

Journals as an Input Tool to Build up Cosmopolitan Academics: The Complexity, Advantages and Challenges

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Abstract

This article aims to explore the world of scholarly journals with their status, standards, and potential. Being a justifiable academic is a social need in academia that expects a dynamic personality. While an academic is expected to be free of all interferences, her/his social responsibility is inevitable. In this sense, an academic is expected to play several roles such as a teacher, a researcher, an author, and a social figure. Out of all these, publishing has become vital in the context of the technologically advanced world of academia. As a prominent way of publishing scholarly works, there are millions of knowledge sources and thousands of journals among them. This type of publication (journal articles) is the prominent and dominant way to build up the calibre as a cosmopolitan academic rather than being a local/home-grown academic who publishes locally. Having wide international sophistication can be designated as 'cosmopolitan' in this context. Though there are thousands of ways to publish, academics are required to

meet some standards and they are confined to named sources of publication by the relevant universities and institutions. Publishing has come across several challenges such as meeting high standards, paying higher amounts as processing fees, and distinguishing genuine and predatory journals. Those who publish among all these hinders have been able to capture unique opportunities as academics, besides, growing up as cosmopolitan scholars. Some universities and academic institutions have developed mandates for publishing to be stable and climb up the career ladder. This article tries to explore all these ways and means by understanding the local and global requirements, boundaries and reach of scholarly journals.

Keywords: cosmopolitan academics, indexed journals, predatory journals, justifiable academic

Introduction

The most important, maybe the most difficult too, job for an academic is writing. Nevertheless, writing is quite easy in comparison to publishing in internationally accepted indexed journals with an impact. Getting to know the world of journals and the role of an academic is important to unlock the world of publishing. First, understanding the role of an academic in an applied manner will help us to proceed to other steps smoothly. An academic has both explicit and implicit responsibilities.

While teaching takes the major role, other related engagements such as paper setting, paper marking, other evaluations, etc. are inevitable as explicit responsibilities. Doing research is also an inherent part of the academic role while publishing is not a legal mandate in some countries like Sri Lanka. But it is required to climb up the career ladder. Thus, it is also part of the role. Social responsibility is not an explicit written responsibility, but scientifically being the producers of knowledge, social responsibility is rather important. Among all these, the biggest challenge is publishing which requires both dedication and competence. Being truthful and genuine in the process of knowledge production is also a must. Standing along with some important social and political phenomena that arise from time to time in the certain environment that they get involved in is expected from academics by society itself. Among all these explicit and implied responsibilities, publishing becomes prominent as it is the way of publicising the new knowledge that academics produce to the world by following the scientific method.

Method, Objectives and Guiding Questions

The author himself does not treat this article as a deep investigation or a research work as the intention of this work was to educate the novices of university academic staff in this regard. Relatively, this is a general introduction that uses secondary data sources to make you aware of the target group

of preliminaries of scholarly journals. Some of the sources are definite as they are the only reference points. In addition, the author integrates his own experiences with reference to journal article publications to enrich the general explanation. The main objective of this short article is to explore the stretches of journal article publication as an input tool to develop universally recognised academics by unpacking all the important considerations and steps while unveiling the advantages and challenges of such publication for academics and other researchers. To be on the theme with focus, this article is also guided by three questions or guiding principles for the current work. They are:

01. What are the scholarly journals and their different types?
02. Why is publication of articles in indexed journals a complex and challenging affair?
03. What are the advantages that academics have when publishing in indexed journals?

Where and What is to be Published?

Individual author publication is simple and easy despite personal expenditure. But, for academics, accepted publishers' publication celebrity is required to gain research excellence. Thus, the best source is indexed journals accepted by the authorities of relevant countries such as University Grant Commissions (UGC's) in some countries. For instance, the

UGC of Sri Lanka has named some such accepted indexes for different disciplines (UGC, 2009). SCI, SSCI and AHCI are those indexes. Publications can be done in the forms of books, book chapters, articles, etc. in addition to the above-mentioned method. With the development of digital technology and the World Wide Web, anybody can publish anything in several forms such as blogs, vlogs, audiobooks and other social media. But these are yet worthy of popularity rather than becoming an accepted scholar in academia.

If the content to be published is a scientific finding, it inherently expects a scientific journal as the medium of publication if not a book. This is where the challenge comes across due to several reasons. Apart from scientific findings, theoretical papers and reviews are also accepted by international journals for publication. Therefore, they are also the ways of knowledge production in the current academic world and ways that enable you to publish.

Meeting Expectations of Indexed Journals

The foremost need is meeting zero or minimum plagiarism. As the first step of accepting a paper, it goes through the process of plagiarism checking by using a computer application. Merely original works could reach this goal and plagiarised works are rejected even without seeing the content after going through the software. The implied idea behind this

process is to undertake original works with some substantial contribution to the related discipline. The novelty of the research finding is another important aspect to be accepted your work by a reputed journal. Even if you have all these, if the work cannot meet a high level of accuracy, then again it will not be accepted. In the research traditions, there are some accepted norms to be respected when writing your article and the consistency of language use is another consideration. To maintain this consistency, using a unique language style, such as British English or American. These are just preliminaries, and there is a lot to meet other than these.

How to Recognise Scholarly Journals

In scholarly journals or other words, in academic journals, articles are written by faculty members, researchers or scholars by using scholarly language or technical language. Most probably articles are lengthy and detailed while giving a full citation for the sources referenced. As the articles are refereed by peers, they are called peer-reviewed journals, or else refereed journals. These kinds of journals are published by academic organisations but not by commercial bodies. Universities are the leading bodies of this industry apart from some reputed private academic establishments/institutions such as Taylor & Francis, Wiley-Blackwell, Elsevier, Academy Publication, SAGE Publishing, etc. If the journal

has all the other characteristics but it focuses mainly on profit-making, it is advisable not to treat it as a good choice to be selected as your publishing platform. Perhaps, book reviews and editorials are not treated as scholarly articles though they appear in some journals. In addition to content, the outlook of a journal will also help us to recognise whether it is a scholarly journal or not. The cover page of a scholarly journal is simple and contains merely basic information such as title, volume/issue numbers and publishing organisation. However, commercially oriented journals may not maintain such standards.

Different Types of Journals

In academic institutions such as universities, they have departmental journals which are not refereed but published annually, biannually, or quarterly. Also, periodicals are published by most such institutions that are also not peer-reviewed. Peer-reviewed journal articles are written by experts in the field and are not like newspaper articles sometimes contain incorrect information or personal opinions. As the peer-reviewed articles are reviewed by several other academics in the same field probably considered as peers, they are called peer-reviewed journals or refereed journals. Most probably, these reviewers do not know who the authors of the articles are; thus, the success or failure depends on their own virtues. There is an editorial board in peer-reviewed/

refereed journals to review the received articles before they accept them for publishing. It goes through a process, and the first step of this process is checking plagiarism by using software nowadays. If the first step is acceptable at least with a tolerable percentage of plagiarism, then it goes to the next step of evaluating based on a particular criterion formulated by the specific journal or publishing group for their journals such as Oxford Publishers. Members of the editorial board may differ for each issue of the journal or a certain volume, however, their names are included in the specific issue when it comes out. There is a specific website to find peer-reviewed journals called Ulrichsweb which was earlier designated as Ulrichs (<https://www.ulrichsweb.com>). From this dictionary of periodicals can be found basic information about journals for beginners to publish.

What is exactly refereed? When the article goes through a peer-review process to maintain its quality standards by recognised academics, it is called refereed which can also be called peer-reviewed (Lasker, 2018). Another type of journal is open access. Most of the peer-reviewed journals are open-access journals in this digital age. If the journal articles are freely available as digital online information that can be freely accessed by authors and users, that is called open access (Ola, 2014). Out of different types of journals, indexed journals remain as most reputed journals. Depending upon

the abstracting and indexing services that cover a particular journal, its prestige is measured. The citation index (indexing) is an ordered list of cited articles, each accompanied by a list of citing articles. Being represented in the relevant online abstracting and indexing services is an essential factor for the success of a journal. A citation index is a kind of bibliographic database, an index of citations between publications, allowing the user to easily establish which later documents, and cite which earlier documents. A citation index was first found in the 12th century in Hebrew religious literature. Legal citation indexes were first found in the 18th century and were made popular by citators such as Shepard's citations (1873). In 1960, the Eugene Garfield Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) introduced the first citation index for papers published in academic journals, first the science citation index (SCI) and later the social science citation index and the arts and humanities citation index. These three citation indexes are the most prestigious even today. The first automated citation indexing was done by "CiteSeer" in 1997 (Ghosh, 2020). Other sources for such data include Google Scholar and Elsevier's Scopus. However, they have not been able to capture such prestige and still most of the academic institutions have not recommended their academics to go for these entry-level citation indexes. The status and ownership of the above-recognised indexes have undergone changes, but their prestige is still there. Science Citation Index (SCI) and Science Citation Index

Expanded (SCI-expanded) Published by ISI a part of Thomson Reuters. As mentioned, SCI was originally produced by ISI and created by Eugene Garfield (1964). The SCI's electronic version is called "Web of Science." (<https://mjl.clarivate.com/home>) SCI-expanded indexes cover over 8000 journals with citation references across 174 scientific disciplines in the science edition. Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) are the reputed indexes in social sciences and humanities owned by Thomson Reuters. Recently, an emerging index has captured its value and gravity in journals called Scopus: Scopus (Elsevier) is a bibliographic database containing abstracts and citations for academic journal articles. It covers 21,000 titles from over 5000 publishers. It is available online only. In addition, the Indian Citation Index (ICI) is an online citation data that is a new web platform for measuring the performance of Indian research periodically known in South Asia. This online bibliographic database was launched in 2009. ICI covers 800 plus journals. Chinese Social Science Citation Index (CSSCI) is also popular in China among academic institutions. In the recent past, there have been many indexing and abstracting platforms, but their acceptance by academic institutions is yet to be sought. Some of such other indexing and abstracting services are Index Medicus/Medlars/Medline/Entrez and Pubmed, Embase/Experta Medica, PubMed Central, Index Copernicus, EBSCOhost (Communication abstracts, current

abstracts, etc.), ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Gale (Academic OneFile, Gender Studies Collection, etc.), ProQuest (ProQuest 5000, Research Library, etc.), Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd. (Linguistic Abstracts) and CrossRef.

Primary Requirements to be Indexed

The journals that seek to be indexed require some minimum standards to be maintained. Most of the newly established commercial-type profit-oriented journals face the challenge of meeting these requirements. To name some such basic requirements, they need to have:

- International Standard Serial Number (ISSN)
- Digital Object Identifiers for all articles (DOIs)
- Editorial board page with names and titles
- Clearly stated peer review policy
- Established publishing schedule
- Established copyright policy
- At least basic article-level metadata
- Publication scope/minimum publication history length/geographic diversity/adequate citations
- Professionalization

Indexed journals also have different standards depending upon some criteria. Some indexed journals do not have an impact

factor, whereas some have (Setiyo, 2020). Achieving a high level of Q rank is another standard. H-index and i10 index are two other standards that appear in Google Scholar citations. What is a Q-rank in indexed journals? Each subject category of journals is divided into four quartiles: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4. Q1 is occupied by the top 25% of journals in the list; Q2 is occupied by journals in the 25 to 50% group; Q3 is occupied by journals in the 50 to 75% group and Q4 is occupied by journals in the 75 to 100% group. The most prestigious journals within a subject area are those which occupy the first quartile, Q1.

The h-index is an author-level metric that measures both the productivity and citation impact of the publications of a scientist or scholar. The index was suggested by Jorge E. Hirsch as a tool for determining theoretical physicists' relative quality and is sometimes called the Hirsch index or Hirsch number. First, we order the values from the largest to the lowest value. Then, we look for the last position in which f is greater than or equal to the position (we call h this position). For example, if we have a researcher with 5 publications A, B, C, D, and E with 10, 8, 5, 4, and 3 citations, respectively, the h-index is equal to 4 because the 4th publication has 4 citations and the 5th has only 3. In contrast, if the same publications have 25, 8, 5, 3, and 3 citations, then the index is 3 (i.e. the 3rd position) because the fourth paper has only 3 citations.

$f(A)=10, f(B)=8, f(C)=5, f(D)=4, f(E)=3 \rightarrow h\text{-index}=4$

$f(A)=25, f(B)=8, f(C)=5, f(D)=3, f(E)=3 \rightarrow h\text{-index}=3$

i10 index is i10-Index = the number of publications with at least 10 citations (Norizi, 2016).

This very simple measure is only used by Google Scholar and is another way to help gauge the productivity of a scholar. The advantages of i10-Index are simple to calculate and My Citations in Google Scholar is free and easy to use.

Understanding what impact factor is also important for academics as the figure of impact factor is considered for some awards in certain countries. In Sri Lanka, this is considered for the presidential academic awards. IF is awarded to the journals indexed in Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports. IF is not available for all indexed journals. The impact factor was devised by Eugene Garfield, the founder of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). Impact factors are calculated yearly starting from 1975 for journals listed in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR). ISI was acquired by Thomson Scientific & Healthcare in 1992 and became known as Thomson ISI. In 2018, Thomson ISI was sold to Onex Corporation and Baring Private Equity Asia. They founded a new corporation, Clarivate, which is now the publisher of the JCR.

Calculating Impact Factor

In any given year, the two-year journal impact factor is the ratio between the number of citations received in that year for publications in that journal that were published in the two preceding years and the total number of “citable items” published in that journal during the two preceding years.

(A)

$$IF \text{ of Year } x = \frac{\text{\# of citations to Journal } X \text{ in the past two years}}{\text{\# of total citable items by Journal } X \text{ in the past two years}}$$

(B)

$$IF \text{ of Journal } X \text{ in } 2012 = \frac{(320) + (225)}{(38) + (73)} = \frac{545}{111} = 4.91$$

A = the number of times articles published in 2008 and 2009 were cited by indexed journals during 2010.

B = the total number of “citable items” published in 2008 and 2009.

A/B = 2010 impact factor (Golubic, Rudes, Covacic, Marusic, & Marusic, 2008).

Advantages of Publishing in Indexed Journals with an Impact

Apart from the professional requirements of attached institutions, publishing in indexed journals is multiple entries to the universe that can broaden our horizons of academic life. Receiving the eligibility for some cash awards and other inspirational rewards, faculty placements, and invitations for different academic events such as editorials, keynote addresses, book chapters, and guest lectures are a few to name. Some world-ranked universities allow their PhD candidates to fulfil thesis requirements by publication. Most probably, once they publish three or more indexed journal articles, they can be put together as the thesis, and they are allowed to be handed over as a means of thesis completion which is called 'thesis by publication'. Also, this kind of publication could create internationally recognized academic figures in the field. The motivation that we receive through this external motivation source is also helpful for academics and researchers to inspire the internal motivation which is required to be with internal contentment.

The Challenges

Humbly, writing is not simple and easy at all. As far as my concern, this is the most difficult job for academics. Academic writing is wholly different from other informal and literary

writings. Academic writing requires meeting a high level of academic standards, following procedures, and avoiding plagiarism. Once all these challenges are met, finding genuine journals and distinguishing predatory journals are the two biggest hampers. Most of the journals that are published by private bodies including state-level institutions operating as profit-oriented organisations ask for higher page charges. Some journals have unique payment methods that need PayPal or some other accounts to complete the payment process. There should be technical knowledge as well in these cases. If the journal does not charge from authors, the backlog of received articles is very big in those free journals. Thus, the waiting time to start reviewing takes years. These are some common challenges that the authors may come across when publishing with indexed journals.

Final Remarks

Finally, the fruit of the end is delicious even though the endeavour looks almost impossible or very difficult. Those who have obtained rid of this hurdle, enjoy the benefits of being truly accepted and genuine academics and researchers. Those who get stuck with the financial challenges of publishing could enter the field through free publications that consume a little more time while the others who are capable of paying to have the other door. If you start at least with entry-level journals with some abstracting and indexing may end up someday with

prestigious publications. But, if we take this as an impossible task or take it for granted, we may further suffer and be limited merely to our own cages where there are no universal access points as academics. They can be considered as confined academics or home-grown academics who closed their own doors by limiting themselves to avoid being cosmopolitan academics who are not very much required for the current world. The current world needs cosmopolitan academics who follow the scientific procedure to publicize the production of research-based knowledge.

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Biographical Note

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