PUBLISHING JOURNAL ARTICLES OR BOOK REVIEWS

“Publishing Scholarly Works” is the title of an annual publishing seminar offered by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard. Below is a summary of the main points of the past few sessions. Speakers are faculty members who serve as journal editors, or other guests affiliated with journals; other speakers are students who have had articles published.

In the science fields, where publishing is by and large confined to journal articles, the submissions tend to be a team project growing out of work done in the research lab or a research team. Thus, it is more common to publish in the sciences while still at the graduate student level. Typically, the order in which authors are listed for a team project follows the well-established convention of putting the name of the principal contributor first and the head of the research lab last. (An excellent discussion of publishing in the sciences is available online at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute web site: www.hhmi.org/grants/office/graduate/lab_book.html. See in particular, Chapter 10. See also Richard M. Reis, Tomorrow’s Professor: Preparing for Academic Careers in Science and Engineering, which can be purchased online at amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com or directly through IEEE Press.)

One point that was agreed upon by all the speakers on the publishing panel is that it is well worth trying to get an article published as a graduate student. A published refereed article is a powerful entree into the field. And all agreed that a seminar paper, or in science, a research write-up, is a good starting point. One faculty participant said he makes it a practice to urge students who have written a strong seminar paper to try to rework it for publication.

Another speaker took an even more extreme position on the goal of publishing as a student, and said that research and publishing are the same thing — that learning how to do the one is like learning to do the other. In each case, you are learning how to make your own points and how to relate them to the scholarly dialogue in your field; publishing is an advanced stage of research. When you write a seminar paper in the humanities and social sciences, you are fulfilling two goals that are also true of published articles: a) it has to be important to the world, and b) it has to contribute to the scholarly literature (although another speaker warned against the pitfall of trying to fill the famous “well-deserved gap” in the literature). If you fulfill both of these goals, you are doing more than just building your own career; you are also being a good citizen, a good teacher, and a good critic.

The close link between research and publishing does not mean that either enterprise is easy; students have much to learn in order to do good research. Almost everyone makes mistakes, and many articles get rejected. Nevertheless, students should make sure that professors know that they are trying to write publishable articles when they write seminar papers. Students should try to get professors to comment on seminar papers in terms of what is needed to make it a publishable article. This may not produce immediate results in terms of getting published, but that should be your aim with seminar papers. The published article should be your model.

Other speakers offered further advice on how to convert a seminar paper into a journal article. They stressed that the process requires reshaping and revision. An article must make an explicit and pointed argument; it must be a complete argument in itself. One speaker observed that seminar papers often convey ideas by indirection; a seminar has a shared sense of what the question is, and a communal vocabulary. For an article, the hidden “gems” of a seminar paper have to be brought out and polished. It
must have better signposts as to where it is going and must locate itself very carefully as part of a larger discourse, making its claims very clearly. A dissertation chapter may work less readily as an article. It is a good idea to try to look at it from the reader’s point of view to see if it will work, but that can be very difficult for an author to do.

Another speaker was even more emphatic about the need to give an article a clear focus. He suggested two rules: a) an article should make only one major point, and b) an article should make at least one major point. He observed that learning how to shape material into one point is very difficult, especially because the early stages of research involve dealing with the unknown. He stressed the need to marshal arguments, to force issues to a point, to develop a sense of logical progression — so that the result is not just a series of loosely connected sentences, but an argument with a profile, a shape, a contour.

All the speakers suggested that before making revisions on a seminar paper or thesis chapter the student should let it sit for a while. It is important to be able to externalize this piece of work, to allow some distancing, rather than having your ego completely involved. This is especially important if cutting is required; otherwise, it’s “like doing surgery on your own arms.” When you pick up the writing again, work on it as if you have never seen it before. Then, after a few drafts, get criticism from advisors and colleagues. Don’t go too far without feedback; early help is best. Most professors will be supportive and actually enjoy this kind of participation. Finally, before you submit the article to a journal, get one last reading from a specialist in the field, preferably someone who does not know you personally.

Another point that was emphasized by all the speakers was the importance of selecting the appropriate journal — understanding the journal’s mission, its audience, and what is expected of an author. They agreed that graduate students have a better chance of getting published if they avoid the major or high prestige journals in their field. They suggested choosing some of the smaller and more specialized journals, finding the special niche that might be closely matched with the work that the student was submitting — a journal that may have been used in the student’s own research. One speaker stressed that there has been a proliferation in the number of scholarly journals in the last few decades. He noted that this was both good news and bad for students. On the one hand, students had more outlets for publishing; on the other, there was a greater expectation that students would publish which was accompanied by greater competition among students who were submitting articles.

The process of choosing journals for submission should involve asking professors and specialists in the field. It should also involve reading through the last several issues of potential journals, noting who the authors were, and the likely audience as well.

The speakers also gave practical advice on how to submit an article, and what steps occur after that. They all agreed that in submitting articles, it was best to send the whole article at the start, rather than an outline or synopsis. They also felt that cover letters can be used, but are not very helpful; nor is a cv (this is in contrast to book submission where a cover letter and cv and synopsis are advised — see the summary below of the book publishing seminar).

They suggested that an appropriate length for an article is between 30 and 35 typewritten pages double-spaced. They noted that each journal has its own written style sheet and guidelines for the format of a submitted article, so be sure to learn those before submitting. Another point that was emphasized was the importance of the initial impression of the manuscript; it is essential to avoid spelling or grammatical errors. One speaker said that a well-written paper is much more likely to be accepted than a poorly written paper even if the contents were the same.

The speakers were all emphatic that authors should not submit an article to more than one journal at a time. The production of scholarly journals is a service to scholars — in contrast to book publishing, which is a competitive business. Multiple submissions of journal articles would be considered unprofessional,
and could be harmful to an author’s reputation. (The speakers noted that many book publishers also object to the practice of multiple submissions, and authors who wish to do so should first inform publishers, who in turn may not wish to consider the manuscript under those conditions.)

Once an article is submitted, there are variations in evaluation procedures among journals. Normally, an article is read first by an inside reader and then submitted to outside readers for peer review — usually two readers who are specialists in the appropriate field. Many journals — especially the larger ones — have an Editorial Advisory Board; articles are assigned to the appropriate Board member who then solicits outside reviews. Members usually serve on a Board for a specific term. In most cases, the author of the article remains anonymous; the outside readers may also remain anonymous, but need not be. If the peer reviews are encouraging, revisions will be suggested. The author then revises — it can be extensive, or just minor changes — and then the author resubmits. Outright acceptance is rare. Speakers warned that doing extensive revisions may not guarantee publication. You can try to find out what your chances are, but you may have to decide whether it is worth doing the work and taking the risk.

The speakers were candid that during the revision process, the relationship with editors was less favorable for students than for senior scholars; students in all likelihood would have to make suggested changes. One speaker gave the wise advice that even if a student strongly disagrees with suggested revisions, the student should keep in mind that the readers are part of the audience that has to be addressed. It is best to read negative comments constructively. Why not try to figure out what is really bothering the readers? There may be a need to restate a position in order to be sure it is correctly understood. After all, if one reader has had a misunderstanding, others might well do the same. Worded another way, the suggested strategy was that instead of meeting the objectionable force head on, go with the criticism some of the way — try to deflect it.

Timing for the reviewing process can take two months, but is usually longer; instant gratification is rare. For any journal, if there is no response after two or three months, it is acceptable to inquire — in all probability, a reader has unintentionally caused the delay. Once an article is accepted, it can take quite some time before it actually appears in print. Many journals, although not all, have a backlog, which causes further delay. If an article is rejected, an author can ask for the readers’ comments. In most cases, a student will also have discussed the article with a faculty advisor, and it is helpful to return to the faculty advisor for further consultation. One speaker observed that chance has a lot to do with whether or not an article gets accepted. It depends on who the readers are, the competition for that issue, and how the various submissions balance one another.

On the subject of what to do if an article is rejected, two views were offered. One was to send it out to another journal immediately, operating on the assumption that you have done the best you can with the article. An alternative is to try to learn from the experience and to assume that you need to re-write and to make your point more clearly. Reviewers often can see what you meant to say, or what was in the back of your mind. Make sure that your article is not a “mystery novel;” set all your results up front, organize so clearly that even readers who have fallen asleep momentarily will know where they are when they awaken.

The speakers also addressed the possibility for students to publish book reviews. In most cases, senior scholars are asked to do book reviews, but senior scholars may suggest appropriate students for the assignment. Editors sometimes know of students working in particular fields and approach them directly. It is also possible for students to send their cv’s to editors, so they might be kept in mind for the appropriate review. Submitting unsolicited book reviews to scholarly journals is not done — once again, because the journal normally chooses the book reviewer well before the book has appeared in print. One student asked how a student reviewer could deal with a book that deserved a negative review. The speakers concurred that doing negative reviews is a highly delicate and complicated matter throughout one’s career. It can be just as difficult to write a negative review for a close colleague — and one acquires
many close colleagues — as it can for a scholar who is more senior. It is possible to decline to do the review. In any case, a negative review should be honest, but never vicious. Reviewers should avoid being rash or intemperate.

During the question period, a student asked if there is a distinction between a seminar paper that is good enough to deliver at a conference and one that is good enough for submission to a journal. While the speakers did not have any consensus on this issue, they did strongly recommend giving papers, noting that it would help to demystify the whole process of sharing scholarly work. One speaker also stressed that editors are human, and that students should not be afraid to approach them and ask questions about their papers.

Another student asked if publishing a number of dissertation chapters as articles would jeopardize eventual publication of the dissertation as a book. The speakers agreed that if these chapters were good enough to appear as articles, then the dissertation would be viewed in a favorable light as well. They ended by urging the students once again to keep writing, to give conference papers, to be active as professionals in the field. They added one bit of cautionary advice — that time is scarce and that students should not interrupt their doctoral work for too long while trying to get published. One refereed published article was sufficient as a powerful entree into the field.

Note: Journals that publish articles normally supply the author with a number of article reprints. If you publish an article, it is especially helpful to send reprints to scholars with similar interests to your own, enclosing a brief cover note to express this shared interest. (Your list may include scholars in other disciplines, or who for other reasons, may not have seen the article.) Reprints are also valuable to use when applying for academic jobs.

PUBLISHING BOOKS

Below is a summary of the main points of the past few sessions. Speakers included editors from university presses. The advice below pertains almost exclusively to fields in the humanities and social sciences. Publishing in the science fields is almost exclusively journal articles, reporting on research projects.

A principal point that was agreed upon by all of the speakers is that publishing is a business; publishers want to sell books. Presently, the climate is grim for scholarly publishers, and this is a trend that has been growing over the last 20 years. Thus, in your cover letter, be sure to highlight how and why your manuscript matters, how it can make a difference in the way people think about the subject. This of course has important implications for how to submit a manuscript and where to submit it. Above all, it means that you cannot submit your dissertation as it is to a publisher — a dissertation is not a book.

A dissertation and a book serve very different purposes and have different audiences. A dissertation is your passport into the profession. You need only convince a small body of people that you “know your stuff.” A book assumes that you already have that knowledge; it requires a different tone. You don’t have to prove that you have read everything. In fact, you should streamline the book, omitting much of the scholarly apparatus of the dissertation. Eliminate scholarly passages that review the literature. Condense or eliminate footnotes, using endnotes instead. Make your style accessible to as wide an audience as possible, avoiding the formal tone or technical jargon or other characteristics associated with a dissertation. An editor of a university press thought that there might be a new trend emerging in which dissertations were being written more directly as books from the very start — a development that would require the support and even leadership of dissertation advisors as well. For a book that deals in greater detail with the traditional distinction between the dissertation and a book, see The Thesis and the Book, edited by Eleanor Harman and Ian Montagnes (Toronto University Press, 1976).
One speaker presented a hierarchy of types of publishers in terms of the size of their potential markets — starting from the smallest market: 1) subsidized series, 2) small university presses, 3) major university presses, 4) small trade houses, and 5) major trade houses. In submitting a manuscript, you should keep this hierarchy in mind and assess the nature of the manuscript in terms of the potential size of the market — i.e., consider how many people will care about the subject of your particular manuscript.

Before you approach a publisher, you should pose some tough questions to yourself: What makes you think your book will be published? What makes you think your book will be sold? What is new or different about your book? What can you do to persuade someone who seems indifferent to the importance of your manuscript? Thinking about the answers to these questions — even thinking ahead about jacket copy — will help you to prepare. He further suggested that understanding what is involved in selling a book is almost the same as understanding what is involved in writing a book.

When a book by a trade publisher is being marketed, a sales representative has approximately 15 to 30 seconds to persuade a seller to market it. If you have answered the tough questions above, you should be able to provide the persuasive “one-liner” that will capture attention. There are approximately 50,000 books published each year, and book sellers can be very skeptical about the potential success of a new book. Furthermore, bookstore chains now control much of the business, and most of the finer bookstores are in serious financial trouble.

On the positive side, this speaker observed that serious nonfiction is “the hottest thing” in trade publishing houses, which can be seen from current best seller lists.

The editor is the point of access to a trade publisher, but he or she does not make the decision alone. There are editorial committees, and the decision is a group process.

Another speaker described the somewhat gentler world of the university press, although he too emphasized the importance of submitting your manuscript to an appropriate publisher, as well as the importance of making a polished presentation in all parts of your prospectus.

A major difference between a trade publisher and a university press is that books published by the latter do not get sold in bookstores. Scholarly monographs are sold through direct mail sales, or are sold to libraries and wholesalers. Adds are also placed in professional journals.

There are over 79 university presses and 5 international ones. Since most presses are inundated with proposals by scholars, your chances of capturing attention will be enhanced if you do your homework and choose the most appropriate publishers for your particular work. The following suggestions were offered for making this choice:

- Network among specialists in the scholarly community for suggestions.
- Browse in book catalogues and in bookstores to see which publishers are publishing in your field. Note the visual appearance and overall quality of their publishing work.
- Smaller university presses may be more appropriate for research monographs. You can start at that level, and eventually work your way up to a larger press. Your work must conform with what a publisher does.
- In some fields, there are smaller presses that are more prestigious than larger ones.
• For a more systematic search for the appropriate university press, see *The Association of American University Presses (AAUP) Directory*, published by the AAUP, 564 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. It contains a grid by subject matter and press. It also contains the names of editors and their departments or fields, plus the address and telephone number.

• Another source is the *Literary Market Place* (LMP), an annual volume published by R. R. Bowker. An international version (ILMP) is also available. This source lists every publisher in the country. It gives skeletal breakdowns about the publishers, geographical location, and subject breakdowns as well.

• In addition, many publishers have a web site, giving not only the above information, but also some instructions on how to submit a proposal and what to include within it. The suggestions presented below are from past speakers on publishing.

Submitting unsolicited proposals to publishers is commonly done, and it is possible to submit proposals to more than one publisher at a time. Submitting an unsolicited manuscript should be avoided. If you receive an invitation from more than one publisher to submit your manuscript, you must inform each publisher before you make a multiple submission. Many publishers will not want to invest the time and energy required for reviewing a manuscript unless they have an exclusive option, and you need to know each publisher’s policy before you take any action.

The proposal consists of four items: a cover letter, a table of contents, a small sample from the manuscript, and a curriculum vitae. It is important to personalize this packet and to address it to a particular person. Anything that looks like a mass mailing will not have a good chance of being considered. The sources cited above will help you to identify the editor’s name. You can also telephone a publishing house and ask for the appropriate name.

The cover letter should give a brief description of the book — a “one-liner” that presents the essential core of the work. The letter should be concise and confined to two or three pages, single-spaced. It should emphasize what is new and unique about the work, who is the potential audience, and basically why it should be published and why you think it will sell. Bear in mind that editors are not specialists; be sure that your description is written in an accessible manner — above all, avoid jargon or technical terms that will discourage an editor from reading it. A good proposal will get read.

Your letter should also indicate the length of the manuscript, making it clear that you are willing to condense if it is too long — and anything over 400 pages, double-spaced, is long. If there are graphs, tables, or illustrations, indicate how many — once again, making it clear that you are willing to limit the number, if necessary. You should also include a copy of a few illustrations, and offer to provide camera-ready copy of illustrations. This is the author’s responsibility — including getting permission for reprints and paying the fees.

Your letter should stress that the manuscript is not your dissertation, that it has been heavily rewritten. Avoid calling it a dissertation. You should show that you are aware of the distinctions between the two and indicate how your book differs from your dissertation. Dissertations, after all, are already available in libraries and on microfilm.

You might try to have well-established figures read the manuscript and note in your letter if they have responded positively. If any of the material has already been published, this should not be emphasized, since it would not be considered an added attraction for publishers (and in fact you will have to do some revision before it could be included in a new publication). In general, publishers will not want to publish it as a book if more than 50 percent has already been published, especially if published articles have
appeared in well-known accessible journals.

It also pays to do your homework about publishers. Show that you have given a lot of thought about why you have chosen this particular press; show that you know what they have published in your field, and then stress how your work fits in with their listings, noting how it differs from what they have already published in your field. Note that many publishers have a web site.

Finally, the cover letter should look as good as possible, using letterhead stationery and a good printer. It should be no more than a single page, single-spaced. (And, as noted above, your letter should address the editor by name.)

For the table of contents, you can use an expanded type, which includes a few sentences describing the content of each chapter. Avoid long chapter titles with many colons.

A writing sample involves an important choice — you should not submit an entire manuscript. Like many writers, you may have left the introduction and conclusion for last, and thus cannot submit them as samples. You can either choose an attractive and fairly self-contained chapter, or write an overview essay — between 20 and 40 pages. The sample should be double-spaced, done on a letter-quality printer. Once again, a polished appearance is essential.

Submitting a vitae is a common practice. It is not essential, but it can be helpful.

If an editor likes your proposal, you will be asked to submit your manuscript. You should receive a postcard acknowledging receipt of your proposal almost immediately, and you should hear within a few weeks if the publisher wishes to see your manuscript. Trade publishers often accept a book on the basis of a proposal — in many cases, before a book has even been written. This practice, however, applies mainly to authors with a strong track record.

For the review process, you are entitled to ask for a quick response, which is roughly within two or three months. Normally, there will be two or three readers for a manuscript. Some publishers send it out to all their readers simultaneously, which speeds up the review process; others prefer to see an initial review before sending it any further. A good editor tries to avoid sending a manuscript to an unsympathetic reader. You can suggest names of appropriate readers, omitting of course personal friends; even if none are selected, your list gives the editor an idea of who might be a sympathetic reader.

If the review is positive, the manuscript will go to the editorial board. Sometimes revisions are suggested and the decision is postponed. The reviews are submitted anonymously to the author, who is also given a chance to respond.

The next step is a committee meeting to decide on your book. If it passes that stage, the last hurdle is the Board of Syndics or Directors. At this level, they often do not read the manuscript, but simply the package of readers and editors’ reports and author’s response. A book cannot be published without their approval.

Finally, the manuscript is back in your hands for producing a final acceptable version.

If your manuscript is rejected by a publisher, do not be discouraged. All of our speakers stressed that this is a very human and subjective process, rather than a scientific discipline. Many rejection decisions are made apart from the intrinsic quality of a book. It could be a business decision; a similar topic may have done badly the previous year. Be persistent and try other appropriate publishers.

In some cases, there is an overlap between trade and scholarly presses — Norton or Basic Books,
example, are similar to scholarly presses. It is unlikely that scholarly credibility will be hurt if a scholarly press is not used. A number of scholarly works with broad appeal and an accessible writing style have been published by trade publishers. (The late Barbara Tuchman is an example of a scholar with this kind of appeal.) It is possible to write in an open and accessible style, without lowering standards or popularizing a work. If your book is on the borderline between a trade publisher and a scholarly press, you might even sell more books with a university press; it might be better to be “a big fish in a little pond.”

Textbooks are another type of publication. They were described as the most profitable part of the business. In talking to textbook publishers, you should focus on course adoptions, indicating why it’s appropriate for various courses, and discussing its advantages over its competitors.

Another speaker observed that while publishing indeed is a business, publishers are very committed to their author and publication lists. This is a commitment despite the fact that 80 percent of published books are unprofitable, with many unsold books landing back in the publisher’s warehouse.

Also on the positive side, there has been much growth in the world of scholarly publishing, which may well continue. As the trade houses become more and more commercial and the number of them grows smaller, we may see a proliferation of small presses and increasing importance of academic presses.

In the area of trade publishing, one speaker emphasized that you will need a literary agent. There is a paradigm shift taking place, and agents have almost become first readers for editors. Agents are a good source of literary and editing advice — once again, replacing a role that editors used to play. They also know how to read publishing contracts. However, getting an agent is not an easy task — it is almost like getting a publisher. The agent paradigm applies mainly to trade publishing, and is seldom used for university presses. You can find a list of agents in the Literary Market Place, although names suggested by published authors that you know are an even better source.

During the question period, Publisher’s Weekly was cited as another important guide to the publishing world. It reviews all kinds of books, and provides a good overview of what is being published and where. The New York Times Book Review is another good source.

For the student who wanted to know about getting short stories published, one speaker observed that both the New Yorker and the Atlantic will give stories a good reading, without the intervention of an agent. In approaching an agent or a publisher, a writing sample should be around five pages, carefully selected to show how well you write.

The normal financial arrangements in a trade publishing contract include an advance when the contract is signed, and then the remainder when the complete manuscript is submitted. Additional payments depend on the number of copies sold. Some sample figures are: 10 percent of the retail price for 5000 copies; 12.5 percent for 10,000 copies; 15 percent for over 10,000 copies.

You can only make a living on advance royalties if it is a trade book; it is out of the question with royalties from university presses, which pay relatively little. There is also not much point in negotiating royalties with a university press; they are fairly standard.

Below is a summary of the process of getting published from the perspective of a student panelist who generously shared the notes she made in preparation for the panel.

- Why have a publishing seminar for grad students?
Many graduate students seem to think their research is not good enough or that it is too early for them to be publishing their work; there is a sense of not being ready, of not wanting to risk something public and permanent. This attitude is selling ourselves too short; the peer review process and editors will catch any huge errors.

And publishing is important because it builds resumes in preparation for the job market, and makes us better writers and teachers.

- **Coursework essays as publications:**
  Each term paper should not be viewed as the completion of a course but as the beginning of a publication. Look at the comments you received on each paper, and begin the process of revision for publication. It is important to get help -- from your advisor or the professor who read and graded the paper, but also from any classmates who might share your interests, and from anyone in this field. Engage in correspondence with faculty working on related topics, especially if you cite their work. Moving beyond the comments you get on a course paper, getting a more representative response than only your professor, is really vital.

- **Conference papers as publications:**
  Delivering a paper at a conference provides an opportunity to receive feedback on your work from specialists in your field and a valuable opportunity to network with other graduate students and professors with whom you may be able to collaborate. Smaller conferences may result in conference volumes. Presenting at a conference may lead directly to publication. Editors of special issues of journals, of new journals, of forthcoming edited volumes, may attend conference panels to find extra articles. Editors will also examine a conference program and may email you with an invitation to submit an article based on your presentation.

- **Book collections:**
  Top-tier, peer-reviewed journals will earn the biggest points for the job market, but chapters in book volumes matter too. They offer the important experience of working with editors and help establish your credibility and public voice. Many academic associations have mass email lists, listservs, newsletters, and websites where calls for papers in book collections (and sometimes journals) are posted and archived. Don’t forget book reviews and encyclopedia articles too. Book reviews in particular are good training ground. Do e-mail review editors, asking to review a book for the journal.

- **Collaboration:**
  Seek opportunities to collaborate with professors; the worst that can happen is that they say no. You could approach the professor of a seminar for whom you wrote a paper, or a professor for whom you’ve worked as a research assistant, or a professor on your dissertation committee, and ask if they would like to co-write a paper with you for publication. They may help you to organize the article better, develop the argument more convincingly, and see how to extend the work.

- **Journal Publishing: choosing the right journal:**
  Look for special opportunities in themed issues, as your chances of acceptance will be higher in a regular journal submission. Look at up-and-coming new journals, which will receive fewer submissions. Begin with peer-reviewed graduate student journals (which are often online publications rather than print). Beginning in this way with graduate student run or new journals helps you to learn what a publishable article actually looks like. By the time you submit to a top-tier journal in your field, you will know how to self-edit and how to make the
most of reviewers’ criticisms in revision. It can even lead to editors of book collections and editors of special themed issues of journals inviting a chapter or a journal submission from you on a related topic.

- **Journal Publishing: submission process:**
  Be deeply familiar with the journal; the kind of articles it publishes, its preferred tone. Don’t submit anything that doesn’t fit. The journal’s website will have instructions for authors, including style preferences, length of manuscript. Follow their style guide closely. Make sure to cite recent scholarship on your topic that was published in the journal; placing your work in the context of the journal’s previous articles will help make it a better “fit.” As you revise for submission, consider being someone else’s editor. This will help you learn how to self-edit. Consider offering yourself to a graduate-student journal as a manuscript reviewer. This will also demystify the publishing process.

- **Journal Publishing: post-submission process:**
  Expect to wait at least 12 weeks for a decision after submission, and around 15 months for the article to appear in print. Submit at least a year in advance of the job market. You can decide to withdraw the piece during the decision-process, but never send it to another journal without withdrawing it from the first one. The article will either be accepted as-is, sent back to you for “revision and resubmission” category, or outright rejected. A request to “revise and resubmit” may mean substantial revisions. Don’t be defensive when reading the reviews by outside readers. Try to implement as many recommendations as you can, and write a separate document in which you go through the referees’ comments one by one and explain what you did to address them. Outright rejection does not necessarily mean the manuscript is unpublishable. It may need a lot of revision, and it may need to be sent to another journal. Look for the constructive and encouraging comments in the reviews, and begin with what they liked—which may be where your article should focus entirely. If the rejection feedback includes some “So what?” comments, then you need to revise so that your article is more convincingly a contribution to your field; more clearly relevant to an audience and to the discipline. Competition is fierce; rejection is a natural part of the process. For every article accepted, about seven are rejected. Don’t assume that your work has been judged substandard if it was rejected; editors might have rejected it on grounds of ‘fit.’ If you try to get something out of the reviews you receive, and if you keep sending your work out to journals and book collections, you will publish.

- **Further reading:**
  Beth Luey, *Handbook for Academic Authors*
  William Germano, *Getting It Published.*

- **Two Sample Letters to publishers**
  The first is a cover letter proposing an article written on a free-lance basis for possible inclusion in a magazine. (It was written by Diane Booton, assistant in the GSAS Fellowship Office; the article was published in *Harvard Magazine*, July-August 2011.)

  The second is a cover letter proposing a book manuscript and was sent to the editors of several university presses. (It was written by Cynthia Verba, Director of Fellowships; the manuscript was eventually accepted by Cambridge University Press, with strong interest also expressed by another respected press.)
September 10, 2010

John Rosenberg, Editor
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He Thought My Conversation Very Silly, but My Pink Satin Dress Very Becoming
On Meeting the Italian Renaissance Scholar Bernard Berenson

Dear Mr. Rosenberg,

“[H]is visit was like a chemical reaction.” In 1888, Mary Costelloe was bored with life and her husband of five years, and she soaked up the newcomer’s enthusiasm for art and culture like “a dry sponge that was put into water.” In 1891, Mary defied social custom and left her husband and children to live with Berenson.

An unpublished account in the Berenson family papers archived at Houghton Library bubbles with youthful emotion, not the anticipated sober prose of a political reformer’s wife and a mother with a second child on the way. Her autobiographical story expresses the disjuncture between the “political and philanthropic life that bored [her]” and the exhilarating beauties on earth that Berenson offered her. The turbulent but highly successful lives of Berenson, a Harvard graduate (A.B. 1887), and Mary, a Harvard Annex student, in the world of art and high-stakes picture dealing are well known from letters and diaries, but this reminiscence of a thunder-struck woman, glimpsing a new life provides a moving insight into a time when women faced limited opportunities for social and economic advancement.

I propose a 1,000 word article for the Feature section or From the Archives, illustrated with one photograph of Mary and Bernard Berenson. I am familiar with Houghton’s collections, having worked there for more than four years. I also have an academic background in art history, as you can see from my profile on LinkedIn or Academia.edu. Although most of my publications are targeted toward specialized readers, I have also written short articles for a broader audience (see enclosed samples).

Would you be interested in seeing this article on speculation?

Sincerely,
December 2, 2009

Dr. Victoria Cooper, Senior Commissioning Editor, Humanities
Cambridge University Press
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Dear Dr. Cooper:

I am following up on our very brief conversation at AMS Philadelphia. The manuscript I am proposing for your consideration is tentatively titled Dramatic Expression in Rameau’s Tragédie Lyrique: Between Tradition and Enlightenment. It deals with a still unwritten part of the story of the French musical Enlightenment, having to do with the music itself. Specifically, the study focuses on the lyric tragedies of Jean-Philippe Rameau and how he engages, through his musical settings, in a search for reconciliation between reason and feeling in his concept of musical expression, making this a critical shaping factor in the dramatic scenes of hit tragedies. It was by no means a simple duality, nor was there a fixed terminology that could convey the varied meanings that were current at the time. Since Rameau was a leading composer of French tragédie lyrique, as well as a leading theorist and central figure in the musical debates of his time, his operas provide an important opportunity to consider this critical and complex Enlightenment issue from a primarily musical perspective; they also provide an opportunity for closer observation of the interaction between theory and practice. The study marks a shift in emphasis, from what has been a strong preoccupation with the Enlightenment discourse about music to music itself. (This previous focus on discourse includes my own study: Cynthia Verba, Music and the French Enlightenment: Reconstruction of a Dialogue, 1750-1765. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

The study’s contributions are found in two main areas. One is captured in the study’s title and its notion of opposition between tradition and enlightenment. The French operatic genre in Rameau’s era was still thoroughly immersed in the past, governed by outmoded conventions and corresponding beliefs that were essentially inhospitable not only to the spirit of the Enlightenment, more generally, but to Rameau’s innovative views on musical expression, in particular. An important argument in the present study is that rather than abandoning the traditional operatic model, which was emblematic of the splendor of the once powerful ancient regime, Rameau sought to adjust the model with each new opera that he wrote, finding inventive ways of making it more accommodating to his views on expression. An equally important finding is that this process of accommodation led to a corresponding series of adjustments related to traditional gender stereotypes in lyric tragedy, resulting, in particular, in a more nuanced portrayal of the heroine. Issues of gender, then, become an integral part of the story. By tracing the trajectory of Rameau’s modifications over the course of his career, the study calls for a re-assessment of the commonly held view that there is little that changed in Rameau’s treatment of the basic model from one new opera to the next (despite the considerable scholarly recognition that Rameau extensively revised the original versions, which is a somewhat different issue).

The other principle contribution concerns the relationship between theory and practice for Rameau. There is considerable consensus that Rameau’s practice closely corresponds with his theoretical insights. While this is strongly confirmed in the present study, the study further argues that this closeness between theory and practice occurs in two distinct ways, and both need to be taken into account for a more complete picture of Rameau as theorist-composer. The first, and more obvious, is that there is a direct correspondence between Rameau’s explicit theoretical formulations and the actual harmonic progressions that he tends to favor in his practice. These favored progressions, strongly promoted in his theories, are an essential source of musical expression for Rameau in his dramatic settings. The second, more far-
reaching but less well recognized, is that there are tonal strategies employed by Rameau in his dramatic scenes that are never explicitly stated. They are, however, an indirect outcome of his explicit statements, almost necessitated by his theoretical formulations. I refer to these as “tonal anchoring strategies,” since they help to articulate a clear tonal context for the expressive harmonic progressions that Rameau favors for dramatic purposes, giving shape to the scene as a whole. This is one of the more progressive or enlightened aspects of Rameau’s musical practice that will be highlighted in the present study: that Rameau takes great pains to provide tonal orientation for the listener, doing so in highly varied and inventive ways, but always in a manner that serves both drama and music, thus enhancing the aesthetic experience for the listener. And while Rameau as theorist and composer may be a special case, the two distinct aspects of the relationship between theory and practice – the more direct correspondences and the less explicit but more far-reaching impact that theory may impose on practice -- suggest a way of looking at the relationship between theory and practice more generally. Keeping the listener in mind is an important goal of the present study. The plan, which I believe is feasible, is to create an accompanying web site for the book, which will provide a recording of all the scenes and individual pieces that are subject to detailed examination in the book. Having a web site for such purposes is becoming a common practice in other fields – I will of course seek the necessary permissions to do so.

Given this combination, the study forges a special and perhaps unusual bond between two critical fields in music: the history of opera, and the history of music theory. At the same time, it adds a new dimension to our understanding of the French Enlightenment from a more purely musical perspective. The potential audience thus goes beyond the music scholarly community; the study is also aimed at those with a music background who may be serious lovers of opera, or scholars in history and related fields, who are interested in gaining a fresh understanding of the era of Enlightenment.

Still another potential audience are the growing number of music directors and performers who venture into the somewhat challenging territory of the French Baroque, as well as the new audiences who flock to their performances and buy their recordings. The extraordinary strategies employed by Rameau to help orient the listener have an important bearing on how a work is performed. For example, if a performance were to artfully highlight these critical moments of articulation, then the listener would have a richer and more complete experience of the music’s expressive qualities.

It is time now to turn to this unwritten part of the story of Rameau and the French Enlightenment, shifting from an almost exclusive emphasis on the intellectual and cultural context of his musical practice, to a close study of the music in his lyric tragedies. This is a propitious moment. We now have ample opportunity to attend performances and hear recordings of Rameau’s major tragedies (in some cases, we can choose among multiple recordings and variant versions). A new scholarly edition of Rameau’s works has gained considerable momentum in recent years, with some of his tragedies already out and others well on their way (Opera Omnia Rameau, editor in chief, Sylvie Bouissou.)

The manuscript is near completion, and I would be happy to provide a chapter or more, should you wish. I enclose the Table of Contents and also a curriculum vitae.

Sincerely yours,