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## Writing for Technology Education Publications

[Len Litowitz\(1\)](#)

Where should technology teachers submit manuscripts for publication? How will they be reviewed? What are their chances of being accepted for publication? How may the odds for acceptance be improved? This article answers these and other common questions about submitting manuscripts for publication in selected technology education publications. Henson's (1988) article in PHI DELTA KAPPAN entitled "Writing for Education Journals" prompted this survey.

A questionnaire containing nineteen items was adopted from [Henson's \(1988\)](#) model. Ten nationally/internationally distributed publications in technology education were identified and selected for analysis. The questionnaire was mailed to the editor of each publication in the spring of 1989. Editors were asked to respond to the questions provided and to return a copy of their most recent publication guidelines. All ten editors (100%) responded.

### PUBLICATIONS SURVEYED

A brief description of the ten publications surveyed follows. Information regarding manuscript review procedures is provided along with an indication of each of the publication's target audience.

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION magazine is written for educators in industrial/technical and vocational education departments at the second-

ary and post-secondary levels of instruction. Articles published are primarily technical in nature but may focus on administration or philosophy. Publication decisions are made by the editor in conjunction with assistant editors.

JOURNAL OF EPSILON PI TAU (JEPT) is the official publication of the Epsilon Pi Tau honorary fraternity for education in technology. Articles submitted to JEPT may focus on technical competence, research and scholarship, or social and professional efficiency. Historical and philosophical articles are sometimes included in JEPT. The journal uses a referee panel consisting of the editor and at least two referees from a national pool to determine publication decisions.

JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (JITE) is the official publication of the National Association of Industrial and Technical Teacher Educators. Most subscribers are faculty members at institutions of higher education. Clientele include teachers of industrial arts/technology education, trade and industrial education, technical education, and industrial and military training. The JITE provides an opportunity for publication of research findings and professional reports. Philosophical or conceptual articles and dissertation findings are also included. The journal uses a blind review process for refereed articles that includes at least three reviewers for each article subjected to review.

JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY (JIT) is the official publication of the National Association of Industrial Technology. Subscribers include faculty at institutions of higher learning, industrial representatives and graduate and undergraduate industrial technology students. Articles are primarily technical in nature, but research findings and conceptual articles are also published. Manuscripts may be submitted for refereed or nonrefereed status. Refereed manuscripts are

submitted for blind review by at least three referees and the journal's editor.

JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION (JTE) is co-sponsored by the Council on Technology Teacher Education and the International Technology Education Association. The JTE is directed primarily at technology teacher educators. The JTE provides a forum for scholarly discussion on topics related to technology education. Manuscripts focus on technology education research, theory, and practice. In addition JTE publishes comprehensive literature reviews, guest articles, reactions to previously published articles, book reviews, and editorials. The JTE uses a blind review process with manuscripts reviewed by at least three referees from an international editorial board.

SCHOOL SHOP magazine caters to persons professionally involved in industrial arts/technology education, industrial education, or education for trade and industry at all levels. Articles related to teaching techniques, innovative projects, laboratory or classroom administrative procedures, and contemporary issues are frequently published. Publication decisions are determined by the editor in conjunction with assistant editors.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION NEWS (TEN) publishes articles on all aspects of technical and occupational education, with emphasis on practical ideas that readers can apply to their own instructional situations. Included are manuscripts on curriculum development, teaching techniques, instructional media, exemplary programs, employment opportunities, research, and major trends and issues in the field. Publication decisions are determined by the editor in conjunction with assistant editors.

THE TECHNOLOGY TEACHER (TTT) is the official publication of the International Technology Education Association. It caters to technology educators at all levels on topics related to curriculum and technical content.

Philosophical and conceptual articles are also included. Publication decisions are determined by the consensus of a blind review panel consisting of at least three assistant editors from a national pool.

(TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, & ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR STUDENTS) TIES magazine is a publication of Drexel University and is supported by industrial sponsorship. This publication is for teachers interested in increasing the technological literacy of their students. TIES articles should promote the understanding of technological concepts, traditions, and impacts. Articles on classroom innovation, invention, entrepreneurship, and problem solving are frequently published. Publication decisions are determined by the editorial staff of TIES magazine.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION JOURNAL (VEJ) focuses on articles which discuss current issues in vocational education, technological and social trends, and promising practices, programs, and products. Articles frequently relate to one of eight themes announced each March for the next publishing year. Publication decisions are determined by the editor in conjunction with members of the editorial and publications committee. Publication decisions are based not only on quality, but on including a mix of articles in each issue.

## FINDINGS

Responses from publication editors to the questionnaire are provided in Figure 1. The ten publications surveyed varied greatly in their characteristics. Major differences in characteristics can be attributed to the following facts:

- o Each of the publications deals with different aspects of technology education and caters to different audiences.
- o Some publications focus specifically on research findings while others stress ar-

ticles related to classroom activities and curriculum.

- o At least half of the publications use a national panel of referees while editors and staff members determine the publication decisions for other publications.
- o Some publications are geared toward secondary school teachers while others serve teacher educators almost exclusively.
- o Several of the publications serve an audience much larger than technology education.

FIGURE 1. Characteristics of selected technology education journals

Manuscript acceptance rates ranged from a low of 5% to a high of 75% with a mean acceptance rate of 44% for the seven publications that provided a usable response to this question. These acceptance rates can be somewhat deceiving because some publications solicit articles while others do not. Editors of publications that provided theme issues commented that the percentage of acceptance for theme articles was greater than their typical acceptance rate.

The number of issues published per year ranged from two to ten. There did not appear to be any correlation between the number of issues published yearly and the acceptance rate of the various publications. For instance, THE TECHNOLOGY TEACHER published ten issues yearly but accepted only about 35% of all manuscripts submitted for publication. Conversely, the JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY published four issues yearly but accepted about 75% of all manuscripts submitted for review.

The number of weeks required to receive notification of a publication decision varied between five and fourteen with an average of ten weeks. There did not appear to be a relationship between the amount of time it took

to receive notification of a publication decision and whether the publication used a national review panel or reviewed manuscripts "in house." Publications that did not utilize a referee pool sometimes took longer to provide a publication decision than those using such a panel.

There was no clear relationship between the number of issues published yearly and the amount of time it took for an accepted manuscript to appear in print. SCHOOL SHOP published ten issues yearly but required an average of twelve months for accepted manuscripts to appear in print. Yet, the JOURNAL OF EPSILON PI TAU, which published two issues yearly, reported an average of only four months to publish accepted manuscripts.

Writing styles were consistent among the various publications with most requiring the [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) writing style. Three publications did not require any specific writing style, and one publication required the Gregg Reference Manual. Most editors also indicated that their publications accepted dot matrix printed manuscripts, although some mentioned that it was not preferred. Several editors indicated that photographs and other visual media had no effect on publication decisions for their particular journals, while others indicated that such media did have a possible or definite positive effect. Most publications that indicated visual media to have a positive effect emphasized curriculum or content specific articles. Lastly, most editors indicated that they welcomed query letters or telephone calls. Some stated that query letters were more appropriate than telephone calls.

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR GETTING PUBLISHED

Editors seem to agree that there is no magic formula for authoring a publishable manuscript. Commitment on the part of the

writer is probably the single most important attribute to successful publication. Still, commitment is not enough. The [VOCATIONAL EDUCATION JOURNAL](#) publication guidelines indicate that authors must: (a) have something important to say and (b) say it well.

Both criteria are equally essential to successful publication. [Patrick Miller \(1987\)](#), at the time he was serving as editor of the JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL TEACHER EDUCATION, described two types of manuscripts, which he came upon all too frequently: (a) those that had "not much to say but said acceptably" and (b) those that had "much to say but said poorly." His observations reinforce the VOCATIONAL EDUCATION JOURNAL publication guideline statements. Publishable manuscripts must provide important messages in a well written manner.

[Miller \(1983\)](#), [Hanlon \(1987\)](#), and [Wilkerson \(1987\)](#) have each provided helpful suggestions for would-be authors. A summary of their suggestions includes the following:

1. Familiarize yourself with field related publications. By thoroughly reading several recent issues of a publication, it is possible to obtain a feeling for the flavor of that publication. Knowing the types of articles that publications frequently include and the audience they cater to should help to determine the appropriate publication for your manuscript.
2. Obtain a copy of the editorial guidelines for publications you wish to consider. These guidelines can help you avoid simple errors in writing style and format. They often contain additional information such as preferred length of the manuscript and specific editorial procedures.
3. Write your manuscript as simply and sequentially as possible. Lack of focus

and organization are common causes of manuscript rejection.

4. Check to be sure that your manuscript has "face validity." Like everyone else, editors and reviewers are subject to first impressions. Eliminating all grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors prior to submitting your manuscript will add to its face validity. The quality of a manuscript's appearance can also have an impact on the reviewer's first impression. Only quality photocopies of manuscripts should be submitted for review in addition to one original copy. Dot matrix print, while accepted by many publications, should be avoided if letter quality print can be provided.
5. Submit a manuscript to only one publication at a time. Ethical considerations dictate that a manuscript should appear in only one nationally recognized publication. By submitting to only one publication at a time, you avoid an excess of editorial comments and the embarrassment of having to choose between publications in the event of multiple acceptance.
6. Have professional colleagues review your manuscript prior to submitting it for publication. The many helpful comments which can be provided by colleagues' critical reviews may save you much time and frustration in the long run.
7. Write letters of inquiry to publication editors regarding potential topics you may be considering. Most editors welcome query letters and appreciate the opportunity to serve as a sounding board for potential manuscript topics.
8. Consider writing an article for a theme issue of a particular publication. Al-

most half of the publications surveyed provided one or more theme issues throughout the year. By authoring a timely article on an upcoming theme topic, your chances of acceptance should be increased.

9. Understand the review process for the publication to which you choose to submit your manuscript. A generic manuscript review process flow chart is provided in Figure 2.
10. Have patience! The time it takes to carry a manuscript from its original conception through the actual publication is often in excess of one year. Patience is a necessary virtue for publication in journals and magazines.

## CONCLUSION

Potential authors should attempt to match each of their manuscripts to an appropriate publication. The audience for whom the manuscript is written, nature of the audience, and the appropriateness of the manuscript to a certain publication appear to be the most crucial concerns. Other important considerations may be the timeliness of the manuscript, the extent and method by which the manuscript will be reviewed, circulation size of the publication, and the publication's acceptance rate. A careful review of these characteristics prior to submission can save much valuable time and effort on the part of the author.

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