

CHOOSING A VENUE FOR YOUR ARTICLE IN THE HUMANITIES:

Journals can range from very specialized and field-specific to multi- and inter-disciplinary. Selecting a journal means choosing a specific audience, and you should carefully consider who you would like to reach. There are several ways to find out more about what your options are. Your advisors and colleagues are probably the best resources for learning about journals in your field, but you can also learn about relevant journals through library search tools and by looking at which journals are publishing the work that you are citing in your own paper.

In general, prioritize peer-reviewed journals if your goal is to establish yourself in an academic field. There are some cases in which you might want to publish in a non-academic journal or one that is not peer-reviewed (for example, if your subject has immediate relevance to a societal issue and one of your goals is to communicate outside of the academy), but peer-reviewed work will have the most impact when you're on the job market and will count towards tenure if you become a tenure-track professor. Never publish in a journal that has a poor reputation, or no reputation in the field.

Do I write the article first or choose the journal first?

If you have an article that is already written, you can simply choose a journal based on the completed piece. This may require modifying the article to the guidelines of the journal, which could result in extensive editing.

On the other hand, you may decide to choose a journal based on an idea that you have not yet put into writing, in which case you can write the article with their style guides in mind. This also allows you to tailor the article to the journal, increasing the possibility that the article will be accepted. If the article is rejected, however, it may be more work to adapt the article for another journal.

What criteria should I keep in mind while selecting a journal?

Reputation

- Is it peer-reviewed?
- Is it an established journal in my field? Does it have a good reputation?

Audience

- How often do I use articles from this journal in my work? How often do articles from this journal appear in scholarship that I read?
- How would a publication in this journal situate me as a scholar, in terms of discipline and/or field? How would this relate to my primary research field?
- What kind of audience does the journal have? How broad vs narrow is that audience?
- What is the journal's aim?
- Who are the editors?
- Who is the publisher or sponsoring organization?

Logistics

- What is the publication style: print, online, both? Is it open access?
- What are the requirements? Is there a style guide? What is the length limit? How well would this match my paper / idea?
- How often is the journal published and how many articles are in each issue?
- How long does the peer-review process last? How quickly are articles published? What is the timeframe from submission to print?
- Is the journal currently backlogged?
- How widely is the journal circulated? Is it indexed in electronic databases and search engines?
- Are there any relevant special issues related to your topic planned?

What are some red flags to watch out for?

Not peer reviewed, poor or no reputation, non-academic

These will not generally count for job applications or tenure portfolios and, in the case of journals with poor reputations, may actually end up hurting your academic reputation.

Asks you to pay fees

No reputable journal will ask you to pay to publish your own work! You may be asked to pay for offprints (which are optional), but article publication should not cost you anything.

Low circulation or irregular publication

Journals that are not published regularly or are not widely circulated mean that the chances are less that someone will find and cite your work. Ideally, you want to publish in a journal that most major university libraries subscribe to, at least online if not also in print.

Approached you unexpectedly or otherwise seems like a scam

No matter how great your work is, no trustworthy publisher will solicit you out of the blue, especially not via email. Many publishing and phishing scams will take information from university or academic web pages and will send you spam emails based on information pulled from these sources. These predatory publishers will usually try to take your personal information or demand a publication fee. This should be distinguished from invited papers (see below), in which a scholar in your field who is editing the volume (not the publisher) will generally contact you.

Members of the board of editors are often also contributors

If the editors of the journal are also the primary contributors, or you keep seeing the same names popping up over and over again, chances are that the journal does not receive enough submissions for some reason (perhaps popularity or reputation) and you may be better off submitting an article to a more popular journal.

What about “Invited Papers”?

“Invited papers” are articles that are solicited for a collected work—e.g., a Festschrift or memorial volume, conference proceedings, and other thematic volumes—by the editor(s) of that volume. If the editors have contacted you for a submission, you may be flattered and tempted to agree right away (especially for Festschriften, if the honoree is someone important to you), but balance the pros and cons. When making these decisions, do not forget that writing any article takes a large time and energy investment, and ask yourself whether it would be better to dedicate that time for a peer-reviewed article submission that may not be accepted or for a guaranteed publication in a different venue.

Cons of publishing an invited paper

These volumes are generally not peer-reviewed and may not count when applying for jobs or for a tenure portfolio. In addition, depending on the type of volume, your article may be hard for readers to find. Finally, these volumes often take much longer to print because of inevitable delays in getting all submissions in, edited, revised, and submitted again.

Pros of publishing an invited paper

An invited work is essentially a guaranteed publication, whereas a peer-reviewed journal submission may be rejected. In addition, if the invited paper is for a volume that is thematic or based on a small, targeted conference, your paper might be easier to find for those interested in the topic.

General and Publisher-Specific Journal Finder Tools:

Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory: www.ulrichsweb.com

Genamics JournalSeek: www.genamics.com

Elsevier Journal Finder: <https://www.elsevier.com/authors/journal-authors>

Biomed Central/Chemistry Central/SpringerOpen:
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/authors/chooseajournal>

Further Reading

Belcher, W.L. *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009.

Soule, D.P.J., L. Whiteley, and S. McIntosh, eds. *Writing for Scholarly Journals*. Glasgow, Scotland: eSharp, 2007.

Silvia, P. *Write It Up*. Washington, DC: APA LifeTools, 2015.

Rocco, T.S., T. Hatcher, et al. *The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing*. San Francisco, CA: JosseyBass, 2011.

Das, A. “How to Choose Journals for Submitting your Paper” (2013):
<http://www.editage.com/insights/how-to-choose-journals-for-submitting-your-paper>