



<< [Back to Document View](#)

[Databases selected:](#) Multiple databases...



## MENTORING: Publish, Perish, and Points in Between; A Primer for the Uninitiated

Hanson, Pat. **The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education**. Paramus: Apr 7, 2000. Vol. 10, Iss. 14; pg. 21

Subjects: Colleges & universities, Education, Educators, Higher education, Teaching  
 Locations: United States  
 People: Cassuto, Leonard, Jenkins, Andrew  
 Author(s): Hanson, Pat  
 Document types: Feature  
 Publication title: The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education. Paramus: Apr 7, 2000. Vol. 10, Iss. 14; pg. 21  
 Source type: Periodical  
 ISSN/ISBN: 10542337  
 ProQuest document ID: 494398331  
 Text Word Count 2608  
 Document URL: <http://proquest.umi.com.ezp1.harvard.edu/pqdlink?did=494398331&sid=6&Fmt=3&clientId=11201&RQT=309&VName=PQD>

### Abstract (Document Summary)

Publications that count in academia are most often interpreted with a capital 'P.' Generally your name (often as first author) must appear on articles in leading "refereed" journals that indicate you are making a "name for yourself" (and for the university for which you work). Carry that a step further, and it might mean "quantitative research in refereed journals," rather than the sometimes more difficult and time-consuming writing of qualitative research, or content analysis studies, or essays that are the mainstay of different professions. Some prestigious journals will not publish studies unless their results have proven statistical significance, disallowing the public access to serendipitous findings and new important questions that a particular study might have prompted.

"It is ironic," says Andrew Jenkins, Health Education Programs at Central Washington University, "that in a field like health education, where the popular press promotes considerable misinformation, that when a reputable health educator gets printed in mass market media, they don't get the same credit as if they had just preached to the choir."

Tenured faculty with a publishing history and reputation often publish with less well-known faculty or graduate students as second authors. While some committees look askance at this practice, partnerships of this kind can move your writing career along steadily. Many don't recognize that the first author on articles written by team can be rotated. A look in medical journals can be very revealing. Many articles dealing with similar topics are published by the same "team" with the "lead" author rotated.

### Full Text (2608 words)

*Copyright The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Apr 7, 2000*

MENTORING: Publish, Perish, and Points in Between; A Primer for the Uninitiated

Students and professors alike know the drill: teaching, research, and service. Today, research translates as publication at private universities, state colleges, and even some community colleges. While neither the American Association for University Professors, nor faculty associations, nor unions have specific policies regarding the number and type of articles in print necessary to survive, "publish or perish" is a reality that every professional in academia must face.

### Issues

The dubious relationship between writing and teaching, in traditional academic thinking, holds that professors who do cutting-edge research, which by being selected for publication has been judged as "good," advance an academic discipline

and therefore make better teachers.

Whether you've observed the teaching of "researcher types" firsthand or attempted to glean the essence of pedantic scientific literature, the relationship between publication quantity to teaching quality remains elusive at best.

In fact, publish or perish can apply even to the larger picture of institutions competing with one another for status, students, and, therefore, money. Barron's Profiles of American Colleges and U.S. News and World Report's College Admissions Selector both have rating scales that rank institutions against one another by using a ratio of publications per faculty members. A private company, ISI, maintains a comprehensive multidisciplinary bibliographic database on journals worldwide. It indexes more than 16,000 periodicals and covers both basic and applied research.

One 1995 study examined 1,318 schools around criteria related to the selectivity of its incoming student body and the scholarly productivity of its faculty, and found a strong correlation. Conspicuously missing from most discussions of this issue, however, have been data needed to ground any alternative views of quality. A new study, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), is being piloted, with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, to illuminate this dynamic (Baughman & Goldman, '99).

#### Higher Standards for Faculty Today

Up-and-coming faculty in today's competitive market must meet criteria far more rigorous than those of a decade ago. It is very likely that new professors will find themselves evaluated by senior faculty members whose own publication records could not keep them employed at the institution.

Leonard Cassuto, professor of English at Fordham University, in a recent Chronicle of Higher Education article, bemoaned what he calls "the murderous job market of the 1990s that prompts a common refrain among members of hiring committees: 'How could I ever have survived in this market?'" He finds that in order to be considered by some universities, there is pressure on doctoral students to publish their research even before they graduate. This contributes to the graying of graduate student bodies and the keeping of potentially good teachers in underpaid postdoctoral teaching assistantships while they work at publication (Cassuto, '98).

Indeed, scholarly studies on just this issue have proved, with some major individual exceptions, that over the years, the more tenured a professor gets, and the higher up the academic ladder many professors ascend, the fewer publications they produce. Much research has been conducted by discipline concerning the relationship between publication quantity, quality of teaching, and job security (Green, '98; Bloom & Klein, '95; Zivney & Bertin, '95; Bradigan & Mularski, '96).

#### New Methods of Disseminating Scholarly Information

The electronic information age is beginning to affect the way academics publish in some fields. Many schools are now struggling to develop criteria for rating faculty members' dissemination of scholarly information through newer, nontraditional methods -- the World Wide Web, for example, or having "unpublished" monographs listed in electronic data bases.

In 1991, Paul Ginsparg, a researcher at Los Alamos National Laboratory, created a database of physics papers on his home computer. Its popularity has begun to change the way scholarly ideas in physics are shared. Twenty-five thousand articles annually are posted in an electronic archive where professors can revise their articles after receiving comments from colleagues who have read them online. Some of the papers are eventually peer reviewed and published in journals.

Peer review and publication of scholarly articles would be radically altered under a new plan being promoted by a small but influential group of academics. The American Association of Universities and The Association of Research Libraries co-sponsored a meeting of scholars, librarians, and provosts in 1997, with Pew Charitable Trust funding, to formulate a new way to meet the goals of identifying the best ideas and getting them out into the field.

In the current system, most scholars present their papers to a specific journal, which solicits reviews of that work from two or three experts in the area. These reviewers, usually anonymous to the authors and vice versa, decide whether an article is to be published in that journal. The new proposal would separate peer review from publishing.

Instead of sending an article to one journal for review, professors would send their work to a "certification panel" in their field, established by scholarly groups that similarly use experts to give each article a grade or stamp of approval. A professor could then have the choice of submitting the article for print publication or posting the article on a World Wide Web site and skipping print publication altogether. Universities would accept a certification panel's stamp of approval and not require that professors actually publish their work.

Some see this as a minor change, merely shifting from "publish or perish" to "certify or perish." Budget-conscious libraries are behind this plan as an alternative to high-priced journal subscriptions, which can cost as much as \$15,000 apiece in science and technology (Wilson, 98).

It wasn't until the mid-'80s that the flagship journal of the Modern Language Association, PMLA, the most reputable journal for the English profession in the country, went from named to blind submissions in which reviewers and editors would run

less risk of undue influence by big names in the field. This has allowed lesser-known and younger faculty a fairer chance of publication.

### Reasons Why Academics Write...and How They Should

There are many reasons why teachers in "the academy" write and why they expect the same of their graduate and undergraduate students. It is an opportunity to clarify and organize thinking, sharpen use of the English language, and demonstrate expertise to one's peers. A primary motivation is to give back to the profession, to make a contribution to the field.

Perhaps the most pressing reason professors write is to secure their careers with tenure and, once that is done, receive promotion.

Publication can translate to annual merit pay increases. However, new faculty should find someone they trust at their institution to warn them about what is acceptable and what is not -- before they make a writing plan for themselves.

Publications that count in academia are most often interpreted with a capital 'P.' Generally your name (often as first author) must appear on articles in leading "refereed" journals that indicate you are making a "name for yourself" (and for the university for which you work). Carry that a step further, and it might mean "quantitative research in refereed journals," rather than the sometimes more difficult and time-consuming writing of qualitative research, or content analysis studies, or essays that are the mainstay of different professions. Some prestigious journals will not publish studies unless their results have proven statistical significance, disallowing the public access to serendipitous findings and new important questions that a particular study might have prompted.

Depending on the institution, the guidelines might differ. In some academic disciplines, "research" does not constitute presentations at professional meetings, nor do articles about innovative original teaching methodologies count for retention, promotion, or tenure. Book reviews or "op ed" pieces in newsletters, self-published material, and even edited anthologies might not be acceptable to some of the committees holding careers in their hands.

Some institutions might not even give credit to a professor for an article synthesizing information much needed by the general public, written in a language that the public can understand. Works in popular magazines with a circulation of millions might be frowned upon, in comparison to acceptance by small, erudite journals reaching the thousands more typical of academic journal circulation.

"It is ironic," says Andrew Jenkins, Health Education Programs at Central Washington University, "that in a field like health education, where the popular press promotes considerable misinformation, that when a reputable health educator gets printed in mass market media, they don't get the same credit as if they had just preached to the choir."

To get closer to the truth of the matter, publications are often used for gatekeeping. When a department wants a particular individual either in or out, depending on the desired outcome, a person's scholarly work can be valued or de-valued in the most critically crucial ways. Fortunately, most colleges and universities operate by committee and have a series of checks and balances so that tenure decisions do not fall solely on the personal opinion of one individual. However, even with full departmental support and sufficient or even excellent publications and citations, because of internal politicking that might have to do more with budgetary projections than either the individual or the publications, some unlucky academics might feel the sting of "perish" attributed to their writing.

Professor Maureen McDonoughKolb, a writing instructor in New York University's HEOP program, which concentrates heavily on improving the skills of minority students to help them move up the academic ladder, says that "in general, the system works, but it is sad and dishonest when it does not."

Every three years, Phi Delta Kappa, an honorary society in education, publishes the results of publications research conducted by Kenneth Henson, long-time dean of the College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University.

Author of more than 200 articles and 20 books, Henson's suggestions on getting started, targeting an audience, style and substance, and the writer-editor relationship are invaluable. Good too is Anne Sigismund Huff's *Writing for Scholarly Publication*.

Dr. Larry Olsen, of Towson University in Maryland, author of 80 articles, 200 presentations, and author or co-author of some 35 textbooks, is a prolific writer in the health education field. Winner of the highest awards by three prestigious professional organizations in public health, he puts it like this: "One doesn't do what one does to see what awards will accrue. One simply always remains committed to excellence in whatever one does. In terms of 'impact,' the first article I published in the *Journal of School Health* probably would be questionable now. I wasn't nearly as good a writer then.

"My basic piece of advice is, if a person wants to become a good free-throw shooter, he or she practices shooting free-throws a little; if a person wants to become a great free-throw shooter, he or she practices shooting free-throws a lot and elicits the help of other great free-throw shooters. Most people, when they graduate from their master's or doctoral programs,

are neophyte writers. The more they write and submit to refereed journals, the better they will become. I would suggest that they align with others who have published in the journals in which they wish to become published, and take the criticism that is offered as a learning experience, not a threat to their `creation."

Writing for publication is important, whether for job security or for the loftier goals of making a difference in a specific discipline. All entry-level college professors hoping to continue need to get over the self-imposed and institutional obstacles to putting their words "out there."

If success in academia is your goal, carefully pick an area to specialize in, hopefully one that makes your heart sing. Meticulously review all of the publication possibilities for your work, find a mentor, take his/her advice...and then, as the Nike ad says, JUST DO IT!

#### References

Baughman, James C., & Goldman, Robert N. "College rankings and faculty publications." *Change*. March/April 1999, vol.31, issue 2. And Peter T. Ewell's response to Baughman & Goldman.

Bloom, Martin, & Klein, Waldo C. "Publications and citations: a study of faculty at leading schools of social work." *Journal of Social Work Education*. Fall 1995, vol. 31, no. 3.

Bradigan, Pamela S., & Mularkski, Carol A. "Evaluation of academic librarians' publications for tenure and initial promotion." *Journal of Academic Librarianship*. Sept. 1996, vol. 22, no. 5.

Cassuto, Leonard. "Pressures to publish fuel the professionalization of today's graduate students." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 27 November 1998.

Green, Robert G. "Faculty rank, effort and success: a study of publication in professional journals." *Journal of Social Work Education*. Fall 1998, Vol. 34, no. 3.

Wilson, Robin. "Provosts push a radical plan to change the way faculty research is evaluated: publishing in journals would no longer be the key to getting tenure or disseminating ideas." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 26 June 1998.

Zivney, Terry L., & Bertin, William. "A comprehensive examination of accounting faculty publishing." *Issues in Accounting Education*. Spring 1995, vol. 10, no. 1,

#### Resources

Henson, Kenneth T. *A Brief Guide for Writing for Professional Publication*. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Publications, Fastback, 1998. (812) 339-1156.

For beginners and those with initial success, this will help them select appropriate journals and shape manuscripts to those journals' needs. Includes circulation figures, refereed status, percent research articles, acceptance rates, average numbers of weeks required for a decision, length of time from acceptance to publication, etc.

Provides scholars with both the philosophy and practical advice. Guidelines for choosing the topic, making an outline, title selection, and writing the study of introduction and conclusion are presented, along with the steps from submission to revision. Includes exercises.

#### PUBLICATION BASICS

First and Foremost: Find a Mentor.

Listening carefully to the wisdom of the more experienced pays off in saved time and energy and stress. And can make a big difference in your lifelong career.

#### Themed Issues

Nearly a third of journal issues have designated themes and solicit manuscripts in advance. Writing on a specific topic for a themed issue can reduce the competition by about two-thirds and double or triple a manuscript's potential for acceptance.

#### Acceptance Rates

These vary as widely as four percent to 90 percent. Most fields have some database about their journals, similar to Henson's in education. Discover the rate for the journals you are considering, and choose carefully, depending on your timeframe.

#### Research Format

Since the "research status" of a journal seems to count heavily in the reward system of many universities, find out which

journals are rated most highly by people in your discipline at your institution. Adhere rigorously to the style recommended by each.

#### Multiple Submission from One Idea or Study

While many journals have strict guidelines as to submitting the same article to competing publications, freelance writers and academics get lots of mileage from one idea all the time. Twisting or reshaping an idea from a single piece of research to meet the different needs of several journals will increase your chance of getting the numbers needed for advancement.

#### Joint Authorship and First-Authorship

Tenured faculty with a publishing history and reputation often publish with less well-known faculty or graduate students as second authors. While some committees look askance at this practice, partnerships of this kind can move your writing career along steadily. Many don't recognize that the first author on articles written by team can be rotated. A look in medical journals can be very revealing. Many articles dealing with similar topics are published by the same "team" with the "lead" author rotated.

#### Revisions/Resubmissions

Authors should always, or with very few exceptions, accept invitations to revise and resubmit articles.

#### Professionalization

Choose a narrow sub-specialty. With help from your already established peers and a good mentor, narrow the focus of what you choose to write. Become a "maven," an expert in some definable area.

Copyright © 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company. All rights reserved. [Terms and Conditions](#)

[Text-only interface](#)

