The Perilous Journey of Journal Publishing

Jim Jansen
jjansen@acm.org
Qatar Computing Research Institute
Hamad Bin Khalifa University
Doha, Qatar
The focus!

FOCUS - the mechanics of the journey!

The issue of *good* research is a given!
The issue of *good* methods is a given!
The issue of *good* impact is a given!
Along with all the other content relevant attributes – interesting, timely, worthwhile, etc.

FOCUS - the mechanics of the journey!
Mechanics of the Journey

✓ What happens to your manuscript once submitted?
✓ Handling communication with the editors
✓ Formatting the Cover Letter
✓ Crafting of the response to the reviewers
✓ Revising of the manuscript
✓ Polishing the final accepted article
✓ Importance of citations and impact factors
✓ Contribution of reviewing to the academic research process
Insights from

Based on my experiences as editor-in-chief (EIC) of two journals

• EIC of *Internet Research* for 5 years (Emerald, Impact Factor of 3.017 at the end of my tenure)

• Currently, EIC of *Information Processing & Management*, into 5th year (Elsevier, Impact Factor of 3.892)

- EIC of Internet Research - handled ~450 manuscripts per year

- EIC of Information Processing & Management - handle 1200+ manuscripts per year
The Journal Publication Process

- Key decision points: Desk Review, Editorial Decision
- Time varies by journal. IP&M stats:
  - Desk Decision: ~0.5 weeks
  - 1st Decision: ~7 weeks
  - Final Decision: ~21 weeks
Cover letter – include one!

• Use Letterhead
• Address to editor and journal
• 1st paragraph - mention the article
• 2nd paragraph – explain the research
• 3rd paragraph – expand why in scope
• 4th paragraph – misc. (data, prior pub)
• 5th paragraph - thank the editor

• Get the editor’s name right.
• Ensure you have the correct journal - happens all the time (i.e., incorrect journal in the cover letter).
Manuscript once submitted

• Desk Review – an editorial check to determine if the manuscript will be sent out for review
• Not a peer review; performed by staff, Ph.D. student, or often the editor (at IP&M done by me).

• Outcome –
  • (a) send out for review,
  • (b) send out back to authors for correction
  • (c) reject

• Desk Rejects – typically ~50%+ at many journals (~60% at IP&M)
Manuscript checklist

• Most editors have a checklist; the items vary by journal
• Some common items that will get your manuscript returned/rejected
  • Over word count / out of scope
  • Not novel research / exploratory research
• Some items that will increase the probability of manuscript sent out for review
  • Abstract full of good research findings and impact
  • Explicitly stated research objectives or contributions
  • Professionally copy edited
  • Citations to recent articles in the journal to which you are submitting
For IP&M, the system does it. I don’t have to do anything.
Something else that happens at desk check

• Plagiarism – just don’t do it, especially your own work (self-plagiarism)

• If based on prior work – mention in the cover letter & cite in a submitted manuscript

• Journal editors, especially in the tech fields, know you probably have a conference paper

• Highlight the differences in the cover letter and manuscript

• Most journals want 30%-50% new findings.
Communicating with editors

- If you argue with the editor, you will lose. There is really no battle. The journal editor is bound by the COPE guidelines and not much else.

- When communicating with the editor be (a) direct – respect the editor’s time, (b) be professional, (c) if disagreeing, have your key facts/positions stated clearly, and (d) let the editor know what you are asking for.

Editors are also researchers; most try to be fair to all.
Response to the reviewers

• Reviewer is a role that researchers have. Reviewers are also authors in another role. Keep this in mind. You are also a reviewer.

• Thank them. Reviewing is a thankless job.

• Prepare a point-by-point Response to the Reviewers.

• The better and more detailed your Response the higher the probability of a favorable outcome!
Response to the reviewers (cont’)

• Pick your battles. The reviewer holds most of the high cards.
• If you push back, okay to be direct, but be polite.
• If you push back on one point, good to give on another.
• Make it easy for the reviewer! Tell them what you did. Show them (or reference the location in the revised manuscript of your changes)
Response to the reviewers (cont’)

Reviewer comment

Comment to reviewer

Reviewer comment

Comment to reviewer

Snippet from manuscript addressing reviewer’s point

Reviewer comment

Comment to reviewer

Snippet from manuscript addressing reviewer’s point

Reviewer comment

Comment to reviewer
Revising of the manuscript

• If you need to work 2 hours to save the reviewers 20 minutes, you work 2 hours! It’s your publication.

• During the revision, easy to introduce mistakes, ensure you copy edit again

• Reviewer directed modifications can mess up the flow. So, you might need to restructure within sections.

• Good time to revisit your literature review.

• Reminder of the word limit – good to be under on original submission.
Polishing the accepted article

- Now that you’ve got the manuscript accepted, don’t embarrass yourself with silly mistakes.
- Copy edit
- Check your figures, images, tables, captions, author names, & references
- Check the numbers in tables, charts, figure, etc. and check the formulas!
- Update literature review
- Consider any acknowledgments – funding agencies, advisors, etc.
Let’s talk impact factor

• Citation – a formal reference to a source contained within a published research article.

• Impact Factor (IF) = number of citations last year to articles published in the last 2 years divided by number of articles published in last 2 years by journal.

Example: IP&M 2018 IF = 3.892

\[
\frac{\text{# 2018 citations}}{\text{# 2018 articles} + \text{# 2017 articles}}
\]

➢ 2018 citations = 1,218
➢ 2018 articles + 2017 articles = 312
➢ IP&M 2018 IF = 3.892
Lets talk impact factor

• Why should you care?

• IFs are an easy way for researchers and institutions to judge the value of a publication.

  ➢ Publish in a high IFs outlet, and you need to justify value? ... just to point to the IF

  ➢ Research published in outlet with high IF and someone doesn’t like it (e.g., tenure committee), they have to work to show it’s not valuable.

  ➢ Reverse is true if published in low IFs outlet (note – might still be good research! Just takes more effort to prove it!)
### Lets talk impact factor

**Power law distribution**
(a few journals with high IF and whole lot of journals with low IF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Factor</th>
<th>Number of Journals</th>
<th>Ranking (Top % of Journals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9+</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+</td>
<td>1616</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>2903</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+</td>
<td>5366</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+</td>
<td>9302</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0+</td>
<td>12558</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2018 IF

IP&M is ranked in top **13.6%** of all journals based on impact factor (IF).

<= IF 3.892 IP&M

<= ~77% of all journals
How to increase your citations?

• Reminder of focus – mechanics. Good research is a given.
• All products need marketing, even your research publications! Note – As a researcher, you are really a small business!
• Specifics:
  • Publish where your audiences are! Have a plan! Most research has more than one potential audience.
  • Take your conference articles and expand into journal publications – good way to target a new audience!
  • Make your research easy to access – most outlets are Green Open Access (i.e., have a website where Google Scholar can index, post your articles there)
Reviewing

- Reviewing is the foundation of the academic system.
- Every paper you submit requires 2 to 3 reviewers to support the system. **Ensure you are doing your part to support the system!**
- How to get started? Progression:
  - Help your advisor review some manuscripts,
  - Then, do some ad hoc reviewing for conferences and journals (best if at the outlets you publish),
  - Then, get on editorial boards and program committees,
  - Then, serve as editors and/or conference chairs.
- Editors of journals track reviewer statistics
Editors: track reviewer statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer Name</th>
<th>Board Member</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Declined</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Accept_Invite_Rate</th>
<th>Avg Time_Invitation</th>
<th>Complete</th>
<th>Uninvite</th>
<th>Complete_Review_Rate</th>
<th>Avg Time_Review</th>
<th>Reminders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-9.09%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reviewers stats:

- Invitations accepted
- Invitation response speed
- Reviews completed
- Speed of reviews
- Can rate quality of review

Reviewers stats are used for editorial board decisions, reviewer awards, guest editor of special issues, editor appointments, etc.
Special note for students

• Don’t submit your entire dissertation as a journal article! A reasonable dissertation will be enough for three journal articles.

• Check with your advisor before submitting and ask about (a) acknowledgments, (b) where to submit, (c) comments and suggestions on the manuscript.

• If collaborating with others, work out authorship order *before* submitting. Any questions about authorship during the revision, work out before re-submitting.

Know the time cycles of the journal before submitting. This is especially important for universities requiring Ph.D. students to have accepted publications.
The Journal Publication Process

Original submission → Desk Review → Associate Editor → n round Review → Editorial Decision → Revise & Resubmit → Rework & Resubmit

Accept/Reject – Note: nearly always Reject

- Cover letter
- Manuscript
- Cover letter
- Response to Reviewer
- Revised Manuscript
- Cover letter
- Response to Reviewer
- Revised Manuscript

Accept - Polished Manuscript
Reject - Revise Manuscript

n = 1 to x

Revised submission → Revised decision
The Journal Publication Process

- Original submission
  - Desk Review
  - Associate Editor
  - n round Review
  - Editorial Decision
  - Revise & Resubmit
  - Rework & Resubmit

- Cover letter
- Manuscript

- Accept/Reject – Note: nearly always Reject

- Accept - Polished Manuscript
- Reject - Revise Manuscript

- Revised submission
  - Revised Manuscript
  - Response to Reviewer
  - Cover letter

Your responsibility

n = 1 to x
The Journal Publication Process

- Cover letter
- Manuscript
- Cover letter
- Response to Reviewer
- Revised Manuscript

Your responsibility - most journal processing time includes time the manuscript is with authors. Would be surprised how long some authors hold manuscripts.

- Cover letter
- Response to Reviewer
- Revised Manuscript

Accept/Reject – Note: nearly always Reject

Accept - Polished Manuscript
Reject - Revise Manuscript
The Journal Publication Process

- Original submission
- Desk Review
- Associate Editor
- n round Review
- Editorial Decision
- Revise & Resubmit
- Rework & Resubmit

Accept/Reject – Note: nearly always Reject

- Accept – Polished Manuscript
- Reject – Revise Manuscript

Also your responsibility – REVIEWING! Each of your submissions puts a 2 or 3 reviewer load on the system!
Information Processing & Management (IP&M)

• 2018 Impact Factor: 3.892

• Associate Editors
  • Yuelin Li
    Business School, Dept. of Information Resources Management, Nankai University, Tianjin, China
  • Xiuzhen (Jenny) Zhang
    RMIT University College of Science Engineering and Health, Australia
  • Paolo Rosso
    Dept. de Sistemes Informàtics i Computació, Universitat Politècnica de València, València, Spain
  • Ian Ruthven
    Dept. of Computer and Information Sciences, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, UK
Information Processing & Management (IP&M)

- 1,200+ submissions (increase of 25% YoY)
- Accept Rate: ~14%
- Processing Times (average):
  - Desk Decision: 0.5 weeks
  - 1st Decision: ~7 weeks
  - Final Decision: ~21 weeks

Processing time to final decision competitive with top conferences … plus you get the chance to revise!
I consider the best by FAR to be

“How to do good research, get it published in SIGKDD and get it cited!”

by Eamonn Keogh, UofC, Riverside.

Available at:
PDF of this presentation

• On my website
• Available at:
  • http://www.bernardjjansen.com
  • Go to News tab
  • First listing
Final Note

Scenario:

• You have a great research question, excellent methods, outstanding data, and fantastic research results!

• You follow all the recommended steps in submitting your manuscript to a top outlet.
Scenario:
• You have a great research question, excellent methods, outstanding data, and fantastic research results!
• You follow all the recommended steps in submitting your manuscript to a top outlet.
And, the submission gets REJECTED!
Final Note

Scenario:

• You have a great research question, excellent methods, outstanding data, and fantastic research results!

• You follow all the recommended steps in submitting your manuscript to a top outlet.

And, the submission gets **REJECTED**!

What do you do?
"It is possible to commit no mistakes and still lose. That is not a weakness. That is life."
Final Note

• Don’t doubt yourself.
• Keep pushing.
• If it was easy, everyone would do it.
Final Note

• Don’t doubt yourself.
• Keep pushing.
• If it was easy, everyone would do it.
• Be Idealistic!
  ➢ You’re the good knight fighting the valiant fight!
Final Note

• Don’t doubt yourself.
• Keep pushing.
• If it was easy, everyone would do it.
• Be Idealistic and Realistic!
  ➢ You’re the good knight fighting the valiant fight! ...
    Sometimes the dragon is going to win.
Final Note

• Don’t doubt yourself.
• Keep pushing.
• If it was easy, everyone would do it.
• Be Idealistic and Realistic!
  ➢ You’re the good knight fighting the valiant fight! ... Sometimes the dragon is going to win.

Rest. Regroup. Fight another day!
Thank you!

Jim Jansen
jjansen@acm.org
Qatar Computing Research Institute
Hamad Bin Khalifa University
Doha, Qatar