ALA 2007 – Editors Panel Discussion from Why Can’t Johnnie and Jane Get Published

Session held on June 23, 2007 during the ALA annual conference

The following are notes from the panel discussion portion of the program featuring editors from several journals, specifically Connie Foster, editor of Serials Review, Dr. William Gray Potter, outgoing editor of College and Research Libraries, James Mouw, editor of Library Collections Acquisitions and Technical Services, Karla Hahn, editor of Library Resources and Technical Services, and Scott Seaman, Associate Editor of Journal of Academic Librarianship.

When selecting topics and beginning the research

- Get a research mentor to help with setting up the methodology because it is very hard if not impossible to fix bad research in the writing stage
- If using statistics, run them past someone good with numbers
- Look for projects that update existing research or are logical extensions of previous research; try to avoid “how I did it good” papers (the panel felt there were too many of these in library literature)
- Set realistic goals and understand that learning to do research is a career-long process

Writing tips

- Make sure the lit review places the work in the context of the literature and make the case for why your paper has implications beyond the local project
- Make sure the methodology matches the hypothesis
- Make sure the hypothesis and conclusions match
- Make sure the article answers all of the questions it asks (“Is the loop closed?”)
- Pay close attention to the introduction and conclusion
  - Make sure the conclusion doesn’t make claims that aren’t supported by the rest of the paper
- Don’t throw in meaningless tables
- Don’t pad the text just to meet the manuscript size guideline – send what you have
- Be sure to follow the submission guidelines of the journal – pay close attention to the notes/references and abstract
- Have a colleague who is a good writer / editor review the paper before sending it in
- If writing with someone else, be sure to determine early in the process who will be listed as the first author.
Submission tips

- Understand the journal to which you are submitting the paper to be sure your article matches their scope and profile; when in doubt, ask the editor [note: I did just this with two journals and got very prompt and positive replies from the editors – Beth]
- Combine all of the pieces into a single document to make it easier to share with reviewers (who are volunteers)
- Expect to be asked to make revisions (only 10% of articles accepted by the Journal of Academic Librarianship are accepted without revision; 95% of articles accepted by College and Research Libraries required revision)
- Expect to be rejected – but revise and resubmit (about 20% of articles rejected by JAL are revised enough to later be accepted by JAL)
- Expect it to take some time to see it in print once an article is accepted; the time varies widely but is easily 6 months to a year for many publications.

Notes submitted by Beth Black, 2007