

PREFACE

As are many good ideas, this book was born over food: garlic shrimp, no celery, as I recall. One week before he was to move to Washington State, Bob Jackson, a dear friend and colleague, mentioned to me that one of the key tasks of his new position would be to mentor junior faculty in the publishing process—not in research, but in publishing. A couple of years away from tenure, several faculty members in his new department were in trouble. They had not published. Some of them were fine or excellent teachers, even creative and productive researchers, but they had not published the results of their scholarship. I have known other faculty who are wonderful scholars, who conduct meaningful research and powerful program evaluations, but somehow have not disseminated their findings. What a loss to our professions that some of our colleagues' best ideas never make the journey from the mind or unpublished monograph to the published page.

Bob and I lamented that while there were many valuable books on writing, and certainly excellent texts on conducting research of various kinds, none of these really teach junior faculty, graduate students, or practitioners the processes and skills needed to take an idea from conception to actual publication. It dawned on us that such a book could be a great resource for those who wanted or needed to publish articles in journals in the human services. By the end of our egg rolls, ideas were flying; Bob had persuaded me that I should be the one to write this book.

As have most people who have learned to be successful in publishing, many of the lessons I have learned have come from the school of hard knocks; numerous mistakes have helped me develop the insights contained in this book. I have learned through trial and error, and through a careful assessment of what has worked and what has not. I have also learned by asking authors about their own publication

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experiences. My experience, my distillation of their ideas, and the developing of a few new techniques seem to have achieved results. In the last six years, I have had more than seventy articles accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. I do not attribute these successes to any particular brilliance. While I believe myself to be a creative and competent scholar, I am by no means an academic superstar. I do believe I am a good writer and I know that I enjoy writing, but as I will discuss, the aptitude and enjoyment of writing can be learned. In his role as editor of the journal *Clinical Effectiveness in Nursing*, Newell (2000) agrees that success in publication is less about originality of ideas and more a function of developing a set of skills (most of which you already possess) through practice. He notes that the more consistently one practices these skills, the easier it becomes to publish. Faculty and practitioners who have numerous publications are usually those who have their writing and publishing “muscles” stretched and conditioned; rarely are they so out of practice that they are stymied by long stretches of inactivity. While it is true that you do possess many of the skills that you need in order to publish, it is also clear that academics do not naturally or automatically learn the processes of writing for publication or submitting manuscripts. In truth, dissertations are very much anti-articles, in that they are overly repetitive, far too dense, and usually characterized by overelaboration. Sadly, it is often erroneously assumed that graduate school training prepares us to publish our scholarship (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 1998). You must carefully hone your new skills and you must learn new processes. It has been noted that artists would not expect the beginner to produce a masterpiece without guidance (Heinrich, Neese, Rogers, & Facente, 2004). This is an important point, as too often beginning scholars and practitioners who want to publish feel inadequate and afraid to submit their work. Fear is natural and normal and can be overcome with training and effort. I hope this book will provide you with some of the guidance you need to demystify the process of publishing scholarship and offer you useful tips for becoming a more effective writer of academic articles.

I believe I have achieved results from a careful analysis of each element in the process of publication. This book explores each of these elements. Not only have I practiced and refined these methods for

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myself, but I have also shared them with colleagues. Those who have used many of the ideas contained in this book have seen measurable results. I sincerely hope these methods also work for you. The methods espoused here are not rules written in stone. They are suggestions that you should modify to meet your own needs, given the realities of your discipline and research. If you disagree with some of the procedures advocated in this book, I hope you are able to develop new methods that work well for you. If you do develop new methods or have your own techniques that you find useful, I would love it if you would share them with me. I also hope you share these experiences with your colleagues, as too little has been written on this essential topic.

This book is not only for academics, but for practitioners as well. Too many important journals in the human services fields seem to lack the wisdom and experience of practitioners. It is my hope that more practitioners develop the skills and confidence to publish their work. While this book is geared toward the human services and helping fields, broadly defined (including social work, education, nursing, counseling, psychology, public administration, criminal justice, etc.), it may be appropriate for those in other disciplines as well.

Developing the ability to write for publication also demands that scholars and practitioners explore their own personal and professional limitations (Murray & MacKay, 1998). Developing as an author demands that you look at your affective tendencies in addition to your cognitive and behavioral skill set. Information and exercises in this book will help you develop the confidence and emotional resources you will need for success in publishing your work.

Throughout this book you will find three tools that I use to illustrate many of the concepts and skills that I explore. First, I frequently use examples from my own scholarship and writing program. For instance, you will find article titles and abstracts, concept maps, automatic writing exercises, cover letters, and revision letters, as well as other sample documents. These real-world examples illuminate and make real many of the issues explored through this guide. Second, I present the story of Karmen Lanzer in several chapters. Karmen's real-life story will help illustrate many of the points made in the book, and I hope it inspires you to begin or to continue your writing and publishing adventures. Third, I have created exercises to help you practice

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many different skills needed in publishing and writing. These skills will become more real to you through practice, and over time you will be able to make them your own. You can find the exercises at the end of each chapter. Before you begin reading chapter 1, I suggest that you complete Exercise 1.

I would like to share two things that mentees of mine have insisted I include early in this text. First, you *will* publish. Fear not; follow the guidelines in this book, work hard, and over time you will meet your publishing goals. Second, every article has a home. Let me say that again: every article has a home. You may have to revise and submit your work many times before it will be published, but it will be published. Remember that publishing is a process, not an event; it takes time and effort, but you can do it!