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SURVIVING PUBLISH OR PERISH: THE JUNIOR FACULTY APPROACH TO SCHOLARLY WRITING AND PUBLISHING

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***Abstract:** One of the biggest challenges facing junior faculty members at colleges and universities throughout the country is the pressure to combine teaching with service, and advising and academic research and publication. Beginning writers/researchers are faced with a delicate balancing act which contains the requirement that they not only teach and serve the community, but also that they have x amount of research completed and published each year to maintain employment and/or seek promotion and tenure at their institution. The authors of this article share the strategies they found useful to help them in their efforts to achieve this goal.*

Introduction

Preparing for life in academia may turn out to be far different than one would expect. The dissertation writing and research process can be a frustrating experience for those looking forward to working at the college or university level. It often comes as a surprise, or really rather a shock, to some, that scholarly writing can be frustrating. Even more frustrating is the process of academic writing and the steps one must take to be rewarded with having your work published in an academic journal. In higher education, it is no longer the primary task of many universities to educate. There can be no such assumptions within the system (MacLeod, Steckley & Murray, 2012). According to MacLeod et al. (2012), Clegg (2008) and Barnett (1999) have explored the fragmentation of teaching and research activity, and the impact this has on academic performance. The confidence gained after the dissertation defense quickly fades when the writer/researcher must face the reality of the old adage “publish or perish”. The dissertation committee, which provided the support and mentoring that guided the candidate through the dissertation process, has now moved on to support other scholars. The role of a new faculty member includes new and sometimes unfamiliar and unexplained responsibilities. Is the writer/researcher carrying a teaching load? If so, how many credits/courses are required per semester? Is the writer/researcher also advising graduate and/or undergraduate students? What types of service is required and is the new member of the faculty able to meet the requirements? What are the timeline and requirements for publication that the writer/researcher must remain cognizant of as he continues with research, service, teaching and advising? “Inability to make adequate time and space for writing can elicit feelings of guilt and dread towards uncompleted writing projects” (MacLeod et al. 2012, p. 644).

Mentoring is also a vital component for the success of new faculty, however, as many faculty members also must deal with high workloads, college/university responsibilities, and their own publishing responsibilities. Are mentors willing to take on the additional responsibility of mentoring junior faculty effectively? Additionally, one must also question the training mentors receive in preparation for that role. Are they ready to assume this great responsibility? Outside of the workplace, the writer/researcher also has the responsibilities of family life and a social existence. Work after all should support and be part of life, not take it over! In order to live in a healthy manner and to give each responsibility its due attention, there must be some balance. The time constraints, workload and service to the college/university can cause anxiety for the researcher/scholar. These anxieties are often compounded by the nagging fear of scholarly, public writing, being rejected for publication, as well as reviewers’ negative comments toward the research or writing. Additionally, the write’s/researcher’s work, once submitted to a scholarly journal, may be held captive for months while it is being reviewed for possible acceptance for publication. What steps can the writer/researcher take to help alleviate some of this stress?

How do writers/researchers successfully approach the task of scholarly writing? Writing can be an arduous task for many. Words do not always flow easily from brain to fingers to computer or pen. Writer's block is something that is not exclusive to those who are writing the Great American Novel; those in academia who often live by the motto of publish or perish also share it. Moore (2003) and Murray (2006), state that the "Pressure to write is undoubtedly intensified by the widespread assumption that academics are naturally able and willing to write" (as cited in Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008, p. 158). Additionally, according to Antoniou and Moriarty (2008), "many academics struggle with their writing. They often cannot find time and space to write, experience fear and anxiety about writing, feel they lack knowledge and expertise, and worry that they are 'not good enough' (p. 158). As a result, the academic writer becomes resentful of having to separate their professional task of writing, from "the whole of the writer's self" (p. 158) which leads to writer resentment. Bradley (2011) further supports this belief, stating, "the fear of academic writing suffered by many in the field is due to the overwhelming demands put upon academics" (p. 319). Due to the lack of training, support and guidance in the early stages of an academic career, many PhDs and Ed.Ds suffer from fear of the great unknown, or how to write for publication. Cameron, Naron, and Higgins (2009) believe that the impetus for these feelings of self-doubt may begin as early as graduate school, and is the direct result of graduate students reading completed academic work rather than the initial drafting, feedback, revisions, and editing that take place before the completed written work is deemed worthy of publication. This ideology is further supported by Murray and Cunningham (2012) who indicate that changing roles and identity, from student to professor can be very painful if it is not managed well or not supported by an experienced mentor to help guide the novice professor through the sometimes difficult seas of successful scholarly writing and publishing. Writing requires the writer/researcher to make a change, no matter the consequences. After all, "to write (for publication) is to make oneself visible, to expose one's ideas and identity to public scrutiny" (Antoniou and Moriarty, p. 164). Having one's work evaluated and commented on by nameless/faceless reviewers puts the writer/researcher in a very vulnerable position. Anonymity allows the potential for harshly phrased criticism that can be damaging to the confidence of the novice academic writer. Reading the sometimes cruelly worded comments written by reviewers often does little to build the writer/researcher's confidence. Scholarly writing becomes a people-pleasing task, and only adds to the pressure of achieving publication(s) to retain employment.

Cameron et al. (2009) suggest two strategies to help scholarly writers deal with their fears and emotions. The first suggestion is to help the writer/researcher who is new to scholarly writing, and understand that they are not the first to experience apprehension about their writing ability. The second is to provide opportunities for the writer/researcher to "practice in confronting their worst fears about writing" (Cameron et al., p. 276). A study conducted by Hemmings, Rushbrook and Smith (2007) suggests that writers/researchers would benefit from reallocated workloads to support time for writing, as well as the allocation of resources that provide for writing support and development in order to boost confidence, such as writing retreats and workshops. According to research conducted by Aitchison (2009), joining a writing group and spending time analyzing other writers' work is beneficial to all participants. In fact, the act of analyzing another writer's work is a very valuable strategy in the development on one's own writing skills. A tactic suggested by Jalongo, Boyer and Ebbeck (2014) was to provide doctoral students the opportunity to work toward publication prior to their graduation. Suggestions to prepare for this endeavor include offering course work that focused on the publishing process. Sword (2009) adds to the complexity of writing by stating that in order to be successfully published the writer/researcher should also convey some or possibly all of the following: in their work: "creativity, imagination, originality; passion, commitment, personal engagement; a sense of humour" (p. 333).

Our approach to scholarly writing. As junior faculty members new to the world of scholarly publishing, the research reviewed rang true to our current work experience. The pressures of writing and publishing in peer reviewed scholarly journals while balancing the responsibilities of teaching, advising and service is overwhelming. Even more frustrating was the lack of mentoring available.

When the opportunity to participate in a writer's workshop presented itself, we were eager participants. The writers' workshop invitation was university wide and sponsored by the dean and the chairperson of the History Department on campus. The writers' workshop, a Saturday offering, runs from approximately 9:00am-3:00 pm. Usual attendance ranges from 10-15 participants and most of the attendees are the same people. A light breakfast of juices, water and pastries was provided, with lunch ordered from the sandwich shop on campus. Each participant has the opportunity to order any sandwich they like. Beverages such as soda and water are offered as well. All of this is provided at no charge to the participants. After a writers' workshop session is offered, the chairperson sent out a survey via email to get feedback from the participants. The writers' workshop we participated in has both a quiet room for those writing on their own, and a workroom for those who are working collaboratively with one or several

other writer/researchers. The opportunity to work in an environment that was collegial and supportive was a very positive experience. We found that we were able to focus on our work, but still receive support and have questions answered by those who are more versed in the process, and have a proven track record, of having their scholarly work successfully reviewed and published.

The second major component of stress was planning to write. The materials were before us, our research was complete, but putting our findings into a logically flowing format seemed overwhelming. As a result, we drew from our prior middle school teaching background and implemented a Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) Content Enhancement Device known as the FRAME. The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KU-CRL) developed the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM). SIM is a research-based and validated instructional method designed to improve the academic success of both at-risk and struggling learners (Matyo-Cepero, 2015). SIM is divided into two components, learning strategies and content enhancement routines. For our purposes, we found that the content enhancement routine called The Framing Routine would suit our needs perfectly. The FRAME device is intended for students with diverse learning needs to use in their content area classrooms or with literacy development work in the areas of reading and writing (Ellis, 1998). The device has four important areas, a key topic, main idea, essential details and the big idea. While this device was not developed with scholarly writing in mind, we found that using the FRAME allowed us to logically organize what we wanted to say and successfully complete the steps of the writing process. Oddly enough, we learned that the developer of the FRAME does not use a device when writing his own scholarly work. We would be remiss if we failed to mention that we also used the FRAME to write this article.

Figure 1 contains the information we used to write this article. Using The SIM Framing Routine device, we chose our key topic, which for this article was how to survive publish or perish. The next step was to describe what publish or perish would be about. For this article, it is about how junior faculty tackle the requirements of scholarly writing and publishing. The FRAME device we used for planning this article consists of eight topic boxes because we needed some extra space to include more information in certain areas. For example, the main idea titled Approach has three dedicated main idea boxes so we could continue on that topic in a more logical manner. When we started planning, we followed a traditional scholarly journal format that included the abstract, the introduction, the body of the work, which in this case was the approach, our approach, and the keywords found in this article. The final section is the “so what” statement box. In that box, we reiterated the main idea of this article. The circles next to each of the items listed under the main idea boxes may be used to number each of the items listed in the order of importance. This allows the writer/researcher to write down ideas and then reflect on the order in which they will appear in the article.

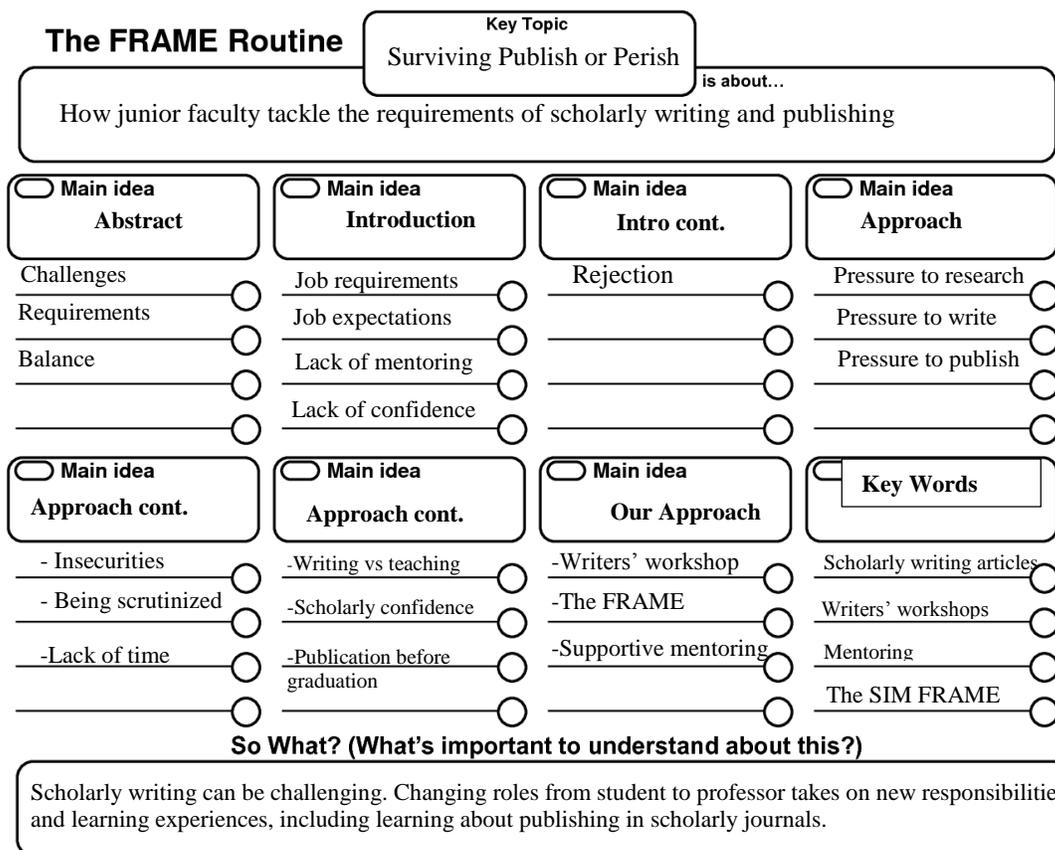


Figure 1. The FRAME device shows how a Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) Content Enhancement approach can be implemented to help writers/researchers plan their scholarly writing.

The third area of difficulty was locating a journal that might accept our work. Finding the right mentor to offer guidance in this process was what was required to complete the task. A senior faculty member, who happened to be a school librarian before perusing her doctoral degree, agreed to meet with us to guide us in the process of selecting an appropriate publication for our work. Our first mentoring session took place in the library where we were introduced to Ulrich’s Global Serials Directory and Cabell’s Directories of Publishing Opportunities. This was a life changing experience! Our mentor guided us through both sites and explained the various facets of information that both provided. We asked many questions, and she patiently answered all of them. We were given the opportunity to avoid the “ad hoc” approach through this informal mentoring session (Jalongo et al., 2014). We also received some excellent advice and strategies to implement in our pursuit of our first published work from someone who had experienced what we were experiencing and was willing to help us avoid any mistakes that would waste our time and cause undue frustration. Because of our very first mentoring session, we submitted a query to the editor of the journal we selected and kept our fingers crossed. The result was our first accepted article and confidence in our ability to have our work published by academic journals in the future.

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