

A Journey in Military Academia: Breaking Down Barriers to Writing

The Harding Project



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In 2011, I joined the Army at 24 years old, embarking on a journey that intertwined my military career with a rigorous academic path.

My educational pursuits have been both rewarding and challenging, from an associate degree in database administration to a doctorate in management specializing in information technology management. However, despite these accomplishments, I often grappled with a crucial question: Where do I go from here?

My Journey and the Need for a Writing Platform

Throughout my career, I have served in various capacities, including as an automated logistical specialist (92A), a chemical officer (74A), and a signal officer (25A). In 2022, I joined the Army Software Factory as a platform engineer, acquiring an additional skill identifier (ASI). During my academic journey, I wrote numerous papers on topics such as ethics in the military, military ethos, training management, and implementing modern software development processes to enhance Army software and improve the end-user experience.

Despite producing what I believed to be publishable work, I struggled to find a suitable platform to share my insights. Concerns about potentially sensitive content and the need for operations security, public affairs, and command clearances further complicate the publishing process. I resorted to publishing in magazines such as AFCEA Signal Magazine and Army AL&T to keep exercising the writing muscle and help build my portfolio as a publisher and academic while still active duty.

Most academic journals demand novel contributions to the field through vigorous research, and while platforms like Medium and LinkedIn exist, they often require an established following to gain readership.

Posting on a personal website would also pose challenges in engaging an audience, particularly given the difficulty of attracting the attention of busy “Scrolling Soldiers.” Let’s be honest. Soldiers are not going to log into a NIPR laptop to read an article; we need to focus on delivering the content in a format that is equitable to all.

The Challenge of Publishing in the Military

There are numerous barriers to publishing within

the military. The requirement for new academic contributions, the need for an established audience, and the procedural hurdles for sensitive content create significant challenges. As a result, many service members with valuable insights and experiences hesitate to share their work, fearing the complexities and potential repercussions.

I wrote extensively on military-related topics during my academic journey, yet I often felt my work needed an appropriate outlet. Whether it was exploring military ethics, discussing the importance of training management, or proposing modern software development processes to improve Army operations, I encountered the same obstacles. The lack of a dedicated platform for military writing meant that my work and many others remained largely unseen and underappreciated.

The Importance of Military Writing and Review

The Harding Project offers a promising solution to these challenges. Providing a dedicated platform for military writing aims to foster a culture of professional discourse within the military community. This initiative is not just about publishing; it is about creating a supportive environment where service members can share their experiences, insights, and analyses without the fear of procedural hurdles or the need for an established following.

Professional military writing is crucial for several reasons. It encourages critical thinking and communication skills essential for leadership and decision-making. Writing allows service members to preserve their experiences and lessons, providing valuable resources for future generations. It also helps bridge the gap between the military and civilian world, enhancing public understanding of military operations and challenges.

The Review Process

There are different types of peer review processes employed in academic publishing to ensure the quality and credibility of research articles. Here I will discuss them and how they can be leveraged to improve military writing. I suggest you keep rank in mind since I will discuss it afterward.

Single-Blind Peer Review: Reviewers know the identity of the authors, but the authors do not know who the reviewers are. This method allows reviewers to provide honest and unbiased feedback while avoiding potential conflicts of interest, although it might introduce bias based on authors' identities.

Double-Blind Peer Review: Both the reviewers and the authors remain anonymous to each other, reducing bias based on authors' identities and promoting a more impartial review process. However, maintaining anonymity can be challenging in specialized fields.

Open Peer Review: Both the reviewers and the authors know each other's identities, promoting transparency and accountability. This can encourage constructive feedback, though reviewers might be less critical to avoid conflicts.

Post-Publication Peer Review: The article is published online and then reviewed by the community of researchers and readers. This allows for a wider range of feedback and continuous improvement, but quality control can be inconsistent.

Collaborative Peer Review: Reviewers collaborate with the authors to improve the manuscript through an interactive process, enhancing the quality of the manuscript but potentially being time-consuming.

Editorial Review: The manuscript is reviewed by the journal's editorial board or in-house editors, thus providing a faster review process but potentially lacking specialized expertise.

Learning from “The Rank Problem” Article

Some of my biggest inspirations came from lower-ranking individuals whose work I cited in my dissertation. Expertise does not always come with time and rank, a sentiment echoed in an article I read on the Harding Project’s Substack about the “rank problem,” written by Lt. Col. Erik Davis. We should all listen to each other and default to kindness, open dialogue, and constructive feedback.

Open Peer Review and Mentorship

One particularly beneficial model is open peer

review, where both authors and reviewers know each other's identities. This approach promotes transparency and accountability and offers additional opportunities for professional mentorship. Younger authors can expand on their ideas and gain valuable context through collaboration with more experienced peers. Open peer review can foster cross-branch collaboration, enriching the quality and diversity of military writing.

We can use modern technology and online collaboration tools such as Zoom, Teams, Office 365, Google Docs, and Miro to facilitate this process. These tools enable authors and reviewers to work together in real time, discussing and refining their work. Of course, using the right tool for the correct impact level is essential, ensuring that security and confidentiality are maintained.

By embracing these technologies, we can enhance the writing process and create a more dynamic and interactive environment for military writers.

So What?

The Harding Project represents a significant step towards renewing professional military writing.

By offering a dedicated platform and supportive community, it addresses the challenges faced by military writers and encourages a culture of professional discourse.

As someone who has experienced the struggles of publishing within the military, I am excited about the potential of the Harding Project to transform military writing and discourse. Through this initiative, we can ensure that the art of military writing continues to thrive, benefiting both the military community and the broader public.



About the Author

Capt. Noe Lorona is a signal officer currently serving as a platform engineer for the Army Software Factory where he plans, develops and deploys cloud architecture to support Agile application development. Lorona holds a Doctor of Management from Colorado Technical University and a Master of Science in management and a Bachelor of Science in information technology, both from National American University. His professional certifications include Certified Associate in Project Management from the Project Management Institute and six Computing Technology Industry Association certifications.