PUBLISHING ADVICE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS[1]

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Introduction

There are any number of reasons behind our wanting to publish, whether for professional advancement or personal satisfaction. Perhaps the largest obstacle to achieving publications is the lack of good practical advice on both how work is selected for publication and how the publishing world operates more generally.[2] This essay is an attempt to provide just this in a clear, jargon-free way.

In short, if there are any hidden 'secrets' to publishing, then it is the ability to 'find your voice', an elusive idea that I will return to repeatedly. I believe that a talent to develop this skill is a possibility for virtually everyone. Indeed, one of the most important things to note from the very start is that getting published as a graduate student *is possible*. This essay will demonstrate how this can be achieved.[3]

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[2] There are several reasons that might explain why there is a general lack of good practical advice available to graduate students. In my own view, the primary reason is that the graduate students are almost always must rely on their supervisors for any publishing advice. There are only rarely seminars or talks designed to give advice on *how* to publish, beyond simply the *importance* of publishing. A focus on the latter tends to intimidate and turn students off trying to publish, while a focus on the former tends to shed light where there was once darkness.

[3] As a brief disclaimer, my advice is meant to be of use to all graduate students broadly working in the humanities and social sciences. While I have published in the areas of law, philosophy, and political science, my advice is not intended for graduate students in these subjects alone. As a further disclaimer, I will occasional comment on publishing in law reviews, but advice on publishing in law is often very different than with the rest of humanities and social sciences. Regular advice on publishing in law reviews can be found on Brian Leiter's Law Reports and I would recommend readers interested in publishing in law

I. *Publishing 101*: Book reviews as an introduction to publishing

The easiest publication to acquire is a book review. The only reason that I can see for why so few graduate students publish book reviews is that this know-how is rarely shared with them. In my view, book reviews are easily the best and most instructive guide to the publishing world readily available. I will now explain how this works.

In general, all journals have two editors. The first editor is 'the editor'. He or she will normally have responsibility for overseeing article and replies/discussion submissions to the journal, as well as dealing with more general enquiries.[4] The second editor is 'the *reviews* editor' (sometimes called 'the book reviews editor'). He or she will normally be in charge of maintaining the journal's publication of review essays and book reviews.[5] Virtually every reviews editor I know is bending over backwards looking for new reviewers for his or her journal—and often tired of chasing colleagues to write yet another review. While the premier journals tend to prefer more established academics, this is not always the case and most journals are perfectly satisfied to have graduate students serve as reviewers. If you want to get your first publication, then become a book reviewer *today*!

It is relatively easy to become a book reviewer. The first step is to identify a journal in your area of expertise. Please ensure that any prospective journal publishes book reviews! (One of the biggest early mistakes is to approach journals with an offer to write a book review for them, only to learn that they do not run reviews.) Book reviews are normally found towards the back of a journal issue, following articles. The second step is to locate the email address of the

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consult this site instead (see here: http://leiterlawschool.typepad.com/).

[4] I discuss what replies/discussion pieces and articles are—and how to get them—below in section 3 ('*Publishing 301*').

[5] I simply note that on rare occasions the journal's editor may also oversee submitted review articles and book reviews.

reviews editor and send him or her a brief message: it is perfectly acceptable and today the norm to contact editors by email rather than through the mail. In your email message, briefly state who you are and the topic of your graduate work. For example, you might say something like this:

> Dear [Review Editor name],
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> My name is [name] and I am a second year Ph.D. student in [subject] at [university]. My Ph.D. centres on [enter 1-2 sentences describing your area interests].
>
> I would be highly interested in writing a book review for your journal if you had any books in my area. Please let me know if this might be a possibility. I look forward to hearing from you.
>
> Best wishes,
>
> [Your name]

That's it.

You will receive a positive response (by email) in virtually every case. If the journal has received a book in your area, then you can expect the book to arrive through the mail shortly thereafter. A particularly good strategy is to search through a journal's 'books received' section (often published at the very back of the journal) and identify a particular book listed there as something you would like to review. This makes good sense because books received are already on hand with the reviews editor: the 'books received' section is often an advertisement of what is on hand for prospective reviewers. You may also suggest reviewing a book that does not appear in the 'books received' section. In general, if the book is not listed, then avoid trying to review any books more than two years old. There can be quite a delay between the time you receive the book, write your review, and the review appears in print—as I will explain shortly. Any book more than two years old today may become a bit out of date when the review would be published. For this reason, reviews editors will be likely to turn down your offer.

For whatever reason, do not despair if a reviews editor turns down your offer to review. In nearly every case, you will only be turned down if a book is either too out of date or under review with someone else. If a book you proposed is already being reviewed, then it is certainly acceptable to ask the reviews editor if you might review a second book instead. Needless to say, there is nothing to worry about if a journal does not agree to let you review a book for them: your future chances of publishing an article with the journal will not be compromised. (Remember that the reviews editor and the journal editor are normally different people, with editorial decisions on articles and book reviews taken separately.) Again, there is no reason for despair. If unsuccessful with one journal, then try, try, and try again.

If a reviews editor agrees to your request to review a book, fantastic! When you receive the book, the reviews editor will spell out when he or she would like you to send your review. These deadlines are never written in stone and you can be late without any fear of your review failing to be published. However, please try to do everything possible to make your deadline, not least if you are a fan of the journal and would be interested in contributing reviews again in future. In addition to a deadline, the reviews editor will also furnish instructions for formatting your review. Ensure that you stick to these religiously whatever your own preferences, as otherwise your review may not be published after all. The word length can vary from about 400 to 1,000 (and 2,000 words in some cases).[6]

Let me explain how 'finding your voice' comes into play. In all likelihood, your audience has primarily comprised of a professor or no larger than a class. Your written work is then

[6] Word limits are much greater for 'review articles' (or 'review essays'): articles of about 5,000-8,000 words that often centre on one book or as many as three or four. Arrangements to submit review articles to a journal must always be made with the reviews editor in advance. Review articles are then regularly refereed by the editors and/or anonymous referees prior to final acceptance and, thus, how you should go about writing them should follow the advice on writing articles that I offer below in section 3 ('*Publishing 301*').

perhaps course work, such as a research project, or maybe it is a draft chapter of your Ph.D. In these cases, your writing is targeted at communicating ideas to a person or small group who are share a familiarity with one another. When writing a book review, the context suddenly changes subtly, but importantly: your audience is now *the broader general profession*.

A good piece of advice in writing reviews is to avoid getting too fancy: avoid footnotes and other references at all costs. Instead, narrowly focus only on the book at hand. In so doing, do not second guess your knowledge of a particular area compared to more senior members of the profession. You need do no more than make general comments on your area, with your discussion fairly exclusive to explicating the book. Begin the review by discussing how the book has been constructed and what problems it attempts to solve, and conclude the review by offering a few criticisms—good book reviews should not be 100% endorsements.

The important thing to remember here is thinking about how you can present this material to someone with at least a general acquaintance with the area, but lacking in particular familiarity with the book you are reviewing. Previously, you have written for an audience that shared some knowledge of what you were writing about as the format would be either a supervisory session with your dissertation or thesis advisors, or as part of a class you were enrolled in. Book reviews are a simple, yet instructive way (often in 1,000 words or less) of trying out a new style of presenting your ideas on your field that is invaluable training. Once you have developed a feel for writing for a general audience in this way, writing publishable articles will become a far more easier task.

There are a few more things that can be said about book reviews. For one thing, *you get free books*! When a journal sends you a book to review, you always get to keep the book (even if you decide the book is ultimately not review-worthy). Hardcover books may easily cost $100 (£50) or more. A graduate student could do worse than acquire these books for free and make big

savings in his or her book budget. If there is an important new book in an area pertaining to your Ph.D. research, then it may prove a wise move to get the book for free in return for providing a review. This will allow you to both have the opportunity to read the book (which you may have to be familiar with anyway), but without having to pay for it.

A second and more important point worth mentioning is this: perhaps the best thing about writing book reviews is that they offer a crucial glimpse at the world of publishing. When you have completed your review, reviews editors normally will ask you to email a copy of your review (in either Word, WordPerfect, or 'RTF' [Rich Text Format]). Usually after a period of several months (and not less than six months or as much as more than one year), you will be sent the publisher's proofs of your review along with a copyright assignment form. These will normally be accompanied by some kind of order form. In general, you will have no longer than a week (and sometimes just three days) to return these documents to the publisher.

Let me now explain what these documents are. The publisher's proofs are copies of the typesetting of your review. They will appear like a photocopy of your review in the journal. What you will need to do (using red or blue ink) is make any *necessary* corrections to your review.[7] If you make no corrections, then what you see in the proofs is exactly what you will get as a final product in the journal when it is published. It is never a good idea to make substantial amendments and, in fact, the publisher may well charge you per word for their added inconvenience. The copyright assignment form is different and may even become ego-boosting: a publisher actually wants to *own* your work(!). Whilst handing over the copyright to your work may also seem contrary to your self-empowerment, it is usually a legal necessity prior to getting

[7] Publishers often recommend that you use a red pen when noting typesetting errors and a blue pen when noting copy-editing errors, although most people I know note all changes on proofs with red ink.

your review published. Depending upon how prestigious you are in the profession, your review will never be published if you fail to sign on the dotted line.[8] Finally, there is usually some kind of order form. Normally, the publisher will send something like one copy of the journal issue in which your review appears along with a PDF file of your review. For a discounted fee, you can normally purchase additional copies of the journal.[9]

The biggest surprise of all for new authors is the time frame involved. For example, the time lapsed in between contacting a reviews editor and receiving the book might be one month. (The primary delay being the time elapsed from the reviews editor first contacting the publisher to send you the book to the book finally arriving in the post.) It may then take two or three months to read the book, write your review, and submit it to the reviews editor. Normally, you will wait not less than six months and often one year or more before you are contacted by the publisher with proofs, copyright form, and order form. After you return these documents to the publisher, you should expect to wait another three or even four months before your review is finally in print. In brief, the period from first contacting the journal to receiving a hard copy of the journal in print may easily be one year and will often be closer to 1 ½ to 2 years. **There is no**

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[8] In general, only a small number of journals allow authors to retain copyright for their published work. This may be problematic as it allows the owner to earn royalties from your work, but it is never a barrier to re-publishing your work later in a book provided you clearly acknowledge its original publication. Details can vary from publisher to publisher (and even by publication) so it is a good idea to read the fine print to clarify what the precise arrangements are when signing a copyright assignment form.

[9] I simply note with regret how much times have changed recently. My first reviews were published in the late 1990s. From then until about a few years ago, the norm from publishers was to send reviewers one hard copy of the journal issue their review appeared in and either a set of offprints of their review or one set of offprints of the full review section. Publishers have since claimed that authors would prefer everything electronically and, thus, for our collective benefit authors began to be sent PDF files of their work (still with one hard copy of the relevant journal issue) instead of the hard copies. This move seems only to have saved on printing costs for publishers and most academics I know regret this change in events. I count myself amongst them.

such thing as 'quick' in the *print* publishing world.[10] The sooner you realize this, then the better you can become prepared. Indeed, this process may seem overly administrative and tedious, but this process (post-acceptance) differs little between all publications, including journal articles and books.

When you have written your review—surprise!—you can add your first entry on your *curriculum vitae* under the section 'publication'. **A star is born.** Getting published *is* this easy. What I like about book reviews is that they begin a thought process. They get you to sharpen your focus, become more astute on finding your market (*e.g.*, not all journals will be appropriate for reviews of books on Hegel's legal philosophy), and finding your voice through writing for a general audience. These are all the product, in my view, of a mental change brought about by the actual need to write for a general audience. Moreover, book reviews allow you to first-hand experience the various stages involved in publishing that will reappear when publishing articles. Finally, you save money as the books reviewed are sent to you for free. For these reasons, I normally encourage all graduate students to write at least one, if not two or three, book reviews during their graduate studies.

I am often asked about the relative importance of book reviews and how strongly graduate students should be encouraged to pursue them. The general argument is that book reviews are almost without any merit and only detract students from completing their studies and publishing items that matter, such as monographs and articles.[11] In response, it is certainly true that having

[10] The situation is *very* different with new, online journals that can publish articles and reviews very rapidly.

[11] It is well worth highlighting one way in which reviews matter an awful lot: promotions (both for the book and personal). Publishers love being able to say that a particular journal and/or reputable scholar said *x* about a recently published book in catalogues and on back jackets of these books. Moreover, it is sometimes a condition for promotion in one's position that they publish a book that has received some critical acclaim.

a book review (or several reviews) listed on your *vitae* will not help with securing employment.[12] While it is the case that I do believe that writing a review or two demonstrates that a candidate has an interest in contributing to the profession (however small this contribution might be)—especially if that candidate does not yet have other publications—and while it is the case that everyone I know with a tenure-track position has written a review prior to coming into their post, **book reviews do *not* make anyone more (or less) attractive for any post**. What *will* matter will be securing book contracts or publishing articles. Thus, writing book reviews may be seen as a great waste of time.

However, I would simply highlight that writing one or two book reviews during one's doctoral studies should not create any additional problems with that student completing studies on schedule. I think the combination of the experience, acquiring important new books for free, and the practice of writing for a general audience well worth the small effort put into the production of book reviews. Book reviews are less prestigious than other forms of publications not least because they are so easy to acquire. Nevertheless, they help newcomers to publishing find their voice (and their feet) and for this reason I believe graduate students should be encouraged to try their hand at least once.

II. *Publishing 201*: Conferences and their proceedings

The next step after writing a book review is writing a conference paper. While not every published article existed previously as a conference paper, the vast majority have (and often list which conferences they were presented at in their acknowledgements). Moreover, many of the

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For these reasons, book reviews do matter more than most people recognize.

[12] Of course, publishing a book that has been the subject of book reviews is often most helpful in seeking promotion or appointments.

better known articles were presented more than once. I am not suggesting that there is any correlation between (a) the number of times a paper is presented and (b) the quality of a paper—and it is a *terrible* idea to attempt a record for the most presentations of a single paper. However, there are some good reasons why reputable articles were once conference papers. I will lay out these reasons here.

Relatively speaking, it is not difficult to get onto conference programmes, although it is more difficult than becoming a book reviewer. Conferences will advertise 'calls for papers' (abbreviated 'CFP') about six months or longer prior to the event. In order to adequately prepare, you must be on top of calls for papers well in advance. A great place to look for calls for papers will be on the websites of leading professional organizations and societies, as well as a few blogs. Be sure to check these sites on a regular basis.

The calls for papers will normally ask for submissions of a paper title with abstract, occasionally the title, abstract, and full paper (with specific rules on word length). Those submissions that will be chosen for participation at the conference are normally selected through anonymous, peer review. What this means is that you should submit a copy of your submission (normally by email) without acknowledging yourself in the paper. When making your submission, clearly state your name, submission title, and contact details in the body of your email.[13] For example, you might submit the following:

> Dear [conference organizer],
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> I would like to submit my [abstract/paper] entitled [title] for consideration at your forthcoming [name of conference] on date. The [abstract/paper] is attached above in [Word, WordPerfect, or RTF]. Please let me know if you have any difficult opening my attachment.

[13] Some conferences use a form that interested prospective conference participants should complete instead. Always check the particulars of any calls for papers prior to submitting a proposal.

The easiest way to contact me is through my email address: [give email address] I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

[Name]

Your message should be short and to the point: whether or not the conference organizers agree to have you present your work at their conference will rest on the quality of your abstract and/or paper, not the length of your email message to them.[14]

It may seem that having to submit a paper is more onerous than having to submit just an abstract. The difficulty with the latter lies in the rush to actually producing the paper in time for the conference date: it is often not the case that time is lacking, but that it can be put off for too long—I am the poster boy for this problem. Finally, in submitting work 'anonymously', the most common error graduate students make is failing to click 'properties' on their document and erasing their name: unless you do this, your name and university affiliation are stamped electronically on your submission conspiring to give your identity away.

An excellent idea is to get onto the programme of a graduate conference before a professional conference. First, the competition to graduate conferences will be less intense than if one had to compete with well known scholars. Secondly, graduate conferences tend to be a bit more receptive and open than more rigid professional conferences. Either way, if you can get onto a programme (whether graduate or professional), then you have achieved another milestone: you have your first entry under 'conference presentations' on your *vitae*, thus, further distinguishing yourself from the pack and improving your chances of securing an academic

[14] I simply note that some organizations requesting simply an abstract may ask prospective conference participants to leave their abstracts in the body of their emails, rather than send attachments. It is also wise to double-check the calls for paper particulars before contacting the conference organizers.

position in the future. Finally, many conferences may offer financial assistance reserved especially for graduate students. It is always well worth asking if such assistance if available from the conference organizers. You should also ask your supervisor if funding is available from your department as well.

Let me first offer a few words of advice about conference presentations before moving on to a discussion on using conference papers for publishing. Much of this advice may seem obvious, but it is well worth repeating. First, speak slowly and loudly enough to be heard by everyone. The temptation is always to rush a bit too much, to say a bit more, to offer another criticism, and so on. Avoid such temptation. Instead, narrowly focus on the task at hand. Opt to offer one or two solid arguments that really hit the mark instead of less accurate additional arguments: if you go for the latter, then you are likely to find all subsequent discussion (and reservations against the paper) centred on the arguments you do not need to make your case. Secondly, do not worry about questions from the audience. While some may have legitimate concerns about your project, audiences rarely subject speakers to 'hostile fire' out of courtesy, if nothing else. It is true that if you perform brilliantly that you may earn some approving slaps on your back. However, not unlike book reviews, your career will almost never be made or lost in giving a paper: you will not be blackballed by any top programme because not everyone was convinced by a paper at a conference. (Of course, one exception might be if you insult members of the audience!)

The relevance for publishing is primarily in gaining some feedback on your work. As many graduate students know too well, it is often difficult enough getting anyone besides your supervisor to comment on your work and offer helpful suggestions for improvement. One easy method to get comments on your work from a (usually) decent number of people is in giving a conference presentation. A particular thing to become sensitive to is what worries the audience

picks up on. These worries may be entirely mistaken, but it is important to see what they are. If and when the time comes to submit your paper to a journal, then the journal's referees may well pick up on these points, too. One purpose of presenting conference papers is to learn which problems you must work harder to pre-empt in revisions.

In some circumstances, a conference presentation is a one way ticket to publication, as some conferences publish 'conference proceedings'.[15] In other instances, someone in the audience may ask you to submit your conference paper to a particular journal for publication. Unfortunately, these latter instances are rare.

I must admit upfront that I am sceptical about conference proceedings and would normally suggest presenting the paper at the conference, but opting out of the proceedings when possible. Why opt out of gaining a publication? Well, when you publish the paper in conference proceedings, you will often become required to assign copyright to the publishers of the proceedings. The consequences of this are that you cannot publish the same paper elsewhere in another place, such as a journal. In most cases (with some effort and a bit of luck), you should be able to get the paper into a higher profile journal than the proceedings. An alternative approach might be to (a) present the full paper at the conference, (b) submit the full paper to a journal, but (c) offer a shortened version of this paper—with a new title—for the proceedings. If you do this, then you will avoid problems with copyright and gain two publications (if a journal accepts the full length piece).[16]

In any event, conference proceedings are the second least important category of

[15] This is increasingly common as more universities offer travel funding to academic staff and graduate students only if there are published proceedings of the conference.

[16] It is important that, if you were to do this, you give proper acknowledgment. Thus, the full length article might be submitted with the following note: 'This article is a revised and expanded version of my [conference proceedings paper]'.

publication, after book reviews. This is because it is only a bit more difficult to publish conference proceedings than book reviews. I am not then trying to suggest that conference proceedings are without merit, not least as some are quite reputable. Moreover, publishing in conference proceedings is akin to killing two birds with one stone: you gain an entry under 'conference proceedings' *and* the hallowed 'publications' sections on your *vitae*. Instead, my claim is only that with extra effort you can often do much better.

The final thing worth mentioning before moving on is what conferences allow you to do. First, they allow you to hone the development of your 'voice'. Conferences are, thus, a fantastic opportunity to present your work to a general audience and see how it is received. **The better you are able to communicate with this audience, the more successful your *publishing* career will be.** Secondly, conferences allow you the opportunity to network. Often graduate students picture 'networking' little more than 'chatting with new people' and this is not entirely untrue. A real value in attending conferences is becoming familiar with fellow members of the profession, from graduate students to senior figures. However, networking can be more than just this. Conferences provide a wonderful opportunity to receive some feedback on your research when you give your paper, but why end there? Often there are opportunities to discover and meet others engaged in similar areas of research outside your session: use this time to gain more feedback on your work. Always keep in mind that journals will send your work to reputable figures in the area of the submission. When networking at conferences, it is worth remaining aware that you may be speaking with past or future referees of your work. There are then any number of benefits in understanding how to respond to the worries of those who meet at conferences whether at your panel or afterwards.

III. *Publishing 301*: Articles, book chapters, and replies

We are now ready to delve into articles. The lessons we have learned in considering how to publish book reviews and conference papers will be put into action again at this stage. To begin, perhaps the most difficult question at first is knowing what exactly to write about. The best advice here is to really immerse yourself with the literature (especially journals) in your area: always be up to date on what the current issues are publishing. If, for example, you are working on theories of property or institutional design, then know which journals are publishing articles on these topics. For one thing, if you already have something in hand that is very similar to what a journal recently published, then they be unwilling to look at your article as it might cramp variety. Hopefully, if something is published in your area on something you have been working on, then a good idea is to consider putting together what is sometimes called a 'reply' or 'discussion piece' (they are essentially the same thing).[17]

Perhaps the easiest way to publish an (albeit brief) article is to write a reply. This is because when you write a full article it must make plain the importance of what the problem is: ***why* exactly should *we* worry about *this*?** When a journal has decided to publish an article on a topic, this first test has already been passed: the editor and referees are confident in the ability of the piece to make a contribution to the literature. Thus, when you write a reply, you need not establish the importance of the general problem beyond the fact the journal recently published a piece in this area, a piece that you wish to criticize.

A reply has as its central concern making clear the importance of a defect in an article, perhaps linking this defect to problems found elsewhere in the literature (although this should be hinted at and not brought out in any length). First, make a list of possible shortcomings and

[17] These short papers are occasionally paraded as 'research notes' as well.

then try to rank them from most to least important. One good general rule of thumb is that you should not worry about more than two or three defects—and, preferably, only one—no matter how many dozen you believe the author has made. Secondly, you may question the perfection of the article, but never question the decision to publish the article. Remember that if the article is not worthy of any serious attention, then surely your short reply will be just as worthless and you will appear the greater fool for wasting your time on a reply.

When writing about the defect, it is best to begin with a brief presentation of the author's view(s) that you will criticize and how this problem might infect his or her argument as a whole. They key here is in being both concise and to the point: **clarity is *everything***. In just a few quick steps, the reader must gain a clear picture of what is at issue in the original article under scrutiny. The more complicated the picture you present, the more difficult it will be for the reader to understand what is happening. **If the reader is unclear, then convincing the reader will be impossible and, if you fail to convince the reader, then your submission will be rejected**. After you present the author's views, you should then discuss the one or two points that you wish to raise. These points should be as direct as possible: delete any points that are not. Your conclusion should state clearly and accurately why what it is that you have offered is important for the journal's readers to consider.

Read and re-read your reply, double-checking grammar and spelling, page numbers cited, etc. In general, editors will not consider replies longer than 1,500-2,000 words so you should be sure to remain within their limits. Every journal will have its 'guidelines for authors': find out what these are and stick to them religiously, whatever your own preferences.[18] If you are able,

[18] As I have learned, the only opportunity you will have for absolute discretion in establishing author guidelines is when you launch a new journal. For a look at my own preferences, see any issue of the *Journal of Moral Philosophy*.

try to have colleagues or supervisors take a look at your reply prior to submission. Before I submit anything (including this essay!), I always read my work aloud—and always to my cats, Miles and Ella—to double-check myself before submission.

There are a few last mechanics to keep in mind. One minor point concerns stapling. My own recommendation is to avoid stapling paper submissions. This is because if an editor needs to produce additional copies of your submission for whatever reason, papers tend to jam in photocopiers after the staple is removed and pages separated. This is a minor point only because it is annoying for some and of no problem for others. Moreover, journal submissions are increasingly electronic-only and so any advice on whether or not staple is often moot.

I normally submit work printed on thick, colour-laser paper of 100 g/m² grain held together by a simple black binder clip. This takes us to a second, more important, point: **keep in mind that appearances count with paper submissions**. The actual papers you submit will be in the hands of someone who will look at these pages and decide whether or not your work merits publication. Submitting clean, professional-looking work will look and feel like something publishable. (One trick is to fully justify margins of your submission giving a closer appearance to published articles, which normally use fully justified margins as well.)

When sending off your submission, always include a cover letter that states that you are submitting the piece to the particular journal for consideration, what (in one or two sentences) you are up to in the submission, state that the submission is *not* under consideration elsewhere[19] (otherwise you could be wasting the time of editors and referees who may learn your identity when they notice the title in a rival journal—one bad idea), and list your contact details, including an email address.

[19] The one exception to this rule is most US-based law reviews. If submitting law articles, first check with the editors to ensure multiple submission is acceptable.

The key to publishing a reply is staying 'on message' (as it were) . . . and being quick to submit. A good motivational technique is to remind yourself: 'if *I* saw a defect so clearly and quickly, *then I may not be alone*'. If a journal has already accepted a reply to the article you have written about, then they may be unwilling to publish your reply, even if yours is a better reply. After all, publishers set page limit guidelines on editors: once the journal has committed to publishing something, there is immediately less space to use and devote to other materials.[20]

If you are able to submit your reply fairly quickly, then your odds of having it accepted are much better than if you had submitted an original article. The reason for this is the different review process. Articles are typically sent by the editor to anonymous referees who have about three to four months (on average) to write reports to the editor.[21] Replies are normally read by the editor with a referee: no formal reports are often submitted, only a thumbs up or down. The importance for striving for a concise, 'on message' reply is that if your reply has these qualities, then you have a great candidate for acceptance. More importantly, journals generally love to receive replies. They let them know people are reading the journal and taking its contents seriously. In addition, if you point out some obvious problems with an article, they may well

[20] I have regularly been asked about how word limits are set. The fact is that the real push for page limits comes from the publishers, not the editors. For example, I could hardly care less how long an excellent article making a real contribution to the literature is when submitted to the *Journal of Moral Philosophy*: my interest as editor is publishing the best work available. Editors have this interest in common. However, journal publishers are more interested in enforcing word limits because this will guarantee that any one issue will contain *x* number of articles: the more the articles, then the more likely potential interest in customers of the journal downloading and/or purchasing the contents of the journal than if it ran just one or two longer pieces.

[21] The review time can vary quite significantly between journals and it is always worthwhile to contact an editor prior to submission to ask about expected length of review. No editor will be able to guarantee a particular number of days (as a number of factors beyond the editor's control can contribute to longer assessment times), but at least you will have a ballpark figure to work with.

reconsider who referees for the journal—perhaps using *you* in the future—to ensure quality control. Finally, publishers increasingly enjoy running replies as they help bump up citations for their journals, as replies cite a published article and the article's author may well publish a rejoinder that cites the reply and original article increasing citations once more.

Upon submission of your reply, you will receive an acknowledgement that it has been received and is under consideration. This normally takes the form of an email, but may also take the form of a letter (or postcard, for many law reviews). On occasion, the journal will reject the submission upfront in their acknowledgement. However, if they do decide to consider the reply for publication, then expect to hear from them in about two months. In most cases, the editor will state up front how long the review process should take. If this time elapses without any contact with the journal, wait an extra week or two before emailing the editor to check the status of your submission—this is always a reasonable thing to do and you should never be shy to ask.

I have stated that your chances of publishing a reply are better than with publishing an article. Needless to say, this is not to say that replies are easily accepted: **the *vast* majority of articles and replies *will be rejected*. That is how the game works.** The big shortcoming of being in the reply business is that if your reply is rejected, then you may well be snookered: all reputable journals have policies against publishing replies to articles in rival journals. If you are 'lucky', then you might sneak your reply into somewhere else although it is bound to be a much lower profile journal.

Thus far, I have said little about publishing *articles*: you may well wonder what any of this discussion of replies has to do with articles. The answer is simple and straightforward: basically, the same thing as replies. Beyond greater prestige, the difference between replies and articles is that articles are much longer in length and must make a case for themselves. In other words, you will have to say a few words making plain why it is that what you are discussing

should be of interest to others in your area. Offer only clear, short reviews of previous work on your given topic and focus as much as possible on your central contentions *only*. ***Never*** allocate space in your article to side issues: journals possess precious little space and referees tend to be allergic to articles lacking a clear focus. Importantly, by keeping a strict focus, your article may be easier (or at least 'more manageable') to write. For one thing, it is completely unnecessary to include 'everything'. In fact, including citations or arguments that are not central to your discussion takes away from your argument overall and threatens your article's acceptability in a journal. Check the author guidelines prior to submission to ensure your submission falls with the journal's word limits, normally set a maximum of 10,000 words.

If you can, then make every attempt to first present your work at a conference or two in order to discern where others find sticking points of contention or possible confusion. (If you are economical, then perhaps one of your central resources for the conference paper you hope to submit for publication in a journal will begin as a book review.) Again, when these worries arise, all you need to do is consider the fact that the referees may well share these worries—the referees may even be in the room! Do all you can to pre-empt these worries.

When submitting your article to a journal, do everything you would if submitting a reply: make sure the paper's arguments are entirely 'on message', use full margin justification, print on good and clean paper,[22] do not acknowledge yourself in the article (thus, preparing the article for

[22] I emphasize this point again because it is worth remembering that any hard copies you submit will be in the hands of referees who will decide for or against publication of your submission. **As a rule of them, never give referees an easy time finding reasons to reject your work.** I regularly see journal submissions that coffee stains or bits of food attached to them. While the reasons are never 'see coffee stain on page six', these submissions are never accepted.

anonymous review), stick closely to the journal's guidelines for contributors,[23] and include a cover letter with full contact details (including your email address) explicitly stating your intent to submit the article to this journal, the article is to submitted to this journal alone and not others, offer a brief one or two sentence statement on what your article is about, and conclude with the following: 'My contact details are listed below. I look forward to hearing from you'. The key to good cover letters is keeping them short and sweet. Remember: whether or not your article will be accepted depends upon the quality of its argument and not the length of your email to the editor.

After submission, you can expect to wait about three to four months (on average) during which time the journal will have (hopefully) sent the paper to referees. Be prepared psychologically for a negative response: I have been told that for every article that gets published, about seven are rejected. **Most top journals will have acceptance rates of 15% and less. (The very top will have acceptance rates less than half this rate.)** Normally, two or as many as four referees will be contacted and asked to advise the journal on whether it should publish your submission. The referees will not know your identity nor will you be told their identities. Often the referees will furnish the editor with a brief report of one or two pages spelling out their reasons for their decision. The editor will then contact with you a decision to (a) 'accept' the submission, (b) you may be invited to 'revise and resubmit' the submission, or (c) the submission will be 'rejected'.

You must not be afraid to try. I know too many exceptional graduate students over the years who claim something like the following as a reasons *against* submitting papers to journals

[23] I simply note that some journals will not review submissions that do not comply with author guidelines, although most journals are happy to review papers following whatever referencing, etc. as long as the article conforms with the house style if accepted prior to publication.

and conferences: 'Well, I want to make sure that I get it *right*'. I have always thought this primarily a sign of insecurity. In this day and age, we must publish or perish: failure to publish may make you a liability for your department or threaten your ability to keep a tenure-track post. The greatest figures in every field made mistakes. There is simply no reason to think that no matter how hard you try, one day something we write will be found less than completely perfect. A leap must be made and a risk taken. If you try and fail, then you will most likely receive the referees' reports that will signal any potential problems in your paper. This will offer a great opportunity to improve your work and get it accepted elsewhere, if rejected at the journal of your first choice.[24] **If you never try, then you will never publish.** In all honesty, there is little to lose in trying and everything to gain.

Best of all, once you are published it is an accomplishment that no one can take away. No matter how stinging the potential replies are to your own work (and remember that any resulting citations to your work may only add to your piece's prestige!), your having won acceptance into a journal—most especially if achieved early in your career—will help tremendously on the job market. Moreover, once you have published something you are always free to change your mind: if Plato can change his mind, then so can the rest of us.

Before moving onto book contracts, let me offer a final few words on what to do if, in all likelihood, your article does not get accepted into the first journal you submit your article to. In general, it is good advice to never submit to the same journal more than once per year, and fewer times than that if they have recently published an article you have written. Hopefully, you will have received some form of comments for their decision to reject. Either way, make sure that

[24] Do not submit papers on the view that you are near 100% certain the journal will reject it, for the purpose of securing helpful referee reports. More often than not, the paper will be rejected immediately and without reports. In all cases, it wastes everyone's time.

their rejecting your article was not too easy: never allow a journal to reject your submission because you did not reference in their style or some other formatting consideration. Double-check recent issues of the journal to ensure that your topic is something the journal would be open to publishing. Moreover, as an extra touch, it is a good idea to work in (if, and only if, possible) a past article published in the journal into your own submission: engage with the literature, not least with that journal's contributions to this literature (as and when appropriate).

In any event, take seriously the referees' comments. They are not always helpful, but when they are then they can be invaluable. Make the suggestions that they call for: these will improve your chances of publishing the article elsewhere. The next step? Easy: submit and submit again! Remember that most articles will be rejected and very few accepted. In some cases, you may receive the verdict 'revise and resubmit' (or 'r n' r' in publishing parlance). Here the journal furnishes you with referee reports that highlight changes you must make in a revised version of your paper, which the journal invites for resubmission. In these cases, your chance of having the revised paper is very high . . . but only if you follow the editor's good advice! Be clear from the beginning on what is expected from you and focus on satisfying these demands, without changing the paper in other ways. Typically, revised papers are then read by the editor, sometimes with the original referees. If you satisfy what is required, then your paper will be accepted. If you do not, then you may be asked to give it one more chance or be rejected.

Finally, allow me to let you in on what is perhaps the greatest kept secret in philosophy, which is my research subject. Looking for information on journals? The Philosophy Documentation Center publishes two books all philosophers should know about: the *Directory of American Philosophers* and *International Directory of Philosophy and Philosophers*.[25] These

[25] For more information, visit the PDC website here: http://www.pdcnet.org/.

books are updated in new additions regularly. (Yes, the *Directory of American Philosophers* contains Canadian philosophers at the back.) Amongst other things, these directories provide outstanding information on journals, listing every journal in the world—the American Directory has information on all US and Canadian journals; the International Directory has information on all non-US and Canadian journals—giving address, contact details for editors, a short blurb, how many articles in philosophy published each year, acceptance rates, wait times, etc.

I do not know of publications off hand like the PDC's directories, but I would advise graduate students outside philosophy to check with their supervisors and professional associations representing their research area to ask about whether any similar publications exist. Many graduate students mistake those journals in their university libraries as most or all that is available or even worth publishing with: this is often not the case. The beauty of effective guides, such as the PDC's, is that it sheds light on the full range of journals in the market. However, it is worth keeping in mind that before submitting any work it is always wise to double-check with your supervisor that publishing in certain outlets is advisable. My own view is that publishing in *x* journal never hurts a candidate, but publishing in some journals can do far more good for your career than publishing with other journals. Which journals are 'best' is a topic I will not address beyond recommending, again, that graduate students take some advice prior to submitting work.

IV. *Publishing 401*: Securing book contracts

There is now just one area of publishing left to cover: books. Let me begin by saying just a few words about book chapters before offering some advice on acquiring book contracts, whether for edited books or monographs.

Graduate students often ask me how they can get the opportunity to write a chapter for

a book. My advice is simple: *get asked*. One of the tricks with edited collections is that normally the editor has wide discretion in selecting authors of chapters for a collection. Whether or not one writes for an edited book is often a product of either being asked or asking yourself (if you are editing the book). Thus, publishing book chapters may often be a product of luck for early career scholars.

If you are invited to write a book chapter, then I would follow all of the advice stated above for articles. One difference with book chapters (as opposed to articles) is that acceptance is largely agreed up front and without anonymous review, even if the publisher might check with its referees prior to publication to ensure the quality of the book's contents are satisfactory. (It is worth noting that practices vary widely between publishers and some do referee all contents.) Either way, the process of proofs, copyright assignment, etc. are virtually the same as with articles. A further difference is that instead of a PDF file copy of your chapter (which some publishers happily provide book chapter authors), you should expect to only receive one copy of the book upon publication. Book editors often receive royalties, but not book chapter authors in most cases.

Now let us turn our attention to edited books. In order to publish an edited book, you will need to produce a book proposal. My proposals follow a particular format. One format I use is something like this:

EDITED BOOK PROPOSAL [stated at top]

Title: [*Title in italics*]

Editor: [**Name in bold**]
[Title of position]

[Address]
[Phone, fax, and email]

Completion: [completion date]

Summary: [Keep this to about 250 words and write what you might imagine could be listed on the proposed book's back jacket and webpage.]

Explanation of contents: [Begin with a brief statement about the structure of the proposed book's contents. Next give a table of contents, followed by an explanation of the content of the proposed chapters.]

About the editor: [This is where you sell yourself: write a blurb about yourself that you could imagine printed on the back jacket of the proposed book.]

Market: [The most important section, in my view. See my comments below.]

Readership: [Here you might say something like this: 'Philosophy / Politics / Law libraries + academics + grad students + advanced undergraduates']

The market section is where the proposal stands or falls in many instances. It is here where you must make a case for the book's existence in light of what is currently available. The fact that you might want to publish on a popular topic is not necessarily a problem. What matters is that you can show how the proposed book will contribute to existing debates briefly and to the point. It must be written in a way that will convince editors that the project is worth pursuing first, before the proposal might be sent to colleagues for peer assessment. For this reason, it is important to be thorough in your discussion, but also brief. Discuss the existing literature by grouping books when possible into camps and show how—in a few sentences—your project is different and an improvement on these past efforts. Nevertheless, the (perceived) existence of a market counts for about everything. Book publishers are generally not in the business of publishing for its own sake, but to at least break even if not earn a profit. I know of many cases where editors were supportive of particular projects which were later rejected on market considerations. It is important to keep all of this in mind.

The next step is to contact an appropriate publisher. Be sure to research publishers

properly, as you would journals ahead of an article submission.[26] Some publishers only cover particular areas and not others: contacting them will be a waste of time.[27] Moreover, it is often permitted to submit your proposal to more than one publisher at a time. You will generally learn pretty quickly how interested a publisher will be in your proposal and up front. Often the wait between submission to receiving a contract can be about three months. During this time, the publisher will need to have your proposal accepted at a special meeting and you may be required to submit a revised proposal (depending upon the comments of reviewers) ahead of this meeting.[28]

A good practice is to leave between one or two years for submission of an edited book. For one thing, you want to ensure that you have enough time to secure authors and you want to ensure that your authors have enough time to write high quality chapters: it makes no sense rushing them for the sake of getting a book out earlier rather than later. The publisher will often

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[26] In philosophy, the PDC publications noted above list (with descriptions and full contact details) all known philosophy publishers in the world. It may be worthwhile to contact leading professional associations in your area to check for similar guides to publishers.

[27] In addition, some publishers do not consider unsolicited proposals. It is always wise to check with publishers first prior to submitting a proposal.

[28] Let me say a few words of caution about so-called 'vanity presses', although I will not identify them here by name. Vanity presses is publishing parlance for publishers who publish book proposals without much in the way of quality assurance. Telltale warning signs are publishers that do not provide copy-editing of books or offer little, if any, royalties. First, copy-editing is *essential*. We all overlook grammatical mistakes in our writing: having a second pair of eyes can make a real difference. Copy-editors often have the additional advantage of not specializing in your area. This makes them particularly astute at picking up on awkward phrasing, incomplete references, and arguments in need of a bit more fleshing out. Secondly, no one publishes for the money, but books do earn at least a bit of money. Why should you earn nothing from several years of in depth research, handing it all away? Refuse to publish with any outfit that either (a) offers no royalties and/or (b) asks you to first buy *x* number of copies of your book upfront prior to agreeing a deal. Publishing with these outfits will see your book in the public domain, but the effort will often not help improve career advancement as these publishers are not considered to be amongst the most reputable even if they have published reputable books in their catalogue.

see you as the only point of contact, leaving you as the liaison with all editors. Moreover, checking the proofs of the collection will fall to the editor as well. The positive side of this is that instead of just one copy you should receive several and there is often a percentage of royalties paid to the editor. The negative side is that editing a book involves a lot of administrative management.

A few final words on edited books. Often they are the collections of papers presented at conferences, but not exclusively so. (One option if you have papers from conference panels is to contact a journal editor to see if his or her journal might run a special issue with these papers.) Therefore, you should not be discouraged from pursuing the editing of a collection because there is no related conference. A secret of the trade is that publishers prefer at least some, if not half, the contributors to be based in North America if only because publishers believe the book might sell better given that North American libraries tend to be wealthier than those found elsewhere.

Now we might wonder what the difference is between pursuing an edited book contract and monograph (or 'authored book') contract. The answer is surprisingly little. For example, I recommend submitting a proposal very similar to what I have described above. The main difference will lie in what you send *in addition* to the proposal. With edited books, publishers do not always ask for sample chapters. With monographs, you must have at least a few chapters in hand (even if in draft form) if not the full monograph.

Requirements will differ widely from publisher to publisher. As a rule, most UK-based publishers do not require authors to have a complete draft in hand upfront and most US-based published *do* require authors to have a complete draft in hand prior to submission. This is only in general and with plenty of exceptions. One piece of advice that holds constant no matter where you publish is as follows. Many graduate students plan on publishing their Ph.D. as a book. My advice is never to claim you are publishing the thesis as a book. Instead, always ensure that you

use this language: '**This book will be a revised and expanded version of my Ph.D**'.[29] Publishers tell me that dissertations do not make hot sellers, for one thing. For another, publishers will want the book to probably cover a bit more ground and perhaps be more up to date, if you submitted your Ph.D. a few years prior to pursuing a book contract.

You should expect that, if a publisher is interested in your proposal, you will receive reports that will often suggest some changes. For this reason, do not treat your initial book proposal as your final proposal. Plus, ensure that any reasonable changes called for by reviewers are made in the final product, not least as you risk delaying publication (and needlessly upsetting reviewers) if you fail to do this.

Finally, one strategy many graduate students have shared with me is their idea that they will publish a variety of papers and then put them together in a collection. We all know of tremendous collections of well-known papers by reputable scholars that have made a major impact on our profession. My advice is that this is a bad strategy for junior academics. First, publishers will want some assurance that running the collection will sell copies and this assurance may come from the reputation of a particular scholar, a reputation that may take some time to build. Secondly, and more importantly, the reason why junior academics may wish to publish their articles in a collection is to give their ideas a wider readership. However, academic books do not sell like Harry Potter books: a rough estimate is that academic books (on average) sell between 400-500 copies each. Top academic journals (on average) have a readership of several thousand. If you want your ideas to receive a wider readership, then perhaps your best bet may be to publish in top journals. Publishing books make great sense . . . if a book is the right format for the expression of your ideas. This is not to say that books *lack* a wide readership: we

[29] Students may freely use this precise language in their proposals.

almost never hear of roundtables on individual articles, but normally on monographs. Yet, it is to say that prospective book authors should have an awareness about circulation and subscription numbers that might differ significantly from what they might guess.

Conclusion

This concludes my publishing advice for graduate students. I do hope that this essay has helped clear away any mystery to how publishing works and to start publishing. Most presentations or articles on this topic that I have attended over the years harp endlessly on the many obstacles to publishing and how difficult it is, without any advice on how to overcome these obstacles. I hope that I have provided some genuine, concrete advice on what you—a graduate student—can do about publishing . . . *today*! For example, as soon as you are finished reading this essay, search out someone to contact on writing a book review. Afterwards, search online for calls for conference papers in your area and begin preparing a submission. In so doing, stick to the lessons of articles and replies: keep the arguments focussed, stay 'on message', and avoid making more points than is necessary. Take into consideration any sticking points that your supervisors or conference audiences suggest to you, revise your paper, and then submit it to a journal. As this review process can take several months, always try to have something under review at any given time as you become more comfortable writing for a general audience in your area, having found your 'voice'.

If I am making all of this sound quite simple, then I am only doing so because it is. All you need to do now is start on the road to publishing . . . today![30]

[30] The lessons learned in this essay are pieced and brought together from countless good advice I have received over the years from any number of people over the years and far too many to list here. Particular thanks must be offered to my fellow editors Bob Stern and, most especially, Dermot Moran who taught me so much. I am grateful to students at

Biography

Thom Brooks is Reader in Political and Legal Philosophy at the University of Newcastle. He is founding editor of the *Journal of Moral Philosophy*. He works in the areas of British and German Idealism, philosophy of law, and political philosophy, with particular interests in the areas of global justice and punishment. He is a board member of the Association for Political Thought, the Hegel Society for Great Britain, the Political Studies Association, and the American Philosophical Association's Committee on Philosophy and Law. His first publication was a book review in 1998 and he has written reviews regularly every since.

Newcastle, Sheffield, and graduate conferences where I have given my now annual 'speech' on publishing advice. I must also thank Brian Leiter for his longstanding encouragement in general and the countless helpful discussions on my publishing views appearing on his Leiter Reports.