

Choosing a Venue for your Article in the Humanities

What kinds of journals are out there?

Journals can range from very specialized and field-specific to multi- and interdisciplinary. 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 journals in your field. You can also search bibliographies and library holdings for both print and electronic venues, as well as websites and catalogues of academic publishers.

There are some cases in which you might want to publish in a non-academic journal or one that is not peer reviewed, but this is not recommended if you are just starting your academic career. Go for peer-reviewed journals first! Other publications may make your CV look more impressive, but peer-reviewed work will have more impact 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?

Whether you write the article or choose the journal first is a matter of personal preference. 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 put into writing yet, in which case you can write the article with the style guidelines 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 when selecting a journal?

Use this checklist as you research possible venues for your article!

- ✓ Is it peer reviewed? What kind of peer review?

Peer review can be “blind” (the author is identified but the reviewers are not) or “double blind” (neither the reviewers nor author are identified). Peer review is especially important for tenure portfolios.

- ✓ Is it an established journal in my field? Does it have a good reputation?
- ✓ How often do I use articles from this journal in my work? How often do articles from this journal appear in scholarship I read?
- ✓ How would a publication in this journal situate me as a scholar, in terms of discipline and/or field? How does this relate to my primary research field?
- ✓ What is the publication style: print, online, both? Is it open access?
- ✓ What kind of audience does the journal have? What is its aim?
- ✓ What are the requirements? Is there a style guide?
- ✓ 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 between submission and print?
- ✓ Is the journal severely backlogged?
- ✓ What are my intellectual rights to the published article?
- ✓ What are the word or length limits?
- ✓ What language(s) does it publish in?
- ✓ How widely is it circulated? Is it indexed in electronic databases and search engines?
This is important for something called the “impact factor,” which denotes how often articles published in the journal are cited, on average.
- ✓ Who are the editors?
- ✓ Who is the publisher or sponsoring organization?
- ✓ 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 keep in mind the possible pitfalls. For one, these volumes are generally not peer-reviewed and may not count when applying for jobs or for a tenure portfolio. For another, your article may be harder to find, depending on the type of volume (for instance, large conference volumes). Finally, these volumes often take much longer to print because of inevitable delays in getting all submissions in, edited, revised, and submitted again. On the other hand, 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. 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.

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

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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: Jossey-Bass, 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>

Publish or Perish Impact Tool: <http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm>