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Review of Sessions A7 and F8:
Writing, Submitting, and Publishing Journal Articles I & II
Melissa Ianetta, University of Delaware
Kelly Ritter, University of North Carolina-Greensboro

All too often, meeting with an academic journal editor is awkward or intimidating, particularly if you are an early-career academic with few (if any) publications. You will find most of these folks are quite nice...if you have the courage to go up and talk with them. And certain organized events, such as the Editors' Roundtable during the Research Network Forum (held the day before the CCCC begins), can help you chat with these helpful and bright individuals without troubling the distinction between potential contributor and stalker. But even these more formal events can be challenging, especially if you are more interested in general tips or considerations for being a successful contributor to *several* journals rather than trying to pitch a specific article for placement in that editor's publication. True, mentors and well-published members of the field can help show you the ropes, but even they sometimes have difficulty articulating what journal editors are looking to publish and why.

In graciously facilitating two linked sessions at the 2012 CWPA Conference titled "Writing, Submitting, and Publishing Journal Articles," editors Melissa Ianetta and Kelly Ritter gave attendees an all-too-rare glimpse of what practices can help your work find print. At the risk of sounding like a suck-up, these two sessions (A7 and F8 in the program) were exceptionally informative, useful, and entertaining. Ritter and Ianetta, editors of *College English* and *Writing Center Journal* respectively, gave anecdotes, advice, and wisdom with a sense of humor that somehow blended scathing sarcasm and hyperbole with a genuine care for the work, the field, and (most) people. Such is the particular genius of this session and these women.

So, what *does* help your chances of publishing? Follow the guidelines to the letter, for starters. Too obvious? Perhaps, but Ritter and Ianetta emphasized time and again how many potential contributors do not follow these fundamental principles. If your submission looks different or deviates from the guidelines in any way, Ritter said that readers could be biased against your work, making your publication that much more unlikely. Thus, they suggest following the guidelines and taking the "unmarked position" of being a contributor communicating formally with editors who know neither you nor your work, whether or not this is not the case. Even reminding the editor that you recently met is not always the best strategy, as this can take the editor's focus away from your writing. As Ianetta joked, rather than being intent on your words, she is now trying to recall you, "trying to figure out if you're the one with the teeth or the one with the sweater with the doll on it."

Bias can work in the positive direction, however. Reading several issues of the journal produced by the current editorial staff can help, argues Ianetta. This way, you not only get a feel for the editorial vision of the journal, but also you begin to see the arc of the conversations taking place on its pages. And it will be much easier for you to craft an article to meet that vision and

contribute specifically to one of the journal's conversations. Also, citing some relevant articles from that journal in your article shows that you keep up with the journal's work and value its contribution to the field. This message is not lost on editors.

Ultimately, no sleight of hand will get an article published if it has trouble articulating its argument or how it builds on existing knowledge. Ianetta strongly recommended writers to “earmark [an article's] contribution to the field” by describing the authors or texts one's work builds from, and how it does something new relative to those texts. Further, she looks for work to present its thesis and a “map” of its structure within the first 10% of the text. Ritter agrees, adding that writers must present what they are talking about, why they are talking about it, and why readers should care within the very earliest parts of an essay. In addition, writers should know that an article for publication is a very different genre than a seminar paper or a dissertation chapter. In those genres, Ianetta said, writers are mostly talking to themselves. In an article, the audience is broader and may not know some of the touchstone concepts familiar to the writer. Thus, articles must focus on meeting the needs of this broader audience, and do so in a relatively small space. If the dissertation chapter is like a sprawling Victorian home, said Ianetta, the article is a studio apartment. Reframing and revision are critical for transforming many seminar papers or dissertation chapters into publishable articles.

Perhaps if we all ask nicely, Ritter and Ianetta will facilitate a similar session at another conference sometime in the future. If so, I encourage you to be there. The information—and the entertainment—are well worth the time.