Editorial

How to speed your paper through production

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Tress *et al.* (2014) gave *Pacific Conservation Biology* readers a clear overview of preparing a paper for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Their figure 1 explained in detail the procedures occurring between submission of a manuscript and the final editorial decision, but simplified the section called 'Production process' to two steps: 'proofs' and 'published.' But just as a simple list of inputs and outputs belies the complex chemical reactions inside the mitochondria of cells, so the activities inside the black box of the production process are more complex than many authors realise. Understanding those activities explains some of those mysterious requests in the 'Instructions to authors' sections on journal websites and gives vital clues on how authors can expedite their papers through production and achieve the nirvana of publication. The description below covers activities at CSIRO Publishing journals (there may be slight differences with other publishers).

From acceptance to proof

Once the Editor-in-Chief says the magic 'A' word for acceptance, the manuscript begins its journey. The paper management software compiles a set of files including a pdf of the submitted manuscript with associated metadata, the author's accepted MS Word manuscript files, separate figure files, and any stray figure legends that authors may have entered as lonely sole entries in the management software. These files are delivered to the production team via FTP.

Production staff then prepare the files for copy editing by removing all figures embedded in the paper and saving them as separate files (the legends stay in the paper file), ensuring that all tables and equations are editable (e.g. none are submitted as embedded images), and reformatting the paper using specialist styling software which also adds in paper DOIs to the reference list where available (if these have not already been provided by the authors). The styling software also checks that every reference cited in the text is in the reference list and vice versa. The paper then moves to the copy editor, who will check important features including:

1. All figures and tables cited in the text are actually included and in the correct order (i.e. Table 1 should be mentioned in the text before Table 2).
2. Every reference cited in the text is in the reference list and vice versa as an important double check that every problem has been caught (sometimes the styling software misses something).
3. References are complete (e.g. no missed details such as page or volume numbers).
4. Spelling, grammar and clarity.

If there are major queries at this stage, the manuscript may be returned to the author for amendment before a proof of the paper is prepared. In most cases, though, the paper will then pass to the typesetter. Some publishers do not include a copy editing step in their workflow, but CSIRO Publishing does so as a service to authors and to maintain standards.

Production staff check the files before the typesetter begins work in case they can answer any questions raised by the copy editor. These may include, for example, a query regarding a missing detail in a reference that the production staff can answer immediately from databases. The typesetter then prepares the proof, with figures and tables in place. A list of questions is included at the end for the author to answer when proofing.

Managing the proof

CSIRO Publishing currently sends authors their proofs as pdf files, unlike the online proof correction systems used by some other publishers. Any specific questions from the copy editor or typesetter are included at the end of the proof and must be answered. CSIRO Publishing accepts corrected proofs in several ways: authors may print the proof, edit it, scan the edited copy and email it back; use software to annotate the pdf directly, or make a separate file (usually MS Word, or in an email) listing corrections. If corrections are complex, authors may return their proofs with a request to see another round of proofs after the corrections before giving the green light for publication. I once neglected this to my own embarrassment. I had inserted some text into a proof and, to indicate exactly where it should fit, added: (Then run on immediately to 'Some of Frank's interviewing panel …'). The literalist typesetter faithfully inserted the material in brackets into the paper; at least it was in the right place. The moral is to always request a second round of proofs if the corrections are complex.

Do remember that the proof is an opportunity to correct errors, not to insert extensive new text or rewrite large sections of the paper. If substantial changes are made at the proof stage the paper may be referred back to the editor who might request further reviews. Tables, equations, figures and symbols deserve special scrutiny. In particular, check that elements haven't disappeared from figures and that text in figures has not altered. As a courtesy to readers, check the references again. Lopresti

(2010) claimed that up to 25% of environmental science papers may contain errors in referencing, which can frustrate readers trying to trace a reference and prevent proper indexing of citations in databases.

When the proof is returned, production staff will arrange the uploading of the corrected paper to the journal website as an 'Online Early' entry, together with ORCID links and links to any supplementary files. Once the corrected proof is published online it becomes the document of record, so any mistake discovered after publication must stand. To ensure an accurate publication record, CSIRO Publishing will consider issuing a corrigendum to correct errors of fact (see http://www.publish. csiro.au/pc/PublishingPolicies). It is not possible to replace the online version, even if the print version is yet to appear.

How to expedite your paper (or help the production staff help you)

You can speed your paper on its journey by:

1. Submitting your figures as separate files that meet the requirements for resolution/contrast and so on specified on the journal website. This saves the production staff time because they don't have to strip the images from the original manuscript and it may also prevent any loss of resolution arising from insertion into the manuscript and then extraction.
2. Including the figure legends in the main manuscript after the reference list.
3. Submitting photographs as separate files that conform to the journal's requirements.
4. Putting your tables at the end of the main manuscript, not embedded. Remember that the production team need to strip them out and edit them, so put them where they can be found quickly.
5. Ensuring that equations and tables are editable and are not included as images or picture files. Macintosh users should note that the equation editor in earlier versions of MS Word for the Mac saved equations as picture files. This is a major problem in production. A third party equation editor may be required (one suggestion is the freeware MathMagic Lite, http://www.mathmagic.com/product/lite.html).
6. Checking that authors' names, affiliations and contact details are accurate, even down to the correct accents over letters if needed. These are courtesies to authors and readers (remember how cranky you get when your name is misspelled, or when you can't trace a reference). More selfishly, if these details are wrong, you won't get the citations you deserve because the databases won't link authors correctly and, for Australian authors, your institution may have trouble crediting this publication in the ERA. Your paper may also languish longer in production while queries are resolved.

The checklist in Appendix 1 summarises these points. Shortly, we will be sending it routinely to authors as part of the correspondence when revisions are requested. If you follow these steps good karma from the production staff will come to you and your paper will be published sooner.

References

Lopresti, R. (2010). Citation accuracy in environmental science journals. *Scientometrics* **85**, 647–655. doi:10.1007/S11192-010-0293-6

Tress, G., Tress, B., and Saunders, D. A. (2014). How to write a paper for successful publication in an international peer-reviewed journal. *Pacific Conservation Biology* **20**, 17–24. doi:10.1071/PC140017

Appendix 1.   Revising your manuscript

Please use this checklist to ensure your revised manuscript contains the important aspects below – meeting these criteria will expedite the production process should your manuscript be accepted!

Checklist:

☐ Is the title concise and written in sentence case in the manuscript?

☐ Are all author names spelled correctly in the title page?

☐ Are all author affiliations correct in the title page, including a relatively full postal address?

☐ Is the corresponding author indicated in the title page and a working email address provided?

☐ Is an abstract of ~250 words provided in the right format (unstructured)?

☐ Is the online short summary provided (~60 words, jargon free)?

☐ Are additional keywords (not already used in the title) provided in the manuscript?

☐ Are appropriate headings used throughout your paper (for scientific papers this will usually be: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion)?

☐ Are tables provided as editable files, and set up with content in individual cells (not formatted using paragraph breaks)?

☐ Are figures provided separately as best quality image files (not embedded within manuscript)?

☐ Are figure captions provided at the end of the manuscript?

☐ Are all figures and tables cited in the text, in order (including Supplementary material if applicable)?

☐ Are your references provided in Harvard format and all cited in the text?

☐ Is there a Conflicts of Interest statement provided in the title page?

☐ Have sources of funding been included in the Acknowledgements?

☐ Has written permission been gained to use any third-party figures?

☐ Has the signed Licence to Publish form been submitted to allow publication of your paper? (listing the correct authors in case of changes)

☐ Have supplementary materials been provided if relevant?

Authors for whom English is a second language may choose to have their manuscript professionally edited before acceptance to improve the English and expedite the production process. All services must be arranged, and paid for, by the author.

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