

Lunch-and-Learn Panel Discussion: Pearls of Wisdom from SJSU Journal Editors & Librarians

Co-sponsored by the SJSU Center for Faculty Development, the Office of Research, the MLK Jr. Library and the Untenured Faculty Organization

On Monday, October 5th and Tuesday, October 6th, 2015, SJSU *faculty and librarians shared valuable advice about publishing one's scholarship*. Attached, you will find slides from the presentation. And below, you will find a summary of panelists' comments and suggestions.

Librarian panelists

Ann Agee ♦ Valeria Molteni

Faculty panelists:

Each has served as editor of one or more peer reviewed journals in their field

Noelle Brada-Williams - *Asian American Literature* ♦ Paul Cascella – *Education* ♦ Yasser Dessouky – *Engineering* ♦ Brent Duckor – *Education* ♦ Frannie Edwards - *Public Administration* ♦ AJ Faas – *Anthropology* ♦ Cay Horstmann - *Computer Science* ♦ Will Meredith - *Music* ♦ Kathleen Roe - *Health Sciences* ♦ Mark Thompson - *Sociolinguistics/English & Comparative Literature* ♦

Editors' advice about strategies to publish scholarship...

1) They recommended taking care to select an appropriate venue.

Don't send something irrelevant to the journal ♦ Read the website carefully. Look at the journal mission ♦ Review the last 3-4 issues of the journal to see what's been published there ♦ Look at the turnaround time - will it work for you? ♦ Contact the editor ahead of time about a proposed submission ♦ Look at the editors and the secondary board, and what they do/what they've published ♦ Don't send the same article to 3 places at once ♦ Talk with your Chair about RTP considerations such as the value of one paper in a high-impact journal vs. a couple in more mid-range journals ♦ Find the sweet spot - don't overshoot or undershoot the journal ♦ Look for special topic issues - often less rigorous ♦ Try to be in the first issue of a new journal - less of a backlog ♦

2) They recommended taking care to craft a strong cover letter.

Take time on your cover letter. ♦ Make the case for why the journal is a good place for your article. ♦ Describe how your article contributes to an ongoing conversation or fills a gap. ♦ Make the argument for how your article makes a meaningful contribution to an on-going conversation in the field and/or in the journal ♦ The cover letter is important. Don't just rewrite the abstract. ♦ Cite other articles from the journal in your cover letter ♦

3) They recommended tailoring submissions to the journal's exact specifications.

Submit in the form and format that the journal wants ♦ Voice is important - abide by the conventions of the field and the journal ♦ Editors are busy - so comply with style and format, to lessen their work ♦ Your paper will first be screened for technical formatting. Then the editor will check for similarity with other publications (beware of plagiarism!) ♦

4) They shared thoughts about the selection of reviewers.

Editors are not necessarily objective or fair. They can sink an article by who they send it to ♦ Suggest good reviewers - people who are thoughtful, knowledgeable, not necessarily the rock stars. Not your friends! (It's a small world...) ♦ Editors are likely to listen to suggestions of possible reviewers. They also look at your reference section, for possible reviewers ♦ Make time to network with your professional peers - they may well end up being the reviewers of your work ♦

5) They urged authors to polish their manuscripts: Write a strong paper, check grammar, be organized, and situate the work well.

What you send in should be your best effort, or the paper may not get past the first screening ♦ Pet peeve - if then paper isn't well written, in professional English, and perfectly formatted. Seek help, if you need it ♦ Poor writing hurts the credibility of your paper ♦ If there are multiple authors, be sure the paper sounds like one voice ♦ Read the paper out loud to yourself. Does it flow? ♦ Avoid abstracts that over-promise ♦ Strong papers are well-crafted, professionally written, with an introductions that orients to the topic, that offers a roadmap that signals the significance of the contribution. Need "signage" for the roadmap, throughout ♦ Papers that are under-theorized or where the theoretical foundations doesn't fit with the rest of the paper won't go far ♦ I look for excellent critical thinking, presented clearly, clean research and methodology, clear statement of how the paper contributes to the field, and NO PLAGIARISM! ♦ Show your work, and justify how you are collecting and analyzing data, and how that speaks to the question ♦ Have the discussion speak back to the issues raised in the introduction. Don't open up a lot of new questions at the end of the paper ♦ Strong papers resolve a theoretical tension ♦ Strong papers are "in the conversation" of the discipline ♦ I read the abstract, then look right at the references - has the author cited seminal papers? Recent work? Everything under the sun? ♦ Show you know the field & that you are aware of what's been done before. Cite key references ♦

6) They suggest asking a peer to read your paper before you send it in.

Have peer-reviewers that you use, before you submit, and offer to serve as reviewers for them, as well ♦ Send a draft of the article to friends or colleagues or peers first ♦

7) They shared thoughts about awaiting reviews.

Be patient! ♦ Be polite. Editors depend on reviewers, whom they know have busy lives ♦ After 4 months, you can follow up, if you haven't heard anything from the editor ♦ Expect 2 months for the first review, 1 month for the "revise & resubmit" ♦

8) They had many suggestions for responding to reviewers' comments.

Be polite about the reviewers' comments, regardless of whether you agree with them or not ♦ An editor is not likely to turn on a reviewer - more likely to turn on YOU ♦ Relationship between editor and reviewers is key - he'd sooner burn and author than a reviewer ♦ Reviewers vary greatly in focus and priorities. Take it all in, have a constructive and creative response to their advice ♦ Editors may seem hard-nosed, but they are trying to maintain the quality of the publication ♦ Take reviewer comments seriously. Take a few days to cool off, if they make you angry, but then respond thoughtfully ♦ Don't be surprised if you get rejected the first time ♦ Everyone gets "Revise & Resubmit" - there's always something that can be done to improve the manuscript ♦ A good editor will identify the priority issues from the reviewers' comments. Pick the top 10 points, and indicate precisely where and how you address them ♦ When you resubmit, point out how you have responded to reviewer critiques ♦ You can respectfully disagree with a request from a reviewer ♦ If you get a rejection, don't just resubmit the paper to another journal as is - you may get the same reviewer, who will be more annoyed this time ♦ If you need to request an extension, do so as early as you can. May be more or a problem in some instances, such as a special issue ♦

9) And last but not least, they encouraged faculty to reflect and engage...

If [the editor] contacts you about being a reviewer, say yes - be part of the community ♦ Cite any secondary reviewers you think might end up receiving your paper ♦ Think about why you are writing – there are many different platforms and purposes (commentaries, reflection, new data...) ♦ Have joy when you write! ♦