A PHILOSOPHY AND PRAGMATICS OF WRITING

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WHY WRITE?
To communicate to a larger group
To have peer review
To explain one’s research, ideas

From student work (to one person—for a professor) to professional (a group of people—many of whom are not like you and your friends)

Basic expository prose (how to)
Varies somewhat by discipline, national culture, generation, etc.

Understanding your audience
From conference paper to publishable article
Sharing and critiquing your ideas
--false concept—ideas as property
developing ideas in teaching
finding specialist peers
conferences
correspondence

Non-specialist peers
where you are geographically
building and maintaining an intellectual/political network

false standards
career needs
practical needs
intellectual goals

intellectual vs. academic
"refereed journals"—journal ranking, quantification
blind refereed: plus and minus
why
citation indexes
internet publication

prejudice against media, popular culture
political prejudices

AS AN ACADEMIC, PRESTIGE IS PRESTIGE IN SPECIALTY, NOT AT INSTITUTION

Career and vs. intellectual integrity
•find out the norms where you are
•re-educate people who will judge you
•if in an unorthodox situation, get it in writing, early on
•consciously promote yourself in a sincere (not cynical) way

Additional ideas:
•the importance of visual support in conference and publication presentation
  --purchase the tools to do this
make it part of your overhead
•"don't [bleep] where you eat"

HOW TO PUBLISH (MECHANICS)
1. survey the field
   library (examine periodicals in your field and related field at major research libraries)
   Bookstores (visit major academic bookstores in large cities, trade book stores, Amazon.com, etc)
   Ads (Chronicle of Higher Ed, publications in your field, other fields)
   Notices, calls for papers (Cinema Journal, websites, listservs, etc.)
   Information at professional meetings
   Contacts
2. Look for non-media specialty publications
   liberal arts quarterlies
   area studies, national orientation
   topic publications (areas, identities, etc.)
   general arts publications

3. Preparation---KNOW THE PUBLICATION

   • send clean copies
   • carefully proofread
   • check style sheet—be absolutely accurate
   • modest cover letter—your expertise
   • return postage/envelope if needed and/or online submission
   • return receipt/postcard
   • have a backup list for rejection (play the %)

Follow up inquiry—email, letter or phone (always be factual, non-emotional—sarcasm is totally inappropriate, but don’t be a wimp either.

When rejected:
   a. Never get into a fight
   b. If misunderstood,
      a. it may be you were not clear,
      b. it may be a form of rejection
   c. readers reports—not worth a quarrel

If you have a chance, meet the editor

If revise, revise and resubmit—
   Phone and get a clear signal

Revise—follow the suggestions, but keep it your own piece (intellectual integrity)
   --you can ignore the minor things you disagree with (but check with several other people)
   --return the reworked ms. With a note about major disagreement
   in general, try to work it out in a business like, professional way.

   [Rule: You can never win a fight with an editor, don’t try]

Delays, double submissions, etc.

Delays in publication are frequent—get a letter (in writing) for employer if you need to show acceptance and intent to publish

Multiple submissions
   • in journalism/reviewing—commonplace to submit on speculation (especially on topical material (but try to set up in advance)
   • academic—usually forbidden

   [Rule: Always keep an editor informed of any changes in intent/activity]

Withdrawal.
   1. if problems, try to do it over the phone
   2. may well close out future possibilities with the publication

   aside—editors have a grape vine
   aside—inexperienced editors often make mistakes, esp. academics.

Commissioned work (e.g. book review; festival or conference report, etc.)
   Be clear about length
   Be clear about deadline
   Send sample, state expertise

   Festival, conference reports, etc.—get commitment to publish in advance
   Be clear about style and subjectivity

Interviews
a. interviews are a form of PR
   a. all directors give the same interview (except Godard)
   b. be wary of “exclusives”
   c. know your publication in advance, get a commitment if at all possible
   d. interviews do little for your career unless you do a lot and become famous for doing them
      (e.g., Scott MacDonald for avant garde cinema).
      a. Credit goes to the interviewee
      b. Translation—a tough call; make sure you want to do it.

After publication, self-promotion is essential. Offprints, copies, etc. This is part of your overhead, send them out with notes.

Copyright and reprint agreement

Another large topic: the changing nature of publishing, e-books and journals.
Explain why you are an expert on this subject (e.g., part of your dissertation, or course work in the area, or special fieldwork, etc.)