Writing for Publication: Personal & Editorial Perspectives

@MariaJGrant
Research Fellow, University of Salford, UK
Editor, Health Information & Libraries Journal
My Background

• 1987–1990, First job in a hospital library
• 1990-1993, BA (Hons) in Library and Information Science, University of Central England
• 1994-1995, Government Agencies/Departments: Health and Safety Executive and Employment Department
• 1995-1998, National Information Services: UK Clearing House on Health Outcomes and the Centre for Health Information Quality
• 1998-Present, University of Salford
Where is the University of Salford?

- North West of England
- 1.5 miles from Manchester city centre
- Manchester United Football Club
Me and Writing for Publication

- 1998, I contributed to my first journal paper
- 2003, I first began to contribute to the evidence base in the form of a commentary
- 2004, I put myself forward as a peer reviewer
- 2005, I published my first solo peer-review for a journal
- 2006, I was appointed as Review Editor
- 2009, I was appointed Editor-in-Chief
Structure of This Presentation

- Personal experiences of writing for publication
- Editorial experiences of writing for publication

Personal Experiences of Writing for Publication

• In 2006, an external speaker came to talk about ‘Getting Published’ at the University of Salford

• Lots of reasons for not writing
  – Lack confidence, motivation or momentum
  – Lack systems to encourage, develop and support novice writers

• What can we do to address these problem?

http://phil-race.co.uk/
What Did the Evidence Suggest?

Four options were identified to support writing activity within the university. They were:

– Writing courses run by experts
– Writing retreats to avoid distractions
– How to guides on writing for publication
– Writing groups
Option 1: Writing Courses

• Run by someone with experience in writing for publication
• Time limited option
• Unlikely to have central funding

http://phil-race.co.uk/
Option 2: Writing Retreats

- Taken away from every day distractions
- Able to focus purely on the task of writing
- How sustainable was this in the longer term?

Option 3: ‘How To’ Guides on Writing for Publication

- Step by step guides
- Practical advice
- Exercises

Option 4: Writing Groups

- With or without a facilitator
- Provide momentum
- ‘Provide a collegial and supportive environment between peers’


Cross Disciplinary Writers’ Group

• Summer of 2006 an invitation was sent out
• No preconceptions about what the group might look like
• Knew that it was unlikely that there would be any centrally funded support
• The writers’ group would need to be a self supporting enterprise
What Would the Group Look Like?

• At the first meeting we determined the group's terms of reference
  – When we would meet
  – How long we would meet for
  – How regularly we would meet
  – Structure of meeting

Structure of Meetings

• Chairing and make notes of the meeting
• Provide updates on our writing activity
  – Student reports, emails, writing for newsletters
• Lead a writing activity
• Provide feedback on writing
• Set goals for what we would like to achieve before the next meeting
# Schedule of Meetings

## Writers’ Group Schedule 2010 - 2011

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month, 12 noon - 1.30pm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Open Activity</th>
<th>Writing for Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07-Oct</td>
<td>RG004</td>
<td>Farad</td>
<td>Stan</td>
<td>Planning your writing career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-Nov</td>
<td>Maxwell 921</td>
<td>Jaye</td>
<td>Frances Bell</td>
<td>Peer review: writing and responding</td>
<td>Sian Etherington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-Dec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>meeting cancelled due to snow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-Feb</td>
<td>RG003</td>
<td>Farad</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Strategies for planning long term writing activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-Mar</td>
<td>M6258</td>
<td>Jaye</td>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>Online writing strategies &amp; blogging</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07-Apr</td>
<td>M5160</td>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Writing Sandwich</td>
<td>Maria J Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-May</td>
<td>M5160</td>
<td>Sian</td>
<td>Jaye</td>
<td>Reading as part of writing</td>
<td>Sian Etherington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-Jun</td>
<td>M5261</td>
<td>Leslie</td>
<td>Sian</td>
<td>No open activity but two writing for feedback</td>
<td>Cristina Costa AND Jaye Milsaac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07-Jul</td>
<td>M6261</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Review of year and planning</td>
<td>Janet Suckley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Activities

• What is a writing activity?
  – Exercise or discussion about any topic relating to writing

• Where do the ideas for writing activities come from?
  – Reading about writing

• What were the writing activities?
  – Getting started
  – Mining projects for papers
  – Negotiating authorship
  – Nutshelling
Writing Activities 1: Negotiating Authorship

- Different disciplines have different standards
  - Who is an author?
  - How do you wish to be cited?
  - How do you decide on the sequence of authors?
  - What strategies can be adopted to avoid disputes?

Negotiating Authorship – Question Sheet

Attribution can become a contentious issue when more than one person is involved in a research project, the writing of a research report or a journal paper.

The following five questions are posed to identify interpretations and alternative practices which group members may find helpful in negotiating authorship:

- What does authorship mean?
- Who is an author?
- How do you wish to be cited?
- How do you decide on the sequence of authors?
- What strategies can be adopted to avoid disputes?
Writing Activities 2: Nutshelling

• Defining our topic in less than 200 word
• A technique we were using with our students but not applying to our own practice

Providing Writing for Feedback

- Develop a protocol for providing feedback
  - Responding to the ideas
  - Adopt a solution-orientated approach
  - Be specific
  - Be constructive
Setting Writing Goals for the Next Meeting

• To maintain the momentum
• When we are actively thinking about our writing
• Making a public commitment to writing

http://bit.ly/mZCQnS
What Purpose Does the Writing Group Serve?

• Five years later we are still meeting
• Rather than ‘finding’ time for writing activity, we actively schedule time
• Engaging with a range of writing related activities has broadened our writing horizons
  – Identify opportunities for adapting our projects for different audiences
  – Levels of output and acceptance rates have increased

Outputs From the Writers’ Group

- Books and book chapters
- Conferences
  - Oral presentations
  - Poster presentations
- Journal articles
  - Non-peer reviewed articles
  - Peer-reviewed articles
- Reports
  - Internally funded
  - Externally funded
- Others
  - Editorship
  - Peer reviewing
  - Writing for publication workshops
Editorial Experiences of Writing for Publication

• Invitation to write
• Peer review of other peoples writing
• Commissioning of manuscripts
• Editing manuscripts
  – Advising author/s
  – Synthesising referees comments
Health Information and Libraries Journal

- Established in 1984
- Official journal of the Health Libraries Group of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
- Jointly owned by the Health Libraries Group and Wiley-Blackwell Publishing
- Published quarterly

Key Milestones

• 2001 - Introduction of Regular Features
• 2006 – Accepted for inclusion in the Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor)
• 2007 - Introduction of Reviews
• 2008 - 25\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary issue
• 2009 - Impact Factor
• 2010 - Virtual Issues

A Typical Issue of the Health Information and Libraries Journal

- Editorial
- A review article
- Original articles
- Regular features
- Obituaries

• Introduced in March 2007
• Different types of review require different approaches
  – Literature review vs systematic review
  – State-of-the-art
  – Overview
• Speak with Review Editor before starting work on a review
Original Articles

• 6-8 original articles published in each issue
  – Educating and training health library and information workers
  – Identifying health information needs and use
  – Information technology and its application in healthcare settings
  – Managing health information programmes and services in the changing environment
  – Outreach to healthcare providers as users of health information services
Regular Features

• International Perspectives and Initiatives
• Learning and Teaching in Action
• Using Evidence in Practice

• Content is usually commissioned by the feature editor
Manuscript Types Submitted, June 2010 - May 2011*

* 155 manuscripts handled by the editorial office, representing 68 unique submissions and subsequent revisions.
Manuscripts Submitted by Geographic Area
June 2010 to May 2011

UK: 28%
Europe: 22%
North America: 15%
Central Eurasia: 9%
East Asia: 7%
South Asia: 6%
Australasia: 9%
South Africa: 3%
South America: 1%
A Typical Manuscript

• Submitted online via ScholarOne Manuscripts (S1M)
• First assessment by the editorial team
• Assignment to at least 2 referees
  – If there is a consensus a decision is recorded
  – If there is a disagreement a further referee is invited
• Usually 2 revisions before a final decision is made
  – Not unusual for 3 or 4 revisions to be required
Contact with Editorial Teams

• Is the manuscript within scope?
• Usually invite to submit a structured abstract
  – Determine whether the manuscript is likely to fit within the journals aims and scope
• Will still need to be peer reviewed
  – To determine quality of the methodology and the reporting
Challenges When Writing for Publication

@MariaJGrant
Editor