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# Writing for Publication

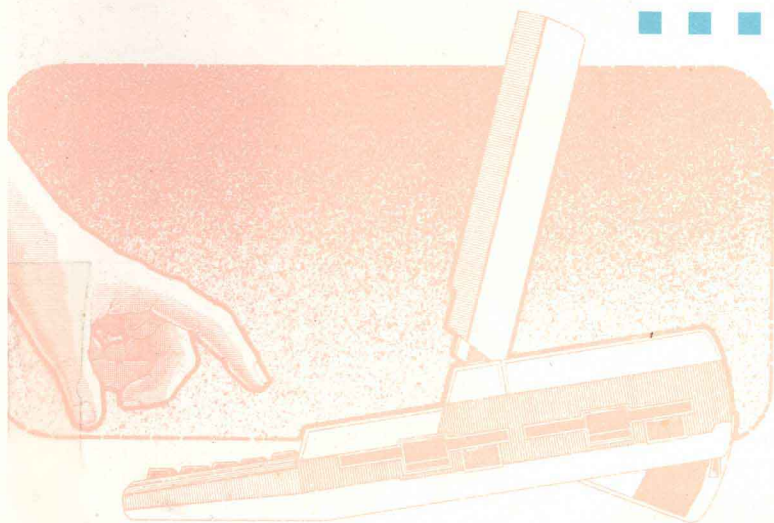
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*James F. Baumann*  
*Dale D. Johnson*

**EDITORS**



in Reading  
and  
Language  
Arts



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# Writing for Publication in Reading and Language Arts

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### Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Writing for publication in reading and language arts/James F.  
Baumann, Dale D. Johnson, editors.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Authorship—Marketing. 2. Publishers and publishing.

I. Baumann, James F. II. Johnson, Dale D.

PN161.w85 1991 91-13333

808'.02—dc20 CIP

ISBN 0-87207-365-3

Graphic design by *Boni Nash*

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# F o r e w o r d

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**P**rimo Levi, who liked to write about writing, once noted that “a piece of writing has all the more value and all the more hope of diffusion and permanence the better it is understood” (1989, p. 170).

The contributors to this volume offer a diverse set of perspectives on how we as writers can be better understood, whether we’re writing an article about a teaching experience, a research book, or a children’s story. The authors of this volume make an important assumption: we have stories to tell and knowledge to share with our colleagues. Each chapter provides important information about one of the specialized genres that make up writing related to reading and the language arts.

The volume is divided into three major sections: writing for journals and other periodicals, writing for children and adolescents, and writing instructional materials. Whatever the writer’s purpose and intended audience, this volume provides detailed information about the contexts, processes, and products of publishing.

A truly literate community is one in which writers encourage other writers, share their knowledge and experiences, and read so that their voices might further develop. This volume makes an important contribution to the literate community. In a sense, the voices within *Writing for Publication in Reading and Language Arts* have much in common with the campfire round.

Someone starts the singing, others listen, appreciate, and grow familiar with the form and rhythm. Eventually, with encouragement, all members contribute their own voices, all worthy of a listen.

Peter Afflerbach  
University of Maryland

### **Reference**

Levi, P. (1989). *Other people's trades*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

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# I n t r o d u c t i o n

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**"H**ow should you like to grow up a clever man and write books?" Oliver considered a little while.... "Well well," said the old gentleman, "Don't be afraid! We won't make an author of you while there is an honest trade to be learned, or brickmaking to turn to."

—from *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens

Over lunch at IRA's Annual Convention in Anaheim, California, in May 1987, we reminisced about times past: when we first met in 1971, when Dale was an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin and Jim was a graduate intern in the Native American Teacher Corps program; when we hooked up again six years later after Dale was a full professor and Jim had returned to Wisconsin to work on a Ph.D.; when we'd met subsequently at various professional meetings.

Our musings were mostly frivolous ("Remember, Dale, when you made me deliver your tuba to the Village Green tavern in Middleton for a performance of the Lost Century Jazz Band?"). But gradually the conversation drifted to more serious matters that included the writing and editing we had collaborated on since about 1979—the successful projects as well as those that bombed. We noted that despite having mentors in the field, much of what we learned about authoring came through experience, a good bit of it painful—the proverbial school of hard knocks.

Because IRA program proposal time was nigh, our ruminations turned toward what we might do at the 1988 convention in Toronto. Since our thoughts were focused on our successes and failures in professional publishing, we decided to conduct a pre-convention institute on the topic of writing for publication, thinking that others might learn from our experiences and those of our colleagues. After 15 minutes or so of scribbling notes on paper place mats and cocktail napkins, we had sketched out a program. The following spring in Toronto, we cochaired an institute on writing for publication. While organizing that meeting, we decided to coedit a volume on the same topic and submit it to IRA for possible publication. That is the history behind *Writing for Publication*.

Our purpose in assembling this book is to provide novice and experienced writers with a series of articles on the emotional, psychological, and nuts-and-bolts aspects of publishing professional and instructional materials in literacy education. We do not claim that this volume is comprehensive, although we believe that most all the major types of professional writing in reading and language arts education are addressed in some fashion. We also do not maintain that all articles are pragmatic pieces; neither the preconvention institute nor this book were conceived with that exclusive focus. Some articles address the passionate, emotional aspects of authoring—for example, Kameenui's chapter on writing articles for research journals, Livingston's chapter on authoring children's trade books, and Otto's chapter on authoring college textbooks.

My passion was for the pen, the ecstasy of watching my scrawl cover the pages. It is the sort of trance saints speak of—a blissful heightened state in which you at once feel utterly alone and in harmony with the universe.

—Erica Jong

On the other hand, many chapters provide concrete suggestions for writing different kinds of materials. Included in this category are Kruse's chapter on writing children's trade books, Howard and Canavan's chapter on preparing professional books and textbooks, Baumann's chapter on writing articles for practitioner journals, and Micklos's chapter on writing for newspapers and newsletters.

The art of writing is the art of applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair.

—Mary Heaton Vorse

Please recognize that we are not suggesting, by way of the more practical chapters, that writing of any sort is formulaic; it's not. Instead, we asked each contributor to tell us what it feels like to write, what works for her or him while writing, or both. As a result, the authors' voices are strong and clear in this work—a lesson we believe is one of the first to learn in acquiring the art of writing.

Writing is both mask and unveiling.

—E.B. White

We have organized *Writing for Publication* into three major sections. Part 1 deals with publishing in journals, periodicals, newspapers, and newsletters. Part 2 addresses writing materials for use with children and adolescents. Part 3 looks at the preparation of textbooks and professional books.

Part 1 includes six chapters on writing for various types of periodicals. The first two chapters deal with publishing in research journals. Samuels describes the process of conceiving of, designing, implementing, and reporting research in scholarly journals. He does this from the perspective of a journal editor—he formerly served as coeditor of *Reading Research Quarterly*. Kameenui provides insight into the process of inquiry an author



must undertake in order to conceptualize and implement a successful research project. He speaks from considerable experience, having published many research reports in a variety of respected research journals.

The next two chapters address publishing articles in practitioner-oriented journals. Jensen provides suggestions on writing for journals whose audience consists primarily of school-based personnel. She writes from an editor's perspective, since she served as editor of NCTE's elementary journal, *Language Arts*, for 7 years. Baumann describes in detail a procedure he has found useful in preparing manuscripts for publication in various practitioner journals in our field. Since he has written and published many articles, his perspective primarily is that of an author, although he does provide some editorial insight drawn from his experience as editor of IRA's elementary/preschool journal, *The Reading Teacher*.

The final two chapters of Part 1 involve writing for still other types of periodical publications. Micklos discusses how to prepare news articles, columns, and features for publication in literacy newspapers or newsletters. As editor of IRA's newspaper, *Reading Today*, he specifically addresses this outlet, although his suggestions apply equally to those interested in writing for other education newspapers or for the various newsletters published by IRA affiliates. Hopkins provides information about writing reviews of professional and instructional materials for possible publication in literacy periodicals. While acknowledging that there are a variety of approaches to review writing, she presents a clear and direct set of suggestions for how one might structure a review.

The first two chapters of Part 2, which deals with publishing materials for children and young adults, address writing trade books for children. Livingston provides a personal view of what it means to write materials for children. She is well qualified to provide this perspective, given her international reputation as a poet, author, anthologist, and educator. Kruse looks at the more pragmatic aspects of writing trade books for children

and young adults. Kruse directs the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a library that houses one of the world's most complete collections of children's trade books.

The next two chapters provide insight into the process of publishing commercial reading and language arts programs for children. Pikulski describes 10 phases involved in publishing a reading program. As a senior author on several editions of a successful reading program, he is well qualified to describe this process. A different perspective on publishing reading and language arts programs is presented by Orrell. Orrell, an executive editor for a major educational publisher, discusses the roles of various players involved in developing a reading program.

The final two chapters of Part 2 deal with other types of instructional materials. Johnson describes the process of authoring supplemental materials in reading and language arts, drawing from his considerable experience in writing such materials. Radencich provides practical information about conceiving, writing, and publishing educational microcomputer software. She knows this process well, since she has published a successful vocabulary and comprehension computer software program.

The final section of the book provides information about publishing textbooks and professional books. Howard and Canavan provide specifics about publishing these types of books. These authors have guided numerous book manuscripts through the publication process in their various editorial and managerial roles with commercial textbook publishers. Otto, the author of many college textbooks, contributed the book's final chapter. He conveys his view of the process of writing books through the eyes of his alter ego, Fats Grobrik, a humorous character who is chock-full of wisdom on this and other subjects.

We hope you will find something here to inform you, to impassion you, to entertain you, or maybe even to provoke you. Writing is neither easy nor devoid of ego and emotion. (When asked how it felt to write *John Brown's Body*, Steven Vincent Benét aptly replied, "Just about like giving birth to a grand piano.") We

must admit, however, that writing is indeed satisfying and rewarding.

One ought only to write when one leaves a piece of one's own flesh in the inkpot, each time one dips one's pen.

—Leo Tolstoy

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P A R T O N E

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*Publishing in  
Journals,  
Newspapers,  
and Newsletters*



## Publishing Requirements for Research-Oriented Journals

S. Jay Samuels

*Publishing in research-oriented journals has been compared to walking across a mine field at night, where a false step can lead to destruction. Skilled soldiers, however, have learned how to cross these dangerous areas in safety. Samuels, a professor of educational psychology and a well-known researcher, explains how to avoid the pitfalls of publishing in research journals and suggests what steps to take to get articles accepted.*

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**E**ach researcher must try to learn from the work of those who preceded him and to add to a unified body of knowledge—knowing that neither he nor anyone following him will ever have the final word.

—Jeanne Chall

As a graduate student contemplating a career as a university professor, I had a host of anxieties. One of these anxieties reflected my concern about my ability to perform adequately on the job. I worried about being able to get my work published in reputable journals if I got a job as a professor at a publish-or-perish institution. With these problems on my mind, I had a disturbing dream one night. I was in a military tank hidden at the edge of a forest, and my goal was to cross an open field to reach the other side. As soon as I began to cross the field, sharpshooters whom I could not



see began to fire antitank weapons at me. They fired at every part of my tank in an attempt to locate a major weakness. Unfortunately, I awoke from the dream before I could find out if I reached my destination.

When I analyzed the dream, I realized that it was a thin veil for my anxieties about getting my research published. The hidden sharpshooters who were firing at me were actually editors and editorial advisory board members looking for weaknesses in my research. Most authors who submit articles to research journals feel vulnerable and wonder about how they can improve their chances for getting published.

Now, with the accuracy of 20-20 hindsight, I can look back and realize that although my anxieties had a modicum of truth, getting published in research-oriented journals is not as hard as I had imagined. Many factors, some of them unrelated to the quality of the manuscript itself, influence editorial decisions to publish or to reject a manuscript. By knowing what editors look for in a manuscript and understanding the hidden factors that influence editorial decisions, authors can improve their acceptance rate.

Consequently, in this chapter I offer advice and some guidelines for publishing in research journals such as the *Reading Research Quarterly* (RRQ). As a former coeditor of this journal, an editorial advisor for other research journals, and a contributor to still others, I can offer several perspectives on how to get published. Since the requirements for getting published in RRQ are similar to the requirements for other research journals, what I say about RRQ generalizes to other journals such as the *Journal of Reading Behavior*, the *American Educational Research Journal*, the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, and the like.

In giving advice to others, I am mindful of the need for caution suggested by a young student who wrote: "Socrates was a very wise man. He gave advice to all the people of Athens. They killed him." Thus, I offer advice realizing that there is dan-