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A JOURNAL EDITOR'S GUIDE TO PUBLISHING ETIQUETTE

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Academics suffer no dearth of advice manuals and guides to charting their scholarly careers. Some graduate programs offer instruction in professionalism, ethics, and etiquette as part of their academic training. But often the fine points of scholarly practice and manners are forgotten in the pressure to develop, research, write, and defend a dissertation, or in the ceaseless round of teaching, committee work, and squeezed-in research that accompanies most academic jobs. What follows is a set of guidelines to journal publishing based on my seven years' experience as editor of *Slavic Review*, during which time I have dealt with more than 880 manuscripts and over 1,600 referees. (And in answer to the most frequently asked question: yes, I read every one of those manuscripts.) My goal is to demystify the process of publishing a journal article, to present my own view of what authors should expect from journal editors and vice versa, and to offer some words of advice on scholarly ethics.

The process of submitting a scholarly article for publication is usually prolonged, but can be tolerable if one knows the rules of the game. It starts with scholarly research, crafted into an article of about 25 pages or so (about 7,000 words), containing a clear argument, new research, and a well-articulated sense of its contribution to its scholarly field. The typical conference paper, meant to be read in twenty minutes, is usually too brief for submission to a journal. A manuscript that is longer than 40 pages is usually too dense or baggy to be readable, and we ask authors of such

manuscripts to shorten them. A clear statement of the paper's purpose and thesis should appear within the first two or three pages. Situating the work within the broader scholarly literature indicates to readers both the author's knowledge of the scholarly conversation in which he or she seeks to participate and a sense of the originality of the contribution.

Many scholars work in multiple and overlapping fields. When writing an article, one should consider for which of the multiple audiences this particular piece is best suited: in Slavic studies, scholars generally seek to place some of their work in disciplinary journals, and other work in area studies journals. In the former, one may need to explain the specific context of one's work; in the latter, it is important to make methodology clear to readers from outside one's own discipline. Before selecting a destination for any submission, one should look through the relevant journals to obtain a sense of their content, their audience, and their style. Advance inquiries about whether an article is appropriate for a particular journal are not usually welcome, since an editor is busy reading all the complete submissions. I respond to such inquiries by explaining that *Slavic Review* publishes scholarly articles about the region we cover in all disciplines, and that prospective authors should take a look at the journal to decide for themselves whether their work fits our profile. Some potential contributors may inquire about a particular journal's backlog, which is a fair question especially if the journal editor does not report regularly

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about such matters, but one should not necessarily expect an answer. Most manuscripts are submitted without advance inquiry, and more important, without being solicited.

Most journals publish guidelines for submissions; if they do not, authors should inquire, and then follow the directions as closely as possible. Failure to do so will only delay the process of evaluation. Submissions should be accompanied by a simple cover letter, including coordinates for further contact. One should not praise one's work or criticize others' scholarship. Requests for special handling because of job-seeking or tenure clocks are also inadvisable: authors should know in advance that the publication process can be protracted and plan their schedules accordingly. All journals should acknowledge receipt of the manuscript within a few days; scholars who have submitted a manuscript to a journal and have not received an acknowledgment within two weeks (longer if by overseas post), should not hesitate to inquire.

Once a manuscript is received, the editor will seek outside readers for peer review. At some journals, a member of the editorial board will read a manuscript to advise on whether it should be reviewed and to select reviewers; at others, an editorial board member will serve as one of several referees. At *Slavic Review*, the editorial board members are not automatically included in the initial review process; some may referee manuscripts in their specialties, and others might be called upon to provide a third or fourth opinion when the initial readers disagree. Normally, I send manuscripts to two readers, occasionally three. Referees are selected on the basis of their scholarly expertise, and we make an effort not to overburden such scholars by asking them to read more than one manuscript (or to write more than one book review) per year. Our refereeing policy is double-blind: neither the author nor the referee should know who the other is, and those who submit to *Slavic Review* are asked to prepare their manuscripts in order to preserve their anonymity—remove references to their own work where possible, eliminate initials in parenthetical comments, omit any acknowledgments that might identify them. Other journals follow different policies, and referees have their own preferences. I believe that

double-blind refereeing provides for the most level playing field for both contributors and evaluators.

The time between submitting a manuscript and hearing from an editor is an anxious one, however long or short. We normally request that reviewers complete their reports within two months of receiving the manuscript. Most referees meet their deadlines, but some are inevitably delayed by competing or unforeseen obligations, and occasionally it takes a few extra weeks for the editor to find referees who are free and willing to take on a manuscript for review. Despite these challenges, almost all manuscripts submitted to *Slavic Review* receive an initial decision within four months. When a manuscript has been in the review process longer than four months, I will write the author to explain its status. If a reviewer is late with a report, there is not much that an editor can do beyond sending encouraging reminders and hoping to receive a response and an indication of when the report might be completed. If a reviewer falls completely out of contact, an editor usually has no choice but to seek a new reader, which will of course further delay the time to a decision.

After receiving all reports, I reread the manuscript against the reports, and make a decision about publication. I am guided by the content of the reviews and the recommendations of the referees concerning publication, but I am not bound by their views: many factors contribute to a final decision about what is accepted, and editors retain broad discretionary power. A few manuscripts are accepted as they are, without need for further revision. Others are accepted with suggestions for optional or required revisions. By far, the most common decision is a recommendation to "revise and resubmit." There is a perception that this is just a gentle (or cowardly) way of rejecting a paper, but that is not true at *Slavic Review*. Most papers benefit from at least one round of revision. Some manuscripts look more promising at this stage than others, however, and in my letter to the author, I try to calibrate my own degree of enthusiasm for the prospective chances of eventual success. When the current manuscript is far from publishability and requires extensive revisions, but still possesses good potential, I will explain that success cannot be guaranteed, that it might be time to try an-

other journal, but that we would be willing to consider a revision. I have learned from experience that I cannot predict how an author will respond to a recommendation for extensive revisions. Some respond brilliantly, others do not. In every case of "revise and resubmit," I try to summarize the referees' evaluations and, where necessary, to indicate how I agree or disagree with the particular points they raise. If an author is invited to revise the manuscript, this is a sincere invitation, and revisions will be considered carefully and fairly.

Normally, authors do not need to respond to these decision letters unless invited specifically to do so. It is particularly unnecessary to write a detailed refutation of the reports. Authors who do not agree with the recommendations of the referees and the editor, should think about whether they have made their case as clearly as they thought. But if there remains a significant difference of opinion, one should consider submitting the work to a different journal. Scholars and editors do disagree, and another journal, another editor, or another audience might find the manuscript suits their interests. In the case of interdisciplinary fields like Slavic studies, there is no clear hierarchy of journals, and the assessment of quality and relevance includes a wide latitude for judgment.

If one decides to accept an invitation to revise and resubmit, how long should the revision take? This depends in part upon the nature of the suggested revisions, but it is always a good idea to allow some time to digest the manuscript reports. In some cases where more research is indicated, it may take awhile to find the time to complete it; but in many cases, what is called for is rethinking or restructuring an argument based on existing data. Because the time between the first decision and resubmission is so variable (and of course some authors choose not to resubmit), I consider revisions as they come in, and evaluate them in comparison to the manuscripts currently under review. Authors should keep in mind, too, that the longer the revision takes, the less fresh the project will be in the memories of the referees. Normally, revised manuscripts are sent back to the initial referees, unless they have specifically indicated that they do not wish to read the manuscript again. In any revision, it is helpful if the author summa-

rizes the changes in a cover letter or accompanying pages. At the editor's discretion, this summary may be passed on to the referees. The referees will receive a copy of their earlier report, but not the initial manuscript, which they have already been requested to discard.

If a paper is rejected (and it is true that editors are uncomfortable using the word "reject" outright, so various circumlocutions are often employed), I summarize the reasons why, and include the readers' reports. In some cases, I may recommend alternative venues for publication, for example, more specialized journals. Referees work carefully on all manuscripts they receive—those that are not acceptable and those that are, and authors should benefit from this review process. It would be a mistake, therefore, to take a manuscript that is rejected in one journal and submit it unrevised to another: in the extreme case, it might be read by the same referee again, who would realize that his or her earlier advice had been ignored.

Once a manuscript is accepted for publication, the author will receive a set of guidelines for preparing the final manuscript. It is important to follow these guidelines carefully. Journals establish particular styles that they follow for clarity, readability, and consistency. An author might not agree with certain elements of a journal's style, but this is a time to subordinate personal preferences to the requirements of the journal. *Slavic Review* copy editor, Jane T. Hedges, works closely and cooperatively with authors in order to make their arguments as clear as possible. In a journal like ours, it is particularly important that scholars pay close attention in their final revisions to bibliographic references and spellings of foreign names and words: we check bibliographic citations, and we proofread manuscript and page proofs, but it is the responsibility of the author to turn in a manuscript that is as error-free as possible. Once we have received the final manuscript, we send the author a letter assigning copyright to the AAASS (with conditions for republication in the author's own work); a few months before the date of publication, the author will receive the copyedited manuscript for review and correction, and a month or so later, he or she will have the opportunity to review the printed page proofs. There is always a very short turnaround

time for this last stage, and it is important that the author keep in touch with the journal and be prepared to complete the review within a few days of receiving the page proof. During this stage, authors will be given the opportunity to purchase reprints of the article; some editors and authors believe this is a wasted expense, since photocopies can be made at less cost, but others like to have the bound and printed reprints to give to colleagues. We prefer to give authors this option.

Some broader issues and finer points related to publishing ethics also deserve attention. Allegations of plagiarism by respected scholars have been much in the news lately, although *Slavic Review* has fortunately experienced nothing of the sort. Nor should it. Authors should acknowledge their intellectual and scholarly debts. Our profession is built on the internalization of integrity.

A grayer area of scholarly ethics concerns "multiple submissions" and "double submissions." Scholars should submit each paper to only one journal at a time, and should not submit their work to the same journal too frequently. It is important to place one's work in a variety of venues, anyway. My own rule of thumb (to which there are occasional exceptions) is not to consider more than two manuscripts from a given author, regardless of the project, within a five-year editorial term.

Our policy on double submission stipulates that a manuscript sent to us must not have been published *or be under consideration* anywhere else in any form, in any language. Occasionally a paper may have been given at a conference for which a volume of essays is planned or vaguely discussed. Such a paper should not be submitted to *Slavic Review* unless it is withdrawn from the conference volume project. The editorial board has suggested that a paper ought to be at least 75 percent "new" to escape this stricture against double submission. Likewise, we will not consider manuscripts that have been published (or are under consideration) in other languages, even in part, no matter how obscure and unread: so choose publishing opportunities wisely. Book manuscripts are more complicated: it is useful and important for scholars to publish parts of larger projects in journals, as a way to engage in a scholarly discussion even before the final fruit

of their projects and as a way to alert readers to the larger work to come. Although *Slavic Review* retains the copyright for articles it publishes, we explicitly grant the author the right to republish the article (in any form) in a book for which he or she is the author or editor. If a manuscript submitted to us is also part of a book manuscript under consideration, we might consider it if the article, if accepted, would appear at least a year before the book, if accepted. In cases like this, authors should always consult the editor in advance. If a submitted article is part of a book chapter under contract to a publisher, then we cannot consider it.

Finally, let me use this forum to add a few words on the etiquette of the *curriculum vitae*, based on my work on tenure review committees as well as at the journal. "Submitted to" means a piece has been sent and acknowledged by a journal or press; "submitted" or "under review" also means that the piece is available to be shared with search or tenure committees. "Forthcoming" or "in press" means that a piece is in the hands of a publisher and off the scholar's desk for the last time, and that it is likewise available for circulation. This includes commissioned articles and book reviews, which should not be labeled "forthcoming" until they are written, submitted, and acknowledged. If an author has received a commitment to publish, but the final manuscript is not yet ready, it should be labeled "accepted pending revisions." For everything else, there is the all-purpose "in progress."

Let me stress that different disciplines have different scholarly conventions, and editors may disagree on some of the points I have enumerated above. I have tried to indicate how we do things at *Slavic Review*, and I invite the responses of readers and other editors who may wish to raise additional issues or provide alternative advice.

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