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Lessons Learned as Author and Editor

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Lessons Learned as Author and Editor
Connie Foster, Western Kentucky University
Editor, *Serials Review*

Writing and editing are dynamic, creative processes. At some point both author and editor must release the finished product and submit to the production process (more copy editing, proofing and queries). To offer the best manuscript possible, keep in mind the following points:

1. Surround yourself with current, concise reference resources (a good dictionary, style manual, thesaurus and, for occasional moments of inspiration, a book on effective writing, such as William Zinsser's *On Writing Well* and Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*). Select topics which interest you. Seek ideas from discussions on electronic lists, in-house studies that can be placed in a broad context with a literature review, or hot topics at conferences.
2. Organize, organize, organize. Revise, revise, revise. The process of revision is more important than the initial writing. How many revisions? While strictly up to you, I suspect that even the best of authors probably average five, six, ten revisions, minimum!
3. Know the finer points of grammar that drive editors crazy: where to place punctuation when using quotation marks, how to use quotations appropriately, avoiding first person narrative and passive voice.
4. Read the instructions to authors before you begin so that you can establish font, type, spacing. Refer to the recommended style manual for endnotes or footnotes, citation of electronic resources, spelling conventions, file format for graphs, figures, tables, charts.

5. Avoid co-authoring. Why? Only the lead author gets proofs, only one author gets first citation, only very dedicated personalities working alike can carry equal responsibilities in the process and emerge still speaking to each other.
6. Have a colleague or someone not in the profession read your manuscript. Although this process bares your professional soul and seems awkward, it is one way of soliciting valuable criticism.
7. Submit accurate figures, tabulations, and consistencies between text and figures. Triple check these! Document pages, volumes, issues, dates of sources correctly the first time, so that you do not have to track later.

An editor's delight is receiving a carefully prepared manuscript. If you are uncertain whether your manuscript fits the scope of the journal, discuss your thesis with the editor.

Guidelines for the submission process not covered above are the following:

1. Only submit your article to one journal at a time. Never play off one journal against the other. Peer review and editorial comments require significant time and analysis.
2. Contact the editor if you have not had a response within a reasonable time. Usually an editor will inform you of the status (being peer reviewed, ready to return with comments, etc.). If you feel the delay is unworkable, talk to the editor!
3. Learn from rejections. Learn from acceptances. I have never had anyone refuse to revise, even more than once. While your ego may be temporarily deflated, taking a deep breath and pounding the keyboard is well worth producing a strong, quality article.

Writing is a challenge and a satisfaction. The more you write the more comfortable you will become in creating a niche in the information universe and sharing research and experiences with a community of scholars and industry professionals.