European University Institute

MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

Publishing Strategies & Refereeing Practice

Economics (Ramon Marimon & Fernando Vega-Redondo)
History (Martin Van Gelderen)
Law (Neil Walker)
Social and Political Science (Peter Mair)

Max Weber Programme
Academic Practice Workshop
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Economics

Ramon Marimon & Fernando Vega-Redondo
Report by Marco Lombardi

Max Weber Programme Academic Practice Workshop

"PUBLISHING STRATEGIES AND REFEREEING STRATEGIES"

Summary Report

Publishing Strategies

Economics journals tend to be more similar to natural sciences journals than to social sciences. An indicative list used by CREA makes it possible to rank economic journals in three main categories: top-level general-purpose journals (e.g. American Economic Review, Econometrica); high-level general-purpose journals (e.g. Journal of Monetary Economics, Journal of Econometrics); high-level field journals (e.g. Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control, Journal of Business and Economic Statistics).

Journals published only electronically are also gaining grounds, but they are not yet as important as they are in other fields, such as computer science.

The first issue in defining a publishing strategy is to pick an appropriate journal. A first question is therefore whether it is better to aim at general or field journals. It is always advisable to aim high, even if this increases the time-to-publication: institutions do usually take this into account when evaluating young researchers. Of course the selection also depends on the type of paper, and as a general rule it is useful to consider that the main references quoted in the paper should appear on the journal to which the paper is submitted.

However, it is important to remark that it is useful to have in one's CV both types of journals, and therefore display the ability to publish different kinds of work. As for joint work, it is nowadays well accepted, but it is still useful to also have papers alone or with coauthors of the same cohort, as this signals that one is able to pursue an autonomous research agenda. Instead, publishing in books (e.g. collections of conference papers) should be avoided, especially at the early stage of the career.

Papers should be submitted in a well-written form, as this increases dramatically the chances of being published, especially for not-yet-known young researchers. Researchers should also take into account that research articles should be written in a way which is appealing to the journal they are submitted to. A paper should be clear about: the research question; why it is important to address the topic; its contribution to the literature (not being too defensive, and citing as most as you can); which directions of future research it paves the way for.

It is crucial to write a good abstract as well as a clear and not too long introduction. As a general rule, a paper can be considered well-written when any researcher who has a quick look on it is able to tell the results to her colleagues.

Of course, there is a considerable degree of randomness in the whole process. To minimize the risk it is useful not to focus completely on a single submitted paper but rather to keep pursuing one's research agenda: *keep pedaling, otherwise you will fall.*

The reason for the length of the refereeing process is that in natural sciences results are not checked formally, and the only thing that is evaluated is the usefulness of the contribution. Therefore, the difference is that in economics scientific communication is achieved via the publication of working papers, and publication on a journal is a final evaluation of the quality of the research. Consequence of this is that also working papers have to be written very well. Publishing research results as a WP is also a good way of avoiding other researchers to work on your same topic. Related to this, it is very important to make other researchers aware of what you are doing, and RePEc is very useful for this purpose.

Once a referee report is received, it is important not to take the comments too seriously: after all, one has to always bear in mind the paper he wants to write, not that the referee wants! Well-written replies to the points raised by referees can appropriately explain why some suggestions were not included. This is even more important in the case of rejection: the comments of the referees may indeed be useful, but future referees may disagree: it would be like trying to hit a moving target.

To minimize the risk of having destructive comments on marginal parts of the paper, one may want to write shorter papers, perhaps splitting the product of one's research into several papers. However this strategy could be problematic for junior researchers.

Refereeing Strategies

Refereeing is done for two different purposes: cooperation and competition. On the cooperation side, we do this to be aware of the current research topics in our field, to gain a reputation and to contribute to the quality of the profession. On the competition side, we have to remark that one has to be fair in expressing judgments. When refereeing a paper, it is always advisable to write a separate letter to the editor, in which one can also suggest to send the paper to a different journal. In general, there are three possible final decisions:

1. The paper is good; go on with the suggested improvements.
2. The paper is not a good contribution, reject.
3. The paper has potential but needs substantive improvements.

The third level in a sense puts the issue in the hands of the editor and should be avoided if possible.

History

Martin Van Gelderen
Report by Valentina Fava

Max Weber Programme Academic Practice Workshop

"PUBLISHING STRATEGIES AND REFEREEING STRATEGIES"

Summary Report

On Wednesday, 14 November 2005, 11.15-13.00 an Academic Practice Workshop on "Publishing Strategies and Refereeing Strategies" conducted by Professor *Martin van Gelderen*, European University Institute, took place in the Conference Room at Villa La Fonte. The following Max Weber Fellows were present: Antonio Stopani, Valentina Fava, Heather Jones, Carmen Menchini, Misha Velizhev, Anastasia Stouraiti. Prof. Karin Tilmans and Dr. Arnout Mertens were also present.

1. Introduction

Professor Van Gelderen decided to briefly introduce the issue and to leave time for the audience's questions.

2. The publication of monographs and articles

Professor Van Gelderen suggested focusing on the publication of monographs because in the historical discipline they tend to be still the natural outcome of a good research work or a doctoral thesis. He announced a meeting to be arranged by the end of January with Richard Fisher, who is head of the social sciences and humanities branch of Cambridge University Press.

Professor van Gelderen strongly recommended publishing in English. He pointed out that English language publications are necessary in order to find a job in English-speaking countries and in order to be noticed by the English-speaking academic world at large.

His talk made explicit reference to publishing strategies in English. His second point concerned the choice of a publisher to address. He stressed the importance of both the "hierarchy" among publishers and the "distribution" factor, underlying how CUP, OUP, and in second rank, Palgrave and Routledge are not only the most prestigious publishers in the world but they also guarantee the best distribution and diffusion of their books.

Prof. van Gelderen stressed, however, the impact of the publishers' marketing and business strategies on the decision whether to accept a manuscript or not. This applies mainly to an author's first book.

Despite the balance of the academic books' market segment is always passive, the proposal of a book must indicate clearly the "audience" the book is likely to appeal: the wider the audience in term of disciplinary range, the greater the chances of publication. In this regard, he suggested sending the publishers manuscripts instead of book proposals. He enlightened how once the publisher has asked someone to read and evaluate the book he has already made an investment in the book and is unlikely to turn it down.

Professor van Gelderen stressed also that publishing with prestigious publishers mean also to go through a time-consuming process. The time lag between the submission of the proposal or manuscript and the final exit in the book shops can be very long, from one year and a half to two years.

However, Professor van Gelderen suggestion is to try our best to publish with those companies. There is another comparative advantage which is the quality of the copy editor, which is extremely high among the top publishers and extremely low, mainly done by the authors, among the others.

Some questions concerned the problem of translation. According to Martin van Gelderen, it is better to avoid translation and no top publisher is likely to pay for translations either publish "declared" translations. The problem of property rights was raised, as well as the costs of publication: the top publishers are not charging the authors for publishing their work; they give the authors a decent numbers of free copies and pay property rights. Finally they guarantee to advertise the product world-wide, providing libraries with copies. However, Professor van Gelderen suggests once the book has been accepted to go through a bargaining process.

Concerning the content of the book: the internal coherence of a book is one of the most important points that referees tend to notice: a book organised as a collection of essays has not much chance of being published, especially if the essays have already been published elsewhere. In this regard, he faced the issue of the publication of articles, stressing the importance of refereed journals.

Law

Neil Walker
Report by Giesela Rühl

Max Weber Programme Academic Practice Workshop

“PUBLISHING STRATEGIES AND REFEREEING STRATEGIES”

Summary Report

On Wednesday, 14 November 2005, 9.30-11.15 am the Max Weber Programme Academic Practice Workshop on “Publishing Strategies and Refereeing Strategies” for the Law Max Weber Fellows conducted by Professor *Neil Walker*, European University Institute, took place in the Conference Room of Villa La Fonte. From the Max Weber Fellows *Hannes Hofmeister*, *Ming-Sung Kuo*, *Francesco Maiani*, *Ekaterina Mouliarova*, *Roman Petrov* and *Giesela Rühl* were present. *Arthur Dyevre* participated in the Workshop conducted by Professor *Peter Mair*, European University Institute for the SPS Max Weber Fellows.

1. Introduction

Before going into the merits *Neil Walker* gave a brief overview of the structure of the Workshop. He pointed out that he had had a look at everybody’s CVs and Publications. Since everybody had published before he had decided not to discuss general publishing strategies but to structure the Workshop around selected issues and most importantly dilemmas revolving around publications.

2. Relationship of Academic Profile and Publications

The first issue that *Neil Walker* raised and discussed during the Workshop concerned the relationship of academic profile and publications. Pointing to his experience both as a supervisor and as a member of numerous selection committees he underlined that it was of highest importance to have a discernable and plausible academic profile. In view of the discernability he emphasized that everybody had to identify or consciously choose his or her own profile (generalist, single specialist, multiple specialist, serial specialist). In view of the plausibility he stressed that the profile had to have a logical connection to the publications (published or work in progress). If the connection was not obvious to an outside observer he recommended structuring the list of publications around certain topics or to number the publications and refer to these numbers when describing the academic profile.

3. Relationship of Books and Articles

The second issue that *Neil Walker* focused on during the Workshop was the relationship between the publication of monographs and the publication of articles. He made clear that he considered this relationship to be one of the central dilemmas of legal publishing since monographs and articles signalled different abilities crucial for academia: The publication of monographs was usually regarded as a proof of seriousness and the ability to serious research. However, people usually would not read monographs. Therefore, they would usually not build reputation but rather strengthen the reputation built somewhere else. Articles, in contrast, were considered as a proof of breadth. Since they were read by people they were the crucial element for building up reputation. Against this background, he recommended to strike a fair balance between the publication of articles and the publication of monographs. More specifically, he suggested to link the publication of articles and the publication of monographs by publishing the main ideas in articles before publishing the monograph.

4. Relationship of Articles and Collections

The third issue that *Neil Walker* put on the agenda of the Workshop revolved around the relationship of articles in law journals and contributions to collections. In contrast to the relationship of books and articles which he considered rather difficult to define *Neil Walker* strongly recommended to go for articles in law journals. Pointing to the economics and politics of publishing he stressed that it was much more difficult and therefore more prestigious to publish an article in a good journal than to contribute to a collection. Since it had become easier and easier to publish books, the last years had witnessed a proliferation of collections leading to decreased prestige of contributions to collections.

5. Language of Publications

The final issue that *Neil Walker* raised during the Workshop concerned the language of publications. Here, he strongly recommended to publish in English since English had developed into the lingua franca of legal academia in Europe. He pointed out that English language publications were necessary in order to find a job in English-speaking countries and in order to be noticed by the English-speaking academic world at large. At the same time, he rejected the notion that publishing *only* in English would constitute an advantage. He rather stressed that what is really needed is good proof of the ability of writing scientific contributions in English.

6. Miscellaneous Questions

At the end of the Workshop the participants raised various questions. They revolved around the value of textbooks and treatises, the publication of Max Weber Working Papers, the relationships of electronic and print publications as well as the problem of double submissions. *Neil Walker* gave useful information and advice on all of these issues.

Social and Political Science

Peter Mair
Report by Stephanie Lee Mudge

Max Weber Programme Academic Practice Workshop

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Summary Report

This report details the content of, and offers feedback on, the Academic Practice Workshop (APW) on Publishing Strategies, which was given by Peter Mair for the SPS Max Weber Fellows (and Arthur Dyevre, who attended the SPS session because he has an interest in publishing in social science journals). The present report covers, first, the content of the session, and then offers commentary and feedback (in the final section).

I. Content of the session

A. Discussion of journal rankings and 'impact factor' calculation

- can be found on the ISI Web of Knowledge
- the impact factor is based on current-year citations to articles published in the last two years. Journals are adapting to the use & influence of the measure – publishing articles citing articles from own journal in last two years (though this is not necessarily an important consideration for reviewing initial article submissions). Numbers are small, so the impact factor is very manipulable. [PM discussed, for instance, how *European Journal of Political Research* suddenly became the #3 journal in political science in 2005 by changing its citation requirements for a data supplement].
- Reviewers look for 'citable' articles - though this is perhaps not as much an issue for, say, top 3 journals. (So this is why writing a review article is a good thing - PM encouraged us to do this.)

B. Prestige hierarchy of publications (from least prestigious to most) [and also, categories for listing things on your CV]:

5. *Book reviews.* PM encouraged us to only write book reviews if they are going to be positive – negative book reviews only make enemies, and in any case book reviews help you very little in professional terms.
4. *Conference papers.* Obviously these don't count as publications, but they show that you are working on things/have things in the pipeline – shows that you're in the game.
3. *Working papers/online papers*. These are increasingly a good idea, says PM. They shouldn't interfere with later journal publication. Among their virtues: they get feedback right away, and allow you to copyright your ideas right away (both can take a long time in traditional journal publication). Working papers are often widely read.
2. *Book chapters.* Articles are always better than book chapters, so if there is a choice, opt for article publication. The problem with book chapters is that they tend to not have much of an impact because they're hidden—tucked away in a book, in a library. If you do publish a book chapter, make sure to put an online version on your website. [Also, PM mentioned

here that if you write a handbook, like the SAGE handbooks, they should be listed on your CV with book chapters.]

1. ***Journal articles.*** (including articles for special issues of journals.) Obviously, these are most important. PM offered certain pointers and guidelines:

a. Always, without fail, send your article to ONLY one journal at a time
b. Send it to the appropriate journal—this means study journals' topics, and choose the right one for your piece
c. Be realistic about the quality of your article, but don't worry too much about aiming too high. If you go for a top journal it will probably be rejected, but odds are it will be rejected on the first try anywhere, and with a top journal you'll get very good feedback/serious reviews
d. Appearance counts. The paper should be complete – with references, tables, conclusion, and abstract. It should look nice in layout and presentation; should look finished. This is partly for the sake of the referees—you don't want to alienate them. Keep to the word limit (this becomes a little more flexible with a resubmission).
e. Always accept invitations to revise and resubmit. This means the door is half open, and you should take advantage of that. If you can't solve a problem that a reviewer highlights, or if it's too difficult, footnote it to that effect—indicate an acknowledgment of the problem, indicate your awareness and offer some suggestions on how you'll address it in future research. When you resubmit, always include a letter along with it. The letter should be polite; it should explain that you found the reviews valuable and how you address their suggestions. Acknowledge the referees in the revision.
f. In all correspondence with the journal, referees and editors; be polite, respectful and prompt.
g. On special issues/editing special issues: even though it's not peer-reviewed, contributions to special issues are a good thing. On being an editor of a special issue, PM emphasized that this can be good because it shows that you are senior enough to be involved/recognized as an authority, but you don't get points for the article you submit. In the early stage of your career, this can be an important tradeoff. If you write an introductory piece, PM recommends that you avoid writing "introduction" in the title.

II. Feedback and comments on the session

The participants generally agreed that the session was very informative, helpful and interesting. We all appreciated Peter's thoughtful efforts to advance our knowledge of the publication process. One participant suggested that comments on a specific paper example might have been useful – where everyone looks over a paper, and Peter then comments on where it might be a good fit for publication, what changes would need to be made for it to be submissible, etc. Also, a couple participants agreed that it might have been helpful for the presentation to cover both sociology and political science journals and publication practices, rather than being restricted to political science. This could perhaps be achieved by including a sociology faculty member in the session as well.