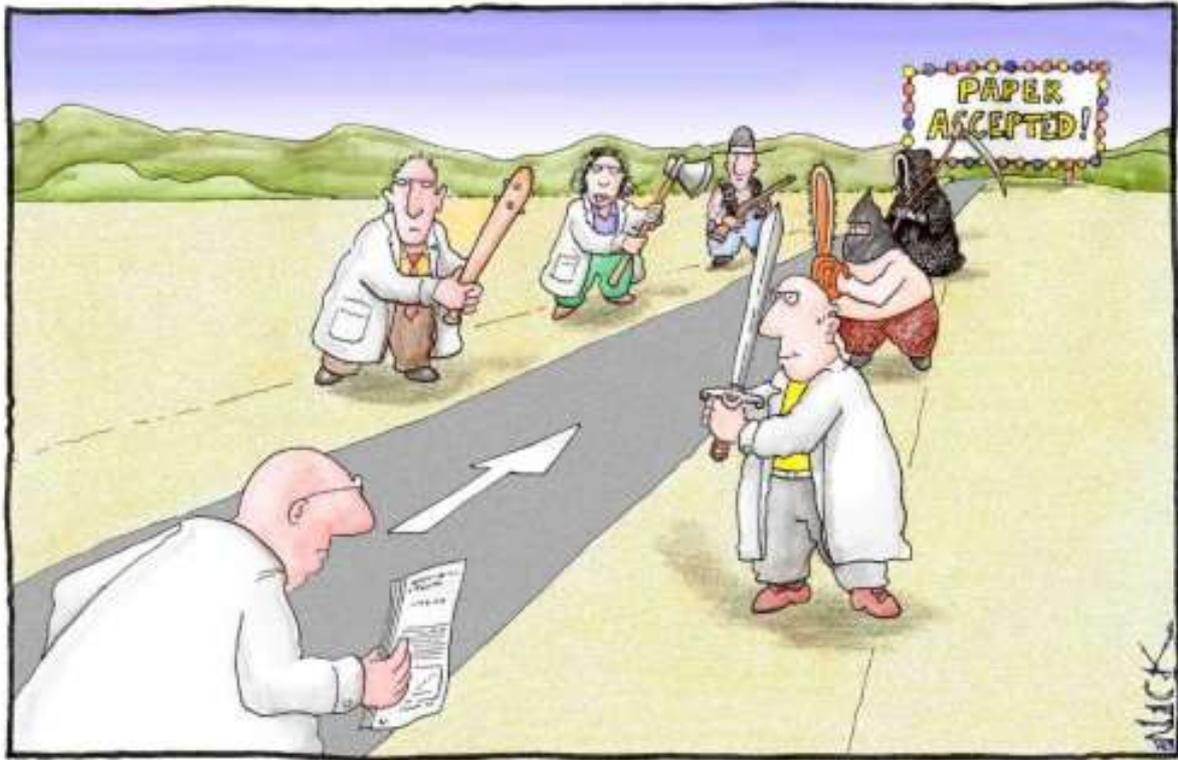


# Introduction to academic publishing- for researchers doing ecosystem or poverty-related research



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined  
peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

ESSA-University of Antananarivo (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014)

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Oryx

CONSERVATION  
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This seminar drew on material prepared for similar events by Bangor University, Oryx (the International Journal of Conservation), University of Canberra, Newcastle University (Australia). The accompanying materials (available on a memory stick) include material from Day, R.A. (1994). *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Cambridge University Press. [ISBN 0 521 558980]

## Agenda (the timing will be flexible)

Welcome from Bruno Ramamonjisoa

Introduction to academic publishing: Why do you want to publish? What are barriers to publishing? What is Open Access publishing and what does it mean for Malagasy scientists? How to choose a journal.

Understanding the peer review process: the process, how to respond to reviewer's comments, how to learn more and prepare yourself.

Getting published: Writing backwards, how to frame an introduction, writing a good abstract (including an exercise).

Helping your audience find the paper (the value of a bit of self-promotion post publication!)

Closing remarks from Jeannicq Randrianarisoa

## Goals of workshop:

- Understanding academic publishing
- The peer review process
- Getting published
- Helping your audience find the paper (self promotion!)

## 1) Understanding academic publishing

- why publish?
- the good and bad of open access
- selecting the right journal

## Why do you want to publish in academic journals?

- Because the research matters and people need to know the results!
- To avoid the research being a waste of resources and time
- To synthesise and build consensus about what is known
- As a training or academic requirement or requirement of funder
- In order to demonstrate impact as a researcher
- Because it is part of the career ladder - '**Publish or Perish**' (quote from Jonah Ratsimbazafy) -certainly true for those wanting international research careers

To show how much a researcher publishes- metrics are increasingly used

- Could simply report number of papers
- OR total number of citations
- H index (tries to capture a combination of number of papers and citations of those papers)
- 



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## What are the barriers to publishing?

Evidence of barriers to publishing in Madagascar:

- University of Antananarivo (only Malagasy Uni on list) is 83<sup>rd</sup> out of 100 top Universities in Africa
- There are many excellent, active Malagasy researchers-but much research stays in reports

## The good and bad sides of Open Access for Malagasy researchers

Traditional model: subscription journals:

- no cost to authors (except colour/extra pages)
- readers pay through subscription fees ('pay wall')
- Good for scientists in Madagascar as no fee to publish BUT
- Bad for scientists in Madagascar as you have to pay to access articles (so it is to hard to keep up with the literature)

Open Access: new model (c. 20 years old but growing fast):

- readers access articles for free
- authors pay publishing fee for each manuscript ALTHOUGH SOME TOTALLY FREE e.g. Madagascar Conservation and Development
- Good for scientists in Madagascar as you can easily access articles BUT
- Bad for scientists in Madagascar as often hard to get fees to publish

**NB Many open access journals (e.g. PLOS ONE) offer reductions or fee waivers for authors from low income countries**

## Selecting the right journal

- Targeting the right audience (*who do I want to read it?*)
- Targeting the right journal (*does the journal publish this type of research?*)
- Targeting for your benefit (*where will I get the most impact?*)
- How to do it
- Avoiding predatory journals
- Useful resources

Selecting the right journal-audience

- Who should read this work?
- What does this audience read?
- Choose a journal which your desired audience can access!

Selecting the right journal: subject/content

- Check the details of what articles a journal accepts carefully to avoid wasting time

Selecting the right journal: Impact Factor

- Impact factor (the average number of citations an article gets) is often used to rank journals
- High impact (>20) e.g. Nature , Science are seen as more prestigious BUT
- really excellent journals often have an impact factor of 2-8
- Some very good journals publishing valuable research have impact factor of <2 e.g. Oryx,
- IF doesn't account for use of research by policy-makers/practitioners
- High impact good for your careers
- NB most journals have quite low Ifs (see fig 1)



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- And remember target audience may never see high IF journals  
Remember that high IF journals have high rejection rates (see fig 2)

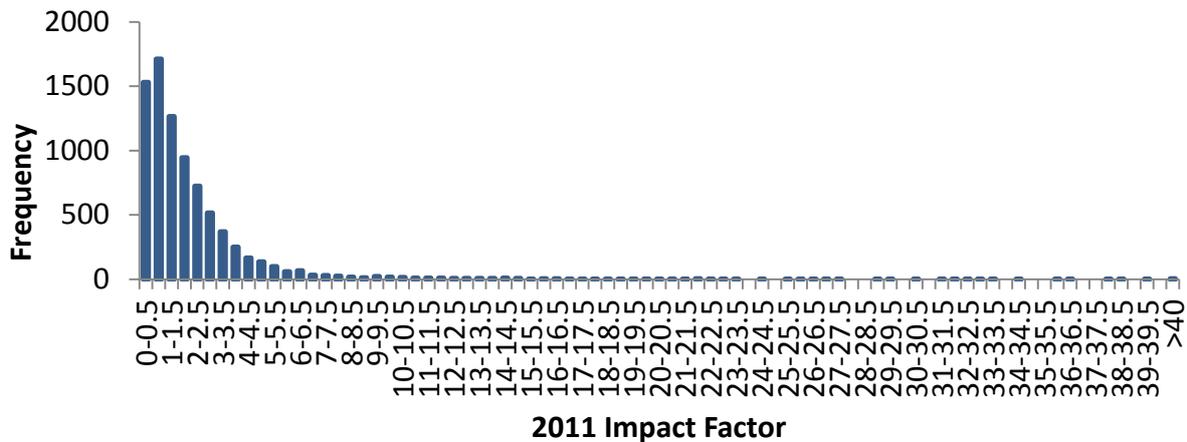
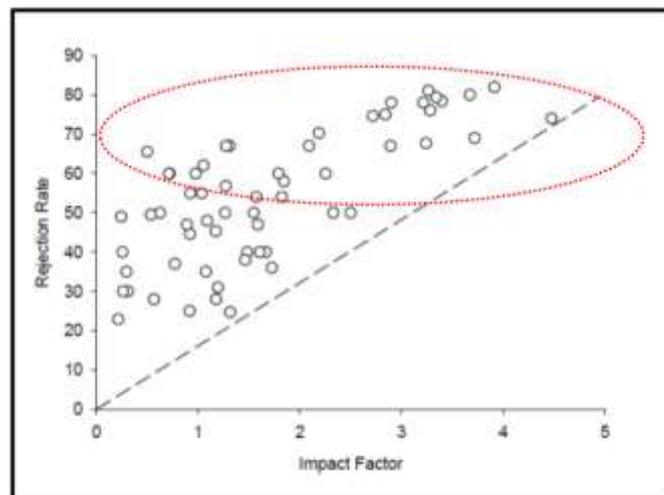


Figure 1. The frequency of journals generally decreases as the impact factor increases. Most journals have an impact factor between 0-5.



Aarssen, L. W., et al. "Bang for your buck: rejection rates and impact factors in ecological journals." *Open Ecology Journal* 1 (2008): 14-19. [http://berthamsciencepublisher.com/openoecol/articles/0001/14TOECCOL\\_1.pdf](http://berthamsciencepublisher.com/openoecol/articles/0001/14TOECCOL_1.pdf)

Figure 2. Journals with a high impact factor usually have a high rejection rate.

Selecting the right journal: how

- Search Google Scholar for similar research and see where it is published
- Familiarity (which journal publishes the research you most frequently read/cite in your work?)
- Look at your reference list
- Ask advice of colleagues
- Read the aims and scope of possible journals

See Fig 3 for how other authors choose a journal....


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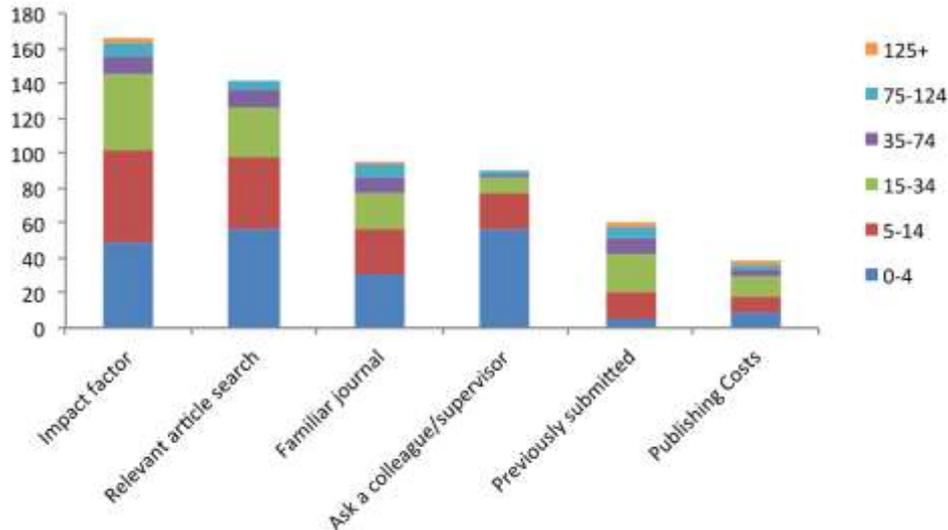


Figure 3. Use of information in journal choice when submitting a manuscript for publication in an academic journal (from Haddaway in prep).

Selecting the right journal: avoiding predatory journals

What is a *predatory* journal?

- advent of Open Access means that journals don't need subscription fees-just need to persuade authors to publish
- Predatory journals are driven by income; the more published articles the better
- journals will accept poor quality research, very crude peer-review if at all...
- publishing in a predatory journal is often viewed as being detrimental to careers

How to spot a predatory journal: Beall's List is a list of publishers and journals that have been assessed based on key criteria

- editorial board not named
- no academic information (affiliations etc.) for editorial board
- identical editorial boards for different journals
- poor/lack of information on publishing processes
- no archiving policy (e.g. DOI codes)
- journal name mimics an existing, well-respected journal (e.g. adding 'International' to title)
- See <http://scholarlyoa.com/2012/11/30/criteria-for-determining-predatory-open-access-publishers-2nd-edition/> for complete list of criteria

Selecting the right journal: useful resources: JANE (Journal Author Name Estimator)

<http://www.biosemantics.org/jane/>

## 2) Understanding the peer review process

Editor's decisions:

- 1) Reject (usually on scope)-NB up to 92% for some journals!
- 2) Minor revision
- 3) Reject but resubmission encouraged (this is a major revision/rewrite/reanalysis)



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4) Accept (usually subject to some minor conditions)  
*NB 4 is almost unheard of at 1<sup>st</sup> submission!*

- Submission to publication often takes > 1 year
- AND can be a painful and fraught process
- EXPECT that the hard work is far from over when you submit!

How to respond to decision letter from editor:

- Write a cover letter where you thank editors and reviewers and include the main changes/improvements you have made
- Then a long, detailed document where you respond to each point made by reviewers/editors in turn, showing exactly how you have changed the manuscript
- YOU need to do the work for them. Don't expect them to have to re-read their decision letter and your resubmission and your response to match up changes made!

Great ways to learn about the process:

- Review for international journals
- Join their editorial boards
- (NB all such work is unpaid but it is great experience and will help you write papers which get published)

### 3) Getting published (delivered by Deborah Bower, Madagasikara Voakajy)

Write backwards....

Step 1) Write the conclusions

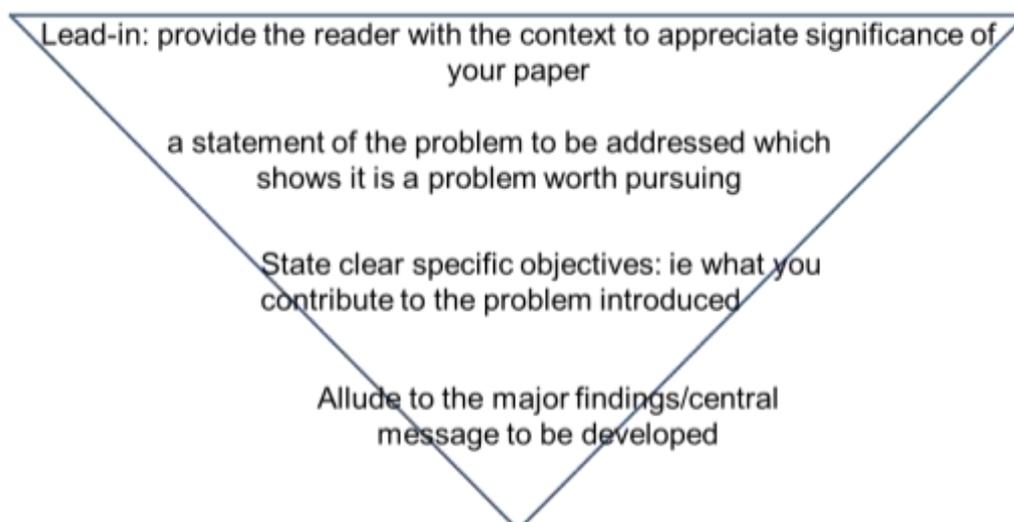
Step 2) Write only the results necessary to support the conclusion

Step 3) Write only the methods necessary to understanding how the results were obtained

Step 4) Write the discussion including only additional information (eg literature) that modifies, extends, confirms or contradicts conclusions based on your results

Step 5) Write the introduction which will have only the minimum information necessary to introduce the questions to which the conclusions are the answers

Framing your paper to make it attractive:



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How not to write an introduction....

*'The infiltration rates of soils in eastern Madagascar have seldom been studied. We provide the first data from eastern Madagascar showing how infiltration depends on land use.....'*

Don't justify importance based on the fact that something isn't known (there is a lot we don't know!)

*'Soil infiltration is important because it affects the rate at which water reaches rivers (therefore influencing flood risk and dry season flows). In Madagascar, rice farmer's livelihoods are heavily influenced by flood and dry season drought....'*

Much better to make a case for why the work matters!

Writing a good abstract:

- 1) Motivation/problem statement:** Why do we care about the problem? What practical, scientific or theoretical gap is your research filling?
- 2) Methods/approach:** What did you actually do to get your results? (e.g. walked 30 transects, interviewed 750 students, carried out 20 focus groups)
- 3) Results/findings/product:** What did you learn?
- 4) Conclusion/implications:** What are the larger implications of your findings, especially for the problem/gap identified in step 1?

Do your homework!

Make sure you follow guidelines on:

- Referencing style
- Font size and type, line spacing, page numbering, margin sizes
- Word limits
- UK vs US English
- Standards for abbreviations
- Details about how to submit tables and charts e.g. separate sheets, file format, minimum resolution
- Copyright declarations
- Ethical approval

*If a paper is not in accordance with specific journal guidelines, it is likely to be returned unread no matter how interesting the subject matter.*

Useful resources on writing

- <http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/writing/introductions>
- <http://abacus.bates.edu/~ganderso/biology/resources/writing/HTWsections.html#abstract>

#### **4) Helping the audience find your paper (self-promotion is a good thing here!)**

Once you get a paper published you need the target audience to find it. You can blog or post on relevant fora (e.g. Madagascar Environmental Justice Network, TBA alumni list) or even email directly relevant people. You want people to find your work so that they can use it.

Use social media to publicise publications: many researchers find papers to read from their twitter stream. There is a very active conservation, development and ecology community on twitter which is worth connecting with. At the very least post your new papers on your personal facebook site as at least encourage friends in your field to publish.



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