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The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing: A Review

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Abstract: The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing provides useful support to writers of scholarly manuscripts for publication, including information on contents of manuscripts, writing skills, and the scholarship process. As many Extension professionals are called on to publish, the book is highly recommended for those who need advice in getting started with the publishing process, especially for peer-reviewed journals.

Extension professionals and administrators are increasingly being called on to produce research reports, evaluation reports, and other scholarship relevant to their fields (Koenig, Winger, & Kitchen, 2000; Loveridge, 1998; O'Neill, 1990; O'Neill & Helsel, 1992). *The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing*, hereafter referred to as *The Handbook*, provides information and tips critical to the success of new and experienced scholarly writers. Rocco and Hatcher (2011) selected leading scholarly writers from fields ranging from education to human resource and workforce development to business to write chapters for this edited book.

The Contents

The Handbook contains 21 chapters broken into four parts, "Becoming A Published Scholar," "Improving Writing Techniques," "Preparing Scholarly Manuscripts," and "Reflecting on the Writing and Publishing Process." In this short review, a discussion of each of the chapters would be impossible, instead, a description of the major sections of the book as well as several items that resonated with my scholarship and writing are given. In the sections of this review, I address the intended audience and offer a critique of the text.

The first part, "Becoming a Published Scholar," highlight the importance of doing scholarly writing as a scholar, as a way to improve thinking and the possibilities for career advancement. Chapter 3, "Learning to Write: Wisdom from Emerging Scholars," provides stories and advice from scholars just completing their master's and doctoral programs and beginning the journey of scholarly writing. This chapter gives some useful steps in getting started with reading for the sake of writing, such as developing a personal database and note-taking system (Nackoney, Munn, & Fernandez, 2011).

The second portion of *The Handbook* moves from motivation and getting started to improving writing techniques. Particularly important for emerging and practicing scholarly writers in Extension would be "Finding Voice: Appreciating Audience," a chapter by Lee (2011). Lee reminds writers first, that they can improve on their writing, even if they find it difficult, and second, the need to develop an academic voice for writing in scholarly writing, which is different from the voice used in reports to constituents or writing educational materials for Extension audiences (Miller, 2001).

The third part of the book highlights the actual preparation of different types of manuscripts, differentiating between literature review, qualitative studies, quantitative studies, mixed methods studies, theoretical articles, editorials, and book reviews. Hatcher and McDonald authored the chapter on editorials and book reviews, a chapter I used in constructing this book review (2011). The chapters in this section provide useful criteria and requirements for the various forms of manuscripts that are typical in scholarly journals.

Finally, the fourth part of *The Handbook* encourages writers to reflect on their writing (and to write about their own writing process). Stephen Brookfield, an internationally renowned adult education author, addresses his own experiences of receiving feedback, even reflecting on his own emotions through the experiences of rejection of his manuscripts and conference proposals (2011). Brookfield writes about his own demoralization and gathering the courage to rewrite and respond to the feedback given on his manuscripts. This is a common experience, and the beginning writer should not stop because of feedback that seems harsh or unsettling or even misunderstanding of the corpus of his or her work (Hoelscher, 2006). I find that this chapter puts me squarely in the middle of other scholarly writers, who have had their work rejected numerous times and have had to go through numerous revisions in order to construct a successful manuscript that can be published.

Intended Audience

The Handbook "is intended to enable emerging scholars and anyone else wishing to improve their writing skills to better understand the parts of a manuscript and how they fit together support each other to create a quality publication" (Rocco & Hatcher, 2011, p. xiii). With this in mind, the primary audience of the book is for academics who do scholarly writing, that is, writing for conferences and peer-reviewed publications. However, a secondary audience of the book is research assistants, graduate students, and anyone who gets involved in scholarly writing, no matter what the level. The book may even assist those who wish to know more about how journal articles come to be published.

Critique

Publication manuals and style guides only go so far in instructing us what to write in an article, what reviewers might be looking for, how to frame the literature review and research questions, and how to describe the research. *The Handbook* demystifies this process of academic writing. Although styles, expectations, and review processes may vary among journals or among the fields in which our publications are based, *The Handbook* will guide a variety of academic writers, especially those who write in the education and social science fields. Clearly, the authors have an interest in seeing beginning and established writers continue to succeed in their work, which is encouraging and hope providing. As a beginning scholar myself, I have used this book extensively since I purchased it. My copy is dog-eared and tattered; I am considering a second copy, so that I can have one at my home office as well. The book is rather reasonably priced in terms of academic books (around US$35).

In general, this book is suitable for most anyone working in Extension or related fields, especially those who are called on to produce scholarly publications. However, it may not be suited for researchers who publish in areas that are not education related, such as those publishing in more science or medically related areas. Publications in these fields (and others) may not follow the same manuscript types or even the same appreciation for the formalities of writing for education. As usual, it is best to check with the publication in which you will submit a manuscript for the conventions of that journal and field. For many scholarly writers in Extension, especially those who wish to publish in *Journal of Extension*, *The Handbook* will save time in helping to write a quality manuscript.

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