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### Art and Science: Publishing and presenting research in Western academia

This observational study focuses on challenges that face CIS scholars in publishing their articles in western scientific journals. Since they used to follow soviet research traditions their investigations often are too broad, while western school orients on narrow and deep explorations. The author emphasizes necessity of observing previous studies; clear research questions; checking availability of data; avoiding wordiness and educational lecture style. The article also includes practical advice about formatting and submission. In conclusion the author suggests five recommendations about co-authorship, RQs, topics, deadlines and modeling.

**Keywords:** western research, publishing, academic journals, Russian academic background.

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**Гуманитарлық пәндер және ғылым:  
 Батыс академиясында зерттеуді жариялау және таныстыру**

Бұл шолу мақалада кеңес ғылыми зерттеу мектебінен білім алған ғалымдардың батыс елдеріндегі журналдарда жариялану жолында кездесетін қиындықтар мен оларды шешу жолдарын қарастырылады. Батыс журналдары жалпылама, кең ауқымды емес, нақты және терең зерттеулерге қызығады. Автор бұдан бұрын жарияланған зерттеулерге арқа сүйеу, зерттеу сұрақтарын мейлінше айқын және қарапайым құру қажеттілігін және көпсөзділік пен оқыту лекциясы стилінен аулақ болуға көңіл бөлген. Тақырып таңдау, басқа авторлармен бірігіп жұмыс істеу, зерттеу сауалдары, межелі мерзім белгілеу және үлгі ретіндегі зерттеуді тауып алу туралы кеңестер берілген.

**Түйін сөздер:** батыс зерттеуі, жарияланым, академиялық журналдар, ресейлік білім беру деңгейі.

Джон Л. Купер

**Гуманитарные и точные науки:  
 как публиковать и презентовать исследования в Западной академии**

Данная обзорная статья рассматривает трудности для исследователей с русским академическим образованием при публикации в западных журналах и пути их решения. Западные научные журналы заинтересованы в глубоких и специфичных исследованиях. Автор подчеркивает необходимость в опирании на ранее опубликованные статьи, определении ясных и простых вопросов, избегании многословности и стиля обучающей лекции. В заключение были даны практические советы о выборе темы, соавторстве, вопросах исследования, дедлайна и модельных научных работ.

**Ключевые слова:** западное исследование, публикация, академические журналы, российский уровень образовательной подготовки.

It is now essential for scholars in any country to produce research reports that are not only accepted in journals and academic conferences, but respected in their subfield. Many scholars with a Russian academic background are unsure how to approach research with a number of fundamental contrasts to those they are used to. This very practical introduc-

tion to publishing in the West should make it easier for scholars in Communication and Journalism to succeed internationally. This paper does not reject the Russian approach, but is written for those who want to publish in the West, and can suspend the Russian style for international work.

Although it is useful to get specific suggestions

on research success, anyone interested in research should carefully analyze a number of publications in their field. As you do this, the content of the research is less important than its purposes, methods, and writing style.

The aims of Western research, while ultimately very similar to Russian traditions, are distinctive and can be difficult to adapt to. Many say that “Russian research is broad, while Western research is deep”; this is accurate, but not very helpful. Those who want to publish in the West might consider Russian scholarship as more literary, in that it discusses almost any aspects around the central topic as if for the pleasure of learning and exploring. Although Western research can do this, its purpose is quite different. In the West, the scholarship of previous researchers is celebrated and fully acknowledged in the text, though each study is expected to go carefully but clearly beyond any previous work. In the West, research is considered to advance the field in at least one of three ways. A study can develop, extend or improve the current theoretical basis of the research; it can provide new data to add to previous work, such as documenting a process in a different environment (such as a new culture); or it can offer practical actions, such as ways that professionals can better craft messages.

In all research, description is important because it informs the reader about the topic; for example, describing the responses of audiences to a television program is necessary before it can be explained more fully. Western researchers are expected to analyze: to pull a phenomenon into its various parts or variables so that their interactions can be explored and explained. [Creswell, 2008]. Traditionally, Western research was positivistic or quantitative: it identified and if possible manipulated discrete variables so that the effect of each on the others could be clearly identified.

In all of this research, it is critically important to clearly identify variables or emerging patterns, since other scholars will judge whether the goals of the research have been achieved. For this reason, specific and answerable research questions are essential to Western research. [Leedy & Ormrod, 2012]. Western research is based on specific research questions, whose answers will determine the success of the whole project. Here is an example: “which factors of website design increase credibility and likability?” The researcher can identify a number of specific factors in the design, specify ways to measure cred-

ibility and likability, and assess how each particular design factor increases or decreases particular measures of credibility and likability. In other words, at the end of the study readers can decide how successfully the researcher answered the various aspects of the question. It is impossible to overstate the importance of clear and answerable research questions in Western research. In that sense, Western research can be seen as a form of “idea engineering.”

Articles submitted for publications will be coldly evaluated by a few “peer reviewers”, or specialists in the field, who look for problems in the research, but who hope it will improve theory, data, and practical recommendations. Only research that has clear goals and answers, with an acceptable methodology and format, will (at least, ideally) be accepted for publication [Belcher, 2009].

Most Western researchers begin by presenting their work at academic conferences, such as the International Communication Association, National Communication Association, International Association for Media and Communication Research, and Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. There are also dozens of regional conferences that are easier to be accepted in and extremely collegial to attend. Their great advantage and attraction are the discussions that can take place with fellow scholars in the field, an excellent way to get supporters but pointed criticism of your work. To address the problem of costly distance from Kazakhstan to most conferences, look for the growing number of “virtual conferences”, whose sessions are online rather than physical. These are less prestigious, but a good start.

Most scholars move on from making conference presentations to publishing in academic Journals. For Central Asian scholars, these helpfully eliminate the problem of travel costs to attend an international conference. Be sure to read and accurately follow the guidelines for submissions. Journals are more difficult to be accepted in, with somewhat higher standards of academic skills, but are otherwise very similar to presentations. The journalism and communication field have many dozens of peer-reviewed such journals; most accept between 5 percent and 40 percent of the articles submitted to them. Many have a particular focus, such as Public Relations or Journalism management, but most are open to many different topics. Many emphasize qualitative or quantitative research, and many are either very theoretical or very practical. Luckily for

scholars who want to publish, it is possible to get a good idea of what each expects by carefully reading their articles and by conscientiously following their Authors Guidelines. Most rejected papers were produced without proper respect for the requirements of a particular journal. Identify a few good journals and target them by looking at the articles in several issues [Campbell, Pentz & Borthwick, 2012].

One realistic and productive way to design research for publication is to “backward plan.” In other words, the researcher can start with a topic then investigate exactly what a particular journal or two will publish on the topic. List the qualities that have been successful for previous authors, which will show you the method, length, type of results and conclusions expected, and writing style that will work best. Of course, scholars can always do exactly the work they want in the way that they want, but should not be surprised or disappointed if no Journal accepts their work.

In Western Social Science research, the word “hypothesis” has a very specific meaning that is unlike the Russian tradition. A hypothesis predicts results, based on clear theory or previous data; using a hypothesis will not help unless you feel confident, so probably only use research questions unless your study is very quantitative, based on theory and previous results.

There are many ways to develop a research idea. The approach you choose depends on personal style and interest, existing literature on the topic, and intriguing general question, or a theory to improve. In other words, there is no “correct” way to design your research for publication, as long as it follows the “question and answer” imperative outlined above.

Research should be based on identifying and analyzing factors. [Rocco & Hatcher, 2011]. In Positivistic or deductive research, which normally uses quantitative methods, these factors are decided before data are collected, based on either an existing theory or previous research. In Interpretivistic or inductive research, which normally uses qualitative methods, a great deal of data are collected and then investigated in great depth until patterns of characteristic, change and interaction can emerge to help develop a theory and understanding of the topic of research [Bordens & Abbott, 2010].

An almost universal problem that makes life difficult for beginning researchers is choosing a topic that is too broad and general. This is especially true for researchers with Russian backgrounds, since

these value general discussions and elaborations. However, this style will block Western publication. Try starting with a design that is extremely narrow: if your research topic is aspects of news that change the attitudes of television viewers, imagine that you will research one audience member watching one report on one situation. This is far too narrow, but it is usually easier to gradually expand a narrow topic (in this case, finding the minimum number of audience members and numbers of reports that can clearly answer the research question) than to reduce a huge, general topic to one that can be successfully explained.

Beyond the success of your individual articles, you should consider your larger academic career and create a strategic plan, called a “research agenda”, or general line of interests. Scholars with the most publications and academic prestige are those who find a narrow range of aspects of the topic and produce many papers on variations of this. If you have a curious mind and enjoy investigating a range of topics, you will be rewarded personally more than professionally. Your research agenda should start with a topic and approach that you can enjoy working with for year after year, but should also consider what is respected and published and avoid older topics that have been covered enough to be seen as boring.

Another problem that frustrates many new scholars is a lack of data. It is almost easier to start with data that is available and has a reasonable size then to develop a study around it, then to start with a research design and be frustrated by the lack of available and appropriate data. Don’t spend much time on a study before ensuring that enough good data are available.

“Backward planning” can help: after deciding on your topic and general theoretical approach, decide on the kind of conclusions you want to make, then on the kind of analysis that will help you reach that conclusion, identify the kind and amount of data that will be useful for that analysis, list the data collection methods that will help you get the data you need, and finally identify a theory and research approach that will guide the collection of necessary data.

Whether a researcher decides on a positivistic/deductive approach or an interpretivistic/inductive approach depends on many factors. Most important is an approach that feels understandable and comfortable to the researcher. Most people clearly lean towards a particular style, and you should respect

your personal strengths. Another factor is existing knowledge on the topic: it is easier to do a theory-based study when a well-developed theory has already guided a number of well-analyzed studies on the topic. It is easier to do a data-based inductive study when there is little or no theory or data to guide the researcher. Another factor is conventions; many topics have been researched with a specific approach. It is possible to conduct research using a very different approach, but that will make publication difficult.

A few researchers use a “mixed method” approach, with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Although this is interesting and productive, and leads to the “triangulation” or comparison of different data that does have real scientific advantages, it adds a serious degree of complexity and difficulty that might be worth avoiding as you start.

In any case, the preferred research among most Journal editors is usually the most “elegant” or simple and clear design. In Western research, unnecessary complexity and wordiness are problems, so researchers who want to be published should find an interesting but clear set of questions and answers and avoid intriguing but confusing side trips. The volume of data and analysis is less important than its value to theory and information on the topic and its clarity. Only conduct research that you can do well, and that will contribute to the field.

Many beginning researchers create problems for themselves by ignoring the formatting and structural expectations of publications: how the reports are organized and presented. Page numbering and headers, subsection fonts and locations, and how references are listed in the text and at the end, need to be followed very accurately. Editors often reject any article that does not exactly follow the prescribed format – after all, these are considered unprofessional, and create extra work to prepare it for publication. Editors take formats very seriously, so you need to take it very seriously, too.

In the field of Journalism and Mass Communication, by far the most common format is the American Psychological Association, known as APA. This format has changed recently because of word processing software and the use of online sources, so only use the most current version of this or any format. Two other formats occasionally requested are MLA and Chicago. The “Useful Links” will offer formatting help. It will save your time and effort to

learn the format before you write a single word, and format correctly as you go. Then you can focus on the results and conclusions without the frustration of reformatting just before the deadline.

Another common obstacle to publications is reference problems. Try to include some references on the theory, the topic, and the situation, such as the media system or nation. It adds credibility if you have both classic references (the earliest important publications) and recent examples. Western and Russian traditions on references are very different; in the West, showing that you know the field is considered both necessary and helpful to the reader, so extensive references are expected. Russian scholarship tends to emphasize the researcher’s creativity and therefore minimize the role of references. Since it is unlikely that many (or any) studies have been done on your exact topic, break down your study into main elements, each of which can be the topic of a set of references.

Most authors with Russian education have trouble adapting to Western conventions of “voice.” In many qualitative studies, the author refers to himself or herself as “I”, and subjective constructions (such as in describing the steps of methodology) are more acceptable than they once were, but most publications in the field prefer very few or no direct personal references. This is a cultural tradition that often makes the writing in direct and clumsy, but it is a tradition that you should follow. Never personalize the article by writing “our nation”, etc.

Another common problem for people beginning Western publications is that they treat their papers as educational lectures. This is a certain way for your research to be rejected. Only include the information, references, and conclusions that specifically address the focus and research questions of the study. Your references will allow any readers who want to learn more to follow up on their own. Western research has a very specific, rather practical purpose so rambling on about aspects with little direct importance to the subject will not be accepted. For this reason, the general thoughts that are popular in Russian reports only belong in the discussion section of Western research, the place for speculation and imagination.

A critical distinction between Russian and Western research approaches is plagiarism. Including the words and ideas of others without giving them credit is so unacceptable that not only papers but entire academic careers have been ruined by using uncred-



ited information. Absolutely never “borrow” the words of others. Plagiarism is actually silly because Western scholars respect that you respect the work of previous authors. If in doubt, cite. The preferred use of references is paraphrasing, or summarizing what authors wrote, then giving a reference. Direct quotes are very useful when an idea is beautifully or importantly expressed, but quotes should be short and very focused on the topic [Silvia, 2007].

Another problem for many authors is “simultaneous submission”—sending the same article to more than one journal. This is tempting because it often takes many months for your article to be reviewed. However, any editor who is embarrassing by publishing the same article as another journal will never consider your work again, and will probably that other editors also reject your work. It is acceptable to submit somewhat similar or overlapping work to more than one journal, or a journal and a conference, but the penalties are so great that you should avoid risking this. Instead, work on several different studies at the same time so you don’t wait impatiently for a decision on your one study and be tempted to send it out to another journal.

Finally, the following ideas help many scholars, so you might consider them for yourself.

1. Beginning scholars naturally are unsure how to get published. Improve your research success by finding and collaborating with a few other researchers. Papers with two or three authors are very common and acceptable. Ideally, at least one co-author should have the skills and experience to help you put your work into publishable shape. Don’t be afraid to contact published authors, even those who are very important in the field. They also need to publish, and many are glad to, for example, extend their research to a new region such as Central Asia. Find scholars who will do their fair share of the work and avoid the few successful researchers who expect new scholar to do all the work, and then simply put their name on the paper.

2. Because of the importance of keeping the research focused, and the temptation of interesting but unproductive side issues, print the research questions in large font on several sheets of paper and tack these in the kitchen, bathroom, and across from their beds. This will keep a tight focus and remind you of your main goal: strong research.

3. If you want to support your career with publications, you must decide whether to follow something you love or adapt to a topic that is likely to be published. For example, research on China will often be more publishable than the same research conducted in, for example, Tajikistan. You have to decide your priorities and how much to adjust your work for the journal “market.”

4. It is easy to know which colleague is struggling to meet a publication deadline—they have short tempers, red-rimmed eyes, and missed appointments. Computers go wrong, data is lost, we can overestimate our progress, and accidents or illness ruins our plans. To avoid this problem, try creating a “fake deadline.” Depending on the size and complexity of your paper, often repeat to yourself that the deadline is days or even weeks before the real deadline. If the actual final date is March 15, give yourself a fake deadline of March 12 or March 1. Of course, your brain knows the true deadline but this might helps you complete the writing early enough so you can actually enjoy the writing. You might even join the small, even mythical, band of researchers who submit work before the deadline.

5. Beginning researchers are understandably unsure how to organize and write their work. A solution is called “modeling.” Find published studies that have already solved the problems you face, then use them as inspiration. If you can find one article on the theoretical aspect of the study, another that uses a method you would like to use, and one whose reporting and writing style feels comfortable and desirable for you, use each of these as conceptual templates by adapting what these published authors have done for important aspects of what you want to do. As long as you credit them in the article, this is not only ethical and respectful, but you are doing them a small favor because work that is cited in other studies is more respected. More than that, their efforts will be a foundation for your own work, just as they used the work of others to start their own success. If you send a grateful letter and copy of your paper, you will flatter them and maybe gain a collaborator or supporter. Perhaps the best part of academia is that it is (or should be) very collaborative and collegial, not competitive or judgmental. Publishing is the main way you join this social network.

### References

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### Useful Websites

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>. The best and largest online site for all questions about correct English, including many pages on academic formats such as APA and MLA.

<http://www.methodspace.com/>. A set of sites from a publisher about selecting and using various research methods for the social sciences, including many opportunities to ask questions from experienced researchers.

<http://thecommunicationspace.com/>. The same as “methodspace” except specifically designed for researchers in mass communication and related fields.

<http://www.apastyle.org/>. The official site for the Association that designs the APA format.

<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/apa.php>. A useful set of documents about how to format articles in the APA style.

[http://www.journalprep.com/FILES/How\\_to\\_Write\\_and\\_Publish\\_an\\_Academic\\_Research\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.journalprep.com/FILES/How_to_Write_and_Publish_an_Academic_Research_Paper.pdf). Practical suggestions on how to succeed as an academic author.

[http://www.sagepub.com/journalgateway/files/how\\_to\\_get\\_published.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/journalgateway/files/how_to_get_published.pdf). A leading publisher in the journalism and mass communication field offers tips on getting published.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=rjos20&page=instructions#.UZOZ97X-FCY>. The “Authors Guidelines” from the publisher of many journals.