contains articles from academics, professional services, current and former students on a variety of career paths.*

*The next publication will be coming out in the summer and we welcome any input from postgraduate students here at The University of Sheffield. This can take the shape of ideas for themes, design or offers of interviews and articles. Below is more information about how you can get involved.*



**Ana Guedes Rosa**, BA, MSc  
Postgraduate Research Student  
Knowledge and Information  
Management Research Group



**Katie Grayson**  
Molecular Biology &  
Biotechnology Research  
Postgraduate

*Special thanks go to Katie Grayson & Ana Guedes Rosa who have contributed editorially to this edition and also to those people who responded to the call for articles. Due to lack of space some pieces have not been used or have been edited, these will be made available either in future editions or online at a later date.*

## HAVE YOUR SAY....

**Share your experience of being a research student here at the University of Sheffield.**

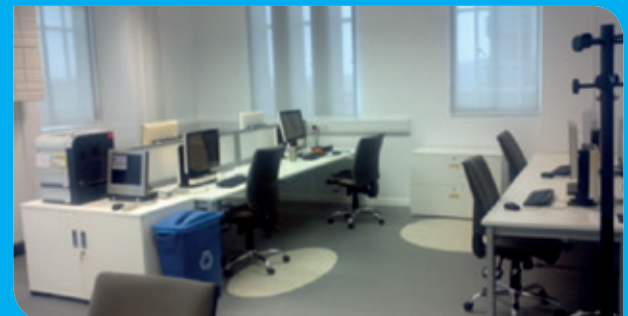
We want to make sure students have the best possible experience whilst studying here. To do that we need to know what you think we are doing well and what we can do better. So we are asking for your feedback via PRES (The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey).

It is running from 5 March to 16 May 2013, and is administered by the Higher Education Academy and Vitae.

To participate please go to  
[www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/pres](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/pres)

To be part of the next publication of Doctoral Times, which will be available in the summer, please contact Carolin Gale at  
[c.p.gale@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.gale@sheffield.ac.uk)

## GRADUATE RESEARCH CENTRE



There are still places available at the Graduate Research Centre for those of you looking for a quiet place to study on a regular basis.

A newly refurbished and centrally located space, the Dainton Graduate Research Centre offers research students dedicated and bookable workspaces at the heart of the campus.

The centre has been designed with students' needs in mind. It has wireless connectivity, social space with soft seating, flexible work space, a seminar room and kitchen facilities.

If you are interested in looking around with a view to using the space you can contact us at  
[grc@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:grc@sheffield.ac.uk)

## Introduction

**To introduce this edition, Professor Sheila MacNeil, Professor of Tissue Engineering and Director of Interdisciplinary Programmes, gives an overview of publishing for the scientific field and why PGR students should publish during their research years.**

As a scientist your work really only has value once it is published. Others can then look at it to see if they can repeat it, build on it, and hopefully translate it into useful advances.

Put simply as a scientist, our publications are our legacy. We hope that we have published some useful, insightful, valuable and perhaps innovative research which will advance the field. Publications in scientific peer reviewed journals are the way in which the scientific community communicates its findings.

To the frequently asked question 'are they any good?' it's now extremely easy to look up a scientist's publications and also to find out how the scientific community rates those papers. A highly rated paper will be read, referenced and cited by other scientists and be part of a wider scientific discourse.

Why should postgraduate students seek to publish? Well the reasons are very simple. The period of postgraduate training is a research apprenticeship; publications are a tangible result from which the prospective employer can think "wow, this person not only got a PhD, they also published 3 papers in good quality journals as they did so!".

So at one level postgraduates should seek to publish because it is part of their apprenticeship. It's no longer sufficient to just learn techniques, do some research, and write up a report.

Whilst you will defend your research degree with your viva voce, and relate it to the vast body of literature out there in the same area, as well as demonstrating that the work achieved was yours and is of sufficient quality to be awarded a PhD; it is more and more the case that when it comes to employing young scientists, it is what they have published that will count as much as the research experience they have gained during their period of training.

There are other good reasons for publishing. It gives you an immediate confidence boost when your work has been accepted for publication in a journal and it's a rite of passage. Once you've learnt how to write a paper (and your first efforts will always be strongly supported by your supervisors) then you have learnt a valuable skill. Hopefully by the time you've finished your PhD you will be able to make a good shot at a decent first draft of a paper.

There is also a discipline to scientific writing that is well worth learning. You will need to be able to describe your research in sufficient detail that someone else in an appropriate laboratory could repeat it and hopefully get the same results. You will also need to adopt an objective mindset in that the results you obtained are the data you got, like it or loathe it, which you hold quite separate to your interpretation of them.

I am a great advocate of writing the results section in a full and factual manner without interpretation. The discussion (what you think your data means), can be written from a different perspective. There are often areas where our interpretations of data changes as years go by; as new bits of the jigsaw puzzle are revealed; as previously held theories crash and burn, but what one hopes is that the results obtained under the conditions described stand the test of time.

This scientific objectivity means that throughout your training as a research scientist you are constantly looking at 'yes, on one hand it might mean this, but on the other hand it might mean something else'. So, as a scientist you move forward disseminating and discussing your findings at conferences and within publications within the wider community so that you can build a body of work that can be built on by others.



## Student Profile

*Ana Guedes Pereira  
Rosa interviews  
Angharad Roberts  
about what it is  
like to be a PhD  
student here at The  
University of  
Sheffield*



**Angharad Roberts,**  
Postgraduate Research Student:  
School of Information.  
Photograph by Jessie Wu

### Tell us a bit about yourself...

I'm in the third year of my PhD in Information Studies at the University of Sheffield's Information School, working on a project titled "Conceptualising the library collection for the digital world: a case study of social enterprise". I blog about my research at <http://digitalworldcollections.blogspot.com>. Before I began my research, I worked as a librarian in a number of university libraries.

### How would you describe your PhD to someone who has little knowledge of the subject?

My research looks at the concept of "collection" in libraries. In the past, the library collection was associated with printed books on the shelves and journal subscriptions. In the digital world of today, this view of "collection" needs to be rethought. Should it include materials from new sources such as social media sites? Can libraries work together more effectively to provide access to information? I'm looking specifically at library collections for social enterprises, which are companies that address social problems or make other positive contributions to their communities and to society.

### What led you to do your PhD?

I was working as a librarian in a university library when I saw this fully-funded PhD project advertised. Helping to manage the library collection was already a core part of my job. So this research project is in a field closely linked to my practical experience.

### What excites you about your work?

As a librarian, the fact that this research involves working with the UK's national library, the British Library ([www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)), is very exciting for me. It's also given me opportunities and experiences which I would never otherwise have had. For example, doing presentations at conferences in the USA and in Croatia.

As a researcher, I'm excited by the idea that some of the work I'm doing might have positive practical implications for library and information services. And then there's the thrill of discovery itself, when I'm sitting in a data collection interview and hear someone say something which I know will shed new light on my topic, or when I'm transcribing or analysing my data and make an important new finding; those are exciting moments.

“It's important to remember that publishing is a collaborative process: authors want to be published, editors want papers to publish and reviewers want to help authors to improve their papers.”

### What is the biggest challenge you've faced during your PG study so far?

I think getting started was difficult. Especially in social sciences, there are so many different approaches you could take, and even the literature review seems overwhelming at the start. I was very fortunate to have an excellent supervisor who gave me the advice and confidence I needed. However, probably the biggest challenge was having a change of supervisor at the end of my second year after my first supervisor got a great new job in the USA.

### What experience have you had with publishing and reviewing research work?

In my last job, I worked with three colleagues on an article about a small scale research project we did in our library. That was my first experience of the peer-review process – and of the timescales involved; we submitted the article in 2010 and it was published in 2012.

Since I started my PhD, I've had papers accepted for a number of conferences. I've also joined the editorial team of the open-access journal *Library and Information Research* (<http://www.lirjournal.org.uk>), helping to get two issues published last year. This involves reviewing articles, communicating with authors and reviewers, preparing papers for publication and getting issues published.

### Do you have any tips for someone who is about to navigate the publication process for the first time?

Possibly the most obvious but sometimes also the hardest thing is deciding what to write and actually getting it written. If you haven't written for publication before, you may want to co-author an article with someone else, such as a supervisor or a colleague. You should check the website of the journal you're planning to submit your article to, to see what guidance they offer. Most journals will have some sort of template showing how articles should look – use that to help you to prepare your article; it will also help the editor when finalising articles for publication!

It's important to remember that publishing is a collaborative process: authors want to be published, editors want papers to publish and reviewers want to help authors to improve their papers. If your article is peer-reviewed and the reviewers make suggestions for improvements, make sure you respond to all the reviewers' comments. If you decide not to make some of the changes suggested, explain why. If you have any questions about the process at any stage, ask the editor.

### What are your future plans?

I hope to go back to working in a library and possibly putting some of the ideas from my research into practice.

## Library Services

### *The University Library's top tips for publishing:*

1. Remember to acknowledge ideas and work from other people. Collect your references to other people's work as you go along and don't leave it until the last minute.
2. Check which referencing style your publisher expects you to use (usually available from the journal website).
3. Use EndNote, or similar reference management software, to keep your references safe and to help you format them in the style required by your publisher. EndNote contains many journal referencing styles and additional ones can be downloaded.

In the Information Skills Resource (accessible from the 'Library' tab in MUSE) go to the 'Researchers' section and see the guidance on referencing.

4. Remember to make sure you obtain permission if you use diagrams, tables, illustrations, etc from other people. Again, if you need to get authorisation make sure you allow plenty of time. Our copyright pages provide full guidance <http://www.shef.ac.uk/library/services/copyright>.
5. If you want to raise your profile consider publishing in an open access journal which isn't hidden behind a subscription barrier. SPARC®, (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition), is an alliance of universities, research libraries, and organisations which offers news and analysis of the open access movement. <http://www.arl.org/sparc/>
6. Save a copy of your article in the University's repository, White Rose Research Online. This is fully indexed by Google and makes your research available to a wide audience. Publishers' policies on the deposit of papers in repositories vary, and may change from time to time. Many publishers allow deposit of the final version of an author's paper in its original format

(typically as a Word file), but will not allow their own pdf files to be used. If in doubt ask your liaison librarian <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/libstaff/sllist> or check the White Rose Research Online copyright guidance at <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/docs/copyright.html>

7. Think carefully when submitting your work for publication. Consider retaining your copyright in order to be able to re-use and distribute your work in the future. Review any documents publishers ask you to sign and check whether they will allow future uses of your work. It is sensible to agree to give the publisher a non-exclusive licence to publish your article.
8. Journal impact factors can be used as a way of selecting which journal you want to publish in and is one method of comparing journals in the same field. Journal impact is largely measured according to the Thomson ISI Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and you can find the impact factor of some electronic journals through StarPlus, the library catalogue. Search for the journal you want and on the 'Find it @ Sheffield' screen, at the bottom of the page under 'citation information' you will find a link to ISI's journal citation report.

See <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/elecjnls/impact> for links to further information.

**Helen Moore,**  
Faculty Librarian for science  
offers the University Library's  
top tips for publishing.



The library service offers a wide range of resources for PGR students including access to online tutorials, group workshops and individual advice.

Each faculty has their own librarian who is available for advice, on literature searches for specific topics, which tutorial or workshops might be helpful. The Team members specialise in particular subject areas and contact details are available via the Library tab on MUSE.

This advice can be provided by email, telephone or face to face depending on the student's needs.

## Doctoral Students who publish

We asked a variety of our students here at The University of Sheffield to tell us how they have combined publishing whilst studying, their motivations for doing so and any useful hints & tips.

### Chris Littlewood ScHARR

I am currently undertaking a PhD in ScHARR and my PhD is focused upon evaluating the effects of a self-managed exercise programme for people complaining of shoulder pain.

I began writing for publication over ten years ago now. My first articles were written for a clinical newsletter and I was fortunate to encounter an understanding and supportive editor who helped me develop my ideas and writing style.

At a similar time I also began working alongside an experienced researcher and excellent plain-English writer. This experience exposed me to more formal peer-reviewed submission and publication and really gave me an appetite to write and submit more.

My initial experiences were full of trepidation and self-doubt. I remember checking, re-checking and checking my submissions again before clicking the 'submit' button. Many questions crossed my mind, such as: What if they don't like it? What if they reject it? What if it is published and someone criticises it?

Again, I look back and regard myself as being fortunate because an adequate number of those early submissions were reviewed favourably and accepted for publication. Like other things in life, positive feedback and early success breed confidence and a desire to do more. I can honestly say I now look forwards to submitting work and receiving feedback – even if that feedback ends with the word 'reject'. I no longer ask those self-doubting questions or take rejection personally. I see the review process as an excellent way to gain feedback and to develop my thinking. And, if one journal doesn't appreciate my work at that time, another one probably will.

Despite all this positivity, I'm aware that I still tend to submit work to 'preferred' or 'safe' journals. Although this is fine some of the time I really want to expand my repertoire during my PhD. I have been targeting other journals over the last 12 months with varying amounts of success. But, recently I attended a writing course hosted by ScHARR and developed by Tim Albert. This has been one of the most influential courses I have ever attended and I feel like I now have the understanding to take my writing to the next level and hopefully get a few more acceptances in some of the 'bigger' journals.

Some people, particularly early career researchers, seem to shy away from submitting their work for publication. This might be for a whole host of reasons, including self-doubt, but really there is everything to gain. Target the most appropriate journal, be clear about the message you are trying to convey and just press 'submit' – what's the worst that could happen?

### Robin Lovelace E-Futures

Since beginning my PhD I've contributed to an online blog about peak oil, written half a dozen articles for the local magazine Now Then, and published in a couple of academic journals

By far the most challenging experience was the latter: it felt at times like wearing a straight-jacket, conforming to a dry academic style. However, experiencing the process of formal peer review (even if it is on the receiving end of it) was also extremely rewarding; making one's mark in the history of ideas.

I think that one's motivation is a rarely discussed yet vitally important consideration in academic publishing, from which all else will flow.

I had conducted a "mini project" – 2 months of sustained research into one topic. Because of my interest in bicycles and a growing knowledge of their environmental benefits in comparison to the UK's dominant mode of transport, I decided to look into the energy savings that could be made by 'modal shift' towards bikes. We were encouraged to seek a sponsor. For my project I approached Andy Wild, then principle Transport Planner for Sheffield City Council. His involvement provided a sense of importance and relevance to the paper, and kept it grounded (aspirations I recommend others seek).

This external link was particularly important for my motivation as I had nearly ended up working for a different body with whom I had less affinity.

There is no secret to writing for an academic journal, you just need hard work and for that you need a powerful motivation. If you are just writing for the sake of it, I'd advise that you reconsider exactly what you are doing. These are the best and freest days of your life: if you do not write exactly what you want to now, you never will. If you are finding the PhD more of a chore than a passion don't give up: "just go for it" is honestly the best advice that I can give. If you find inspiration in a cause in the mean time, your academic performance will rise to match your enhanced sense of self esteem.

*“publishing early on makes writing your thesis so much easier, as you have a template for good writing technique and those terrifying blank pages fill a lot quicker.”*

**Lauren Buck**, Biomedical Science.

*“the process of publishing has made me value so much more the importance of debate and disagreement within academia and has made me more confident and capable in defending my work.”*

**Louise Reardon**, Politics.

## **Eleanor Kent** School of English

I had been offered my first publication after a conference called ‘Representing Perpetrators’ at the University of Sheffield. Getting published is a vital step from studenthood towards becoming a professional academic, and an intimidatingly large one. It’s a leap into the unknown. You go from writing essays that only your supervisor will read—even the best student will at some point console themselves with the fact that no-one else saw their vague phrasing on page 3, or noticed their misattributed quote in the second paragraph—to sharing your writing with (potentially) the whole world. With a publication, there is no luxury of camouflage, and it can feel terribly exposing. Although nerve-racking, this had a galvanising effect in terms of quality (I’m still proud of what I wrote) and it was actually quite refreshing to have that kind of pressure.

My nervousness about being chained to my arguments in print and forever was also partly tempered by the length of time it took to publish my article. That’s another thing for which I was unprepared. The machinery of publication turns so slowly that by the time something has come out you have had plenty of time to relax about it. It also differed from assessment deadlines in that, while work had to be completed by a certain date, I got several chances to polish the article. Refining one piece of work felt luxurious compared to the feeling of incompleteness that always accompanied the submission of my student essays: a month’s reflection will always make the weaknesses in your writing glare out at you. None of this would have been possible without the support of my editors. I had to trust their word that my work was good enough. I realised that although your research is based on your own judgement, you will always depend on feedback—this is not a process which halts at graduation.

Most importantly, looking around at other academics’ writing I became more alert to the ways that their arguments had changed and developed over time. From that perspective publication began to seem less like a public statement carved in stone and more like the beginning of a dialogue with colleagues. And of course dialogue is the point—thousands of individuals making complex statements into the ether would be meaningless. Realising that this was part of a process in which I will, I hope, get the chance to adapt and reply was exciting, and lent a fresh incentive to my work.

## **Paul Heath**

### Materials Science & Engineering

As a student, writing up your first papers for publication can seem a real trial. I have recently come through this and have had my first journal article and conference proceedings accepted into the literature.

My experience of writing these articles has been far removed from my earlier experience of piggybacking onto a publication.

There are hurdles to leap before the final product can be admired on Science Direct the paper must obviously be written up, formatted, proofread and checked by your supervisor. Then there may be an entire rewrite and re-examination of all your results. After this and having polished your work to a sparkle, you will get politely thumped with a question that pokes a hole in your results. That is the time for another rewrite.

When the paper has finally been finished and submitted to the journal, it is sent out to a review panel. This stage requires patience and can be a long wait. I found comments should be taken with a pinch of salt. They should be addressed coolly, the fact you feel a reviewer didn’t seem to read the paper he is criticising, is probably worth ignoring. The paper is then accepted or rejected based on the reviewer’s comments and your response to them.

What I have found more than anything is that the work, patience and attention to detail that goes into writing a piece for publication is staggering. The science, results, interpretation and even writing style, must be analysed, even a simple choice of wording to describe a process can potentially cause agony. At one point, I found myself debating for a fortnight whether the term ‘contacting properties’ or ‘wetting behaviour’ was more suitable.

For a paper to be trusted it must read well, have a structure accessible to the reader, be grammatically perfect, be uniformly and immaculately presented and fit the journal’s formatting guidelines. Despite the hard work required I would still recommend the experience to anyone. Writing the paper, discussing the analysis and addressing the criticism and suggestions taught me more about the work I had done, than three years in the lab might have. This also goes hand in hand with disseminating your work and increasing your publication and citation index, which will obviously be helpful in any future career choice.

*“think if there is an aspect of your research reading that may be worthy of publication; this can serve to Contribute to developing your knowledge for the research proposal, Contribute to your scholarly profile and Contribute to your final thesis.”*

**Katharine Whittingham** SchARR.

## TrackChanges

Originating in the University of Sheffield's Faculty of Arts and Humanities, **TrackChanges** is a biannually-published journal designed to be interdisciplinary and peer-reviewed. **TrackChanges** not only promotes publication by postgraduates of all levels and early-career academics to an audience outside of their discipline, but also affords an opportunity – one that rarely presents itself at postgraduate level – to obtain valuable editorial experience. While still in its infancy, first published only in October 2011, **TrackChanges's** editorial team of students have led it through three complete editions and a fourth in progress, under the impetus of the Department of Archeology's Professor Dawn Hadley.

Each cycle of **TrackChanges** is subject to a rigorous editorial procedure to ensure articles published by the journal meet high academic standards. Each article is examined by two peer reviewers who must reflect upon its theoretical context and whether there is a clear framework, overview of supporting literature, and overall clarity of the article and validity of the author's findings. Essentially, they decide whether or not the article should be published, and their recommendations are returned to the article's author. Once the author revises the article to the peer reviewers' satisfaction, it is accepted for publication, and sent to a copy editor. A copy editor's role is rather different, yet just as crucial to the published edition of **TrackChanges**. Copy editors are asked to edit the fine detail of the article thoroughly in order to ensure that it is properly formatted, free from spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors, and perhaps most importantly, reads well. The whole process is double-blind: that is, the peer reviewers and copy editor do not know who the author is, and vice-versa. All involved are postgraduates and early-career academics.

As the current lead editors, we co-ordinate the entire process and act as a buffer between the editorial board and authors, safeguarding their anonymity and monitoring the integrity of their work. Each edition of **TrackChanges** has two new lead editors who select a fresh theme for their edition as well as providing the editorial board and authors with advice and support, and run a training workshop for new volunteers to the editorial board early in each edition's cycle.

Getting published is vital to the development of every researcher. For those of us pursuing an academic career, the publications section is one of the most important on our CVs. To an academic institution, publications show an individual can contribute to or improve its reputation for high quality research. To non-academic employers, publications demonstrate a candidate's capability of producing excellent work that is well-regarded by others in their field and the possession of sophisticated communication skills.

We have both worked on **TrackChanges** for several editions, acting as peer reviewers and copy editors prior to assuming our current role as lead editors. Working on **TrackChanges** has led us to read some fascinating papers and pick up valuable editorial skills. Perhaps the most interesting aspect, though, is gaining an insight into how others will critique your work. Whatever your role on the journal, working on it can only increase your ability to effectively disseminate your research.

**Stacey Dunlea and Duncan Burnes**  
Lead Editors  
Track Changes Issue 4



## Getting Published

*Katie Grayson and Tom Bannister research getting published both academically and via alternative routes.*

### Writing a scientific paper for publication

Publishing a scientific paper is an extremely important method of disseminating experimental findings. Peer-reviewed publications are a major way in which a researcher's merit is assessed, in the world of academic research, it can be a case of "publish or perish".

### Organising and writing the paper

A scientific paper should explain the reasons for doing the research, the experimental design and its execution and should include all the information necessary to enable a peer in the given field to come to the same conclusions.

Scientific writing requires special attention to order and organisation. A typical paper includes an abstract, introduction, material and methods, and results and discussion sections. Negotiation with any collaborators is important in order to ensure all the essential points get covered.

What many first-time authors do not take into account is that writing a paper can be an incredibly long process. Often when writing, experimental holes are discovered and further experimentation is required to reinforce the findings of the paper. Each author listed on the paper needs to read the drafts and give feedback, don't underestimate how long this can take.

### Which journal should I submit to?

When deciding which journal to submit your paper to, be aware of which journals are publishing similar research to yours; a good tip is to look at where the papers you cite are published. Each journal has specific formatting rules and instructions for authors which must be followed precisely.

### The peer-review process

After submitting your manuscript to a journal, it will be sent to anonymous reviewers. The reviewers will make notes on your manuscript, indicating what needs to be improved before it can be published. Extra experiments that need to be performed to back up your conclusions may be suggested. It is not always necessary to take the feedback from reviewers as rote, for example, the further work may be beyond the scope of the paper, or an issue that can be addressed in another paper. These issues can be discussed with the reviewer to see if middle ground can be reached; when happy the reviewer will inform the journal that the paper is suitable for publication

### Getting Published Non-Academically

Journal articles, conferences and workshops are the usual reasons to lift your writing kicking and screaming from the cosy confines of your computer and into the bright lights of the outside world. And yet how many people actually end-up reading and hearing what you have written? If you are lucky, perhaps a hundred people might read an article? A few dozen see a presentation? The sad fact is: for many PhD theses, the upgrade committee will be the first and last examination of what you have expended three years of your life on. Poor PhD thesis, surely it deserves more than a brief period in the light? Have you considered first treating it to a non-academic outing?

Everyone gets frustrated reading the mainstream media over breakfast; coffee and cornflakes spoiled by deadline-hounded journalists making sweeping generalisations about things that you know are mere exceptions. Convert this irritation into something constructive. Give the public information written by a real expert. You will spend years researching a subject; many journalists spend just a few caffeine-fuelled hours. You may feel that your research on the sex life of *laminaria digitata* may not be of interest to the general public, but even in the most 'obscure' theses there is always a core narrative that, when exposed, tells a story. Identifying this core and then condensing, translating and contextualising it, is key to publishing in non-academic sources.

If you are heading into academia after your PhD then the current buzz-words are 'impact', 'outreach' and 'dissemination'. True, publishing in a peer-reviewed academic journal is irreplaceable, but publishing in a renowned magazine or newspaper demonstrates different abilities. It shows that you are capable of turning specialised knowledge into digestible and accessible parts: this is a core teaching skill and a component of academic writing that is often forgotten. Furthermore, PhD students are increasingly not heading into academia. An article published in a newspaper or magazine may be more accessible for prospective employers in a way that an article in *The Sublittoral Seaweed Quarterly* may not.

But how to go about it? Surely you can't publish in *The Guardian*? The key to avoiding the initial disappointment of that inevitable rejection is to be realistic. Devise a 'hit-list' of publications of varying readerships: blogs at the bottom and mainstream newspapers at the top. Start small and work upwards. There are many reputable online blogs, e-zines and discussion forums that have regular contributions from established experts, both inside and outside academia. Research the techniques of the freelance journalist and create a suitable pitch letter. An important point to remember is: do not skimp on quality; what goes on the internet stays on the internet. But, prepared properly, every thesis has a story to tell. Tell it.

## Push to Publish: Academic Publishing for Early Career Researchers

### *Dr Pascale Baker*

When I started my doctoral project on bandits in Latin American literature and culture, my desire was to finish it crowned by a successful viva voce. However, important as that is, in academia, there is an even more pressing concern: getting published. Future career prospects may depend on it, especially with nationally-graded research assessment exercises, such as the 2014 Research Excellence Framework looming on the horizon and weighing heavily on the thoughts of academic departments' recruiting decisions.

So is it that black and white? Well, yes, in a nutshell, but the good news is that the Humanities Faculty at Sheffield is supportive, with publishing workshops on offer at School-wide level. I attended one of these in 2011 and the academic giving the workshop provided not only practical advice but also, importantly, encouragement. The Graduate School also offers seminars on publishing as part of the Doctoral Development Programme. Additionally, since 2011, a Faculty-wide publication, *Track Changes*, has offered Sheffield Humanities postgraduates the chance to submit articles for the biannual publication. Articles go through the peer-review process expected for any decent academic journal and there is also the opportunity to contribute to the editorial process for each edition. This is valuable experience indeed for any would-be author, and although I have not been directly involved myself, I have received positive feedback from colleagues who have been.

#### **Researcher Professional Development Team (RPDT)** – providing a collaborative, research led, University wide framework of professional development for researchers

As outlined in Doctoral Times' winter 2012 edition, the RPDT has been established to provide a development framework for researchers that encompasses mentoring, coaching, careers advice, knowledge exchange and collaboration opportunities.

Preparation for research publication, as detailed in the articles in this edition, is a multi-faceted process. Developing the skills needed to write a quality paper, understanding of the publication landscape, communication and presentation confidence and the ability to respond positively to feedback are all vital aspects.

Those who have generously shared their experiences in these pages make it clear it is never too early to start considering publication and how to develop these skills!

As part of the professional development framework for researchers, there is a raft of resource available for PGR's and research staff. To find out more, please contact the relevant member of the RPD team:

[www.shef.ac.uk/ris/contacts/pdt](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/contacts/pdt)

So what about getting your first article into an internationally recognised peer-reviewed journal? Well, it is a good idea to consult your supervisor or more established academic colleagues in your department about where to publish first. Even if your first piece does not appear in the most prestigious journal, the fact that it appears in an externally peer-reviewed journal at all will signify something to potential employers. Try to continue along the publishing trajectory the further you advance into your thesis, carefully targeting suitable journals that you are familiar with, or that are recommended for your area by colleagues. It will help you to stand out from the crowd when applying for academic jobs, shows an awareness of what is required of a researcher, and provides your work with national and international scholarly recognition. If you teach on your specialist areas, use that process to enrich your knowledge of the area and to enhance any publications that you submit.

A final word of advice borne of experience is to be prepared to take rejection and to absolutely expect any article/manuscript to require changes, minor or major, once peer-reviewed. Anything that is not a direct 'no' is in fact a positive step, and once you have the contract to publish, the time spent will be vindicated.



**Dr Pascale Baker**, Guest Lecturer, School of Languages & Cultures

*“It's never too early to consider how your writing might be published, and giving conference papers throughout your PhD can be a great way to get lots of feedback.”*

**Dr Laura King**, alumna of Sheffield University, now Arts Engaged Impact & Innovation Fellow at The University of Leeds.

## Publishing Research – As A Research Student And Beyond

### *Dr Sandra Kemp*

As a PhD student, I found the idea of writing an article and submitting it to a journal quite daunting. However, one day my PhD supervisor said to me “I think you should consider publishing this”. He was referring to 10 pages I had drafted describing a small-scale study. Six months later I submitted my first journal article and I will always remember the thrill of seeing it in print the following year. That first step towards publishing in an academic journal was the most difficult and there are five key points I learnt along the way.

#### 1. Targetting a journal

It was easier to write an article with a particular journal in mind. I found that time spent becoming familiar with journals in my field and the type of articles published by different ones was very worthwhile. Experienced academics had great advice about which journals I could try.

#### 2. Finding ‘critical friends’

I was very fortunate that my PhD supervisor and other academics at the university were very generous with feedback. However, academics are very busy people so finding other ‘critical friends’ was important. Sometimes more experienced work colleagues or friends working in different discipline areas were willing to help. My co-authors also fulfilled the role of ‘critical friends’ and the discussions we had about ideas and writing were fruitful learning experiences.

#### 3. Learning from rejection (it was not the end)

Even when the journal did not accept my article, the feedback was often very useful. Having an article rejected did not feel good but it was easier to see it as a learning opportunity when reviewers provided thoughtful, constructive feedback. Sometimes a reviewer highlighted areas that could be improved and this would ultimately lead to an acceptance by a different journal.

#### 4. Using software tools

Using a software tool such as EndNote meant that I did not need to spend a lot of extra time making changes to the referencing style in order to submit an article to another journal. Less time on formatting changes meant I could spend more time on the rewriting process. Software has also made the online submission process for many journals simpler. These are usually easy to use and it takes about one hour to set up an account.

#### 5. Publishing to support a career

Publishing is essential for an academic career but in various management roles I have undertaken, I have found that it is also viewed favourably by employers outside the academic world. A peer-reviewed publication listed on a curriculum vitae is one form of evidence of writing skills and this is a critical skill for many jobs, not just academic ones.

Although writing a journal article inevitably requires a significant time commitment, I have found it always rewarding, both personally and professionally. I am sure you will too.



**Dr Sandra Kemp** alumna of Sheffield University, now Deputy Director of eLearning, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, a joint medical school by Imperial College London and Nanyang Technological University.

#### Good Research and Innovation Practices in Publication

The University’s Good Research and Innovation Practices Policy (‘GRIP’ for short) clarifies the University’s expectations for how research should be undertaken and the Policy applies to all postgraduate research students. The Policy highlights minimal acceptable practices that the University expects to be followed at different stages of a research project; section 1.4 focuses on Good Publication Practices. We recommend you read this:

[www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/grippolicy/practices/all](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/grippolicy/practices/all)

The GRIP Policy in full: [www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/grippolicy](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/grippolicy)



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