Helping publishers get closer to authors:
Perspectives from a global survey of academic authors

Presented by:
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VP Publisher and Academic Relations,
Editage / Cactus Communications
EDITAGE: Helping authors get published

Research Publication. Simplified.
Subject expertise, customized pricing, and 100% money-back guarantee.

Start with English editing

750,300 papers edited
198,000 authors served
1200+ subjects covered
2000+ experts
14+ years of experience

English editing
Transform your first draft into a grammatically correct, finely polished document

Publication support
Services that guide you through journal selection, manuscript preparation, journal submission, etc.

Translation
Overcome the language barrier with accurate translation followed by English editing

Trusted by Publishers, Journals, and Societies
EDITAGE: Author’s needs are first

AUTHOR NEEDS
Authors have been at the core of our DNA, and all our services are designed keeping in mind the author's needs.

- **Editage Insights**
  A comprehensive multilingual learning and discussion platform for all aspects of scholarly publishing

- **Workshops**
  Enabling scientists to communicate their research better

- **Webinars**
  Multilingual online seminars to educate authors on good publication practices

- **Manuscript Screening**
  Identifying the best papers that match the scope of the journal

- **Pre-/Post-Acceptance Editing**
  Focused editing for a specific stage of the publication cycle

- **Production Services**
  Augmenting journal in-house processes to improve production timelines

- **Language Editing**
  Substantive English-language editing by subject experts

- **Translation**
  Thorough 4-step process to ensure the original meaning is retained

- **Graphics/Video Summaries**
  Impactful artwork and conformity to the journal’s guidelines

- **Manuscript Preparation Support**
  Technical review, plagiarism check, and formatting for target journals

- **Journal Selection/Submission Support**
  Publication experts to manage the entire submission process

- **Alt-Text Writing**
  Descriptive text for images written by experienced subject experts

- **Peer Reviewer Training**
  Enabling reviewers to communicate effectively with authors
EDITAGE: An educational resource

• Editage Insights (www.editage.com/insights)

✓ Tutorials on all aspects of academic publication
✓ Guidance at every stage of the publication process
✓ Answers to all questions researchers ask
✓ Interviews and videos giving practical advice
✓ News, updates, and trends from the publishing industry

INDUSTRY SURVEY

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
We’ve all seen the headlines

Is the Peer Review Process for Scientific Papers Broken?

Online debate erupts to ask: is science broken?
Panel discussion about the shortcomings of science sparks chatter about possible remedies.

Scholarly publishing is broken: Is it time to consider guerrilla self-publishing?

The scientific publishing culture is broken - can it be rescued?

Opinion: Academic Publishing Is Broken
Academic research publishing is a broken system that needs to be fixed

NOVEMBER 1, 2015 ~ DIGITALBIOLOGIST
Let’s begin with some facts for perspective…

EVERY YEAR

ABOUT 8 MILLION RESEARCHERS

PUBLISH 2,500,000 ARTICLES

8,000,000
Let’s begin with some facts for perspective...

2.5 MILLION ARTICLES IN

28,134 Peer-reviewed English-language journals*

10,900 journals

Included in Thomson Reuters’ Journal Citation Reports

22,000 journals

Included in Scopus

* As of 2014 - Ulrich’s database

Note: Venn diagram not to scale
More research output from ESL countries
This causes a lot of pressure...

For authors

And for journal editors
Previously identified gap in perspectives between authors and editors

Authors think...

• They understand publication ethics and do the best they can to adhere to standard guidelines
• They address and respond carefully to all peer reviewer comments
• Journal instructions for authors are often incomplete and unclear

Editors think...

• Authors don’t realize the importance of publication ethics
• Authors only address the peer reviewer comments they find agreeable
• Journal instructions for authors are generally clear and complete

Previous survey of ~300 East Asian authors and ~100 international journal editors

Please mind the gap!
So we asked authors globally for their opinions

- Ongoing survey by **Editage Insights**, a global learning and resource platform for researchers
- Survey being run in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Portuguese

Seeking authors’ opinions on all aspects of the journal publication process

- Manuscript preparation
- Journal selection
- Journal processes
- Peer review
- Open access
- Publication ethics

Supported by the industry

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Interim results: 5293 respondents

Respondent demographics

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Total number of respondents for each survey language

- English: 1724
- Simplified Chinese: 1950
- Portuguese: 1027
- Japanese: 296
- Korean: 296

n = 5293

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Respondent profile

Which of these primary roles do you identify yourself with as a researcher?

- Author: 83%
- Journal editor: 4%
- Institutional head or Administrator: 1%
- Other: 12%

Roles identified when selecting “other”

Consultant, Writing, Professor, Fellow, Independent, Lead, Scholar, Science, Student, Researcher, Medical Writer, Editor, Published, Author, Academician and Clinician, Librarian, Doctor, Lecturer, Content, Reviewer, Assistant, Retired, Postdoctoral, Teacher.

$n = 5259$

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Top 10 countries represented (current location)

Number of authors currently working in these countries

China: 1,493
Brazil: 909
Republic of Korea: 306
Japan: 283
United States of America: 273
India: 211
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: 78
Australia: 68
Turkey: 50
Canada: 45
Portugal: 44

n = 4299

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Author respondents by field of study

- Medicine and Allied Health Sciences: 37.8%
- Humanities and Social Sciences: 18.9%
- Life Sciences: 18.2%
- Physical Sciences: 8.7%
- Other (please specify): 16.4%

Fields identified when selecting “other”

- Architecture
- Information Technology
- Development
- Human Business Law
- Mathematics Teaching
- Chemistry Research Engineering
- Interdisciplinary Science
- Public Health Education Arts Management Psychology
- Applied Test Economics Veterinary Medicine Nursing Energy

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD

n = 4299
Experience and English proficiency of author respondents

How long have you been involved in academic research and/or journal publishing?
- More than 5 years: 50%
- 1 to 5 years: 38%
- Less than 1 year: 12%

What is your written English proficiency?
- English is my first language: 10%
- English is not my first language but I’m comfortable writing in English: 52%
- English is not my first language and I find it challenging to write in English: 38%

How many papers have you published in an international English-language journal?
- More than 5: 29%
- 1 to 5: 36%
- Trying to publish my first: 18%
- None: 17%

n = 4298

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Publication-related challenges authors face

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
What do authors struggle with most in the whole process?

Percent authors who find specific stages of the publishing process “VERY DIFFICULT”?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript preparation for submission</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to peer reviewer comments</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting a journal for your manuscript</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking manuscript status in journal submission systems</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring compliance with relevant ethical guidelines</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 4427

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Throwback to our previous survey study

Which is the most challenging stage of the publication process?

What authors find challenging vs. what journal editors think authors find challenging

Scores indicate the average rank assigned to each parameter on a 1-to-5 scale, where 5 = most challenging
What aspects of manuscript preparation are “VERY DIFFICULT”? 

- Framing a research question: 28.2%
- Structuring the manuscript in IMRAD format: 20.7%
- Presenting information from previous studies in your own words: 20.4%
- Conducting a literature review: 16.6%
- Drafting the manuscript title and abstract: 15.9%
- Creating figures and tables: 14.0%
- Formatting as per journal guidelines: 13.6%

n = 3797

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
What aspects of manuscript submission are “VERY DIFFICULT”? 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Difficulty Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the submission (cover letter, authorship statement, conflict of interest disclosure, etc.)</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending enquiries to the editor during manuscript processing</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the status of your manuscript in the journal system</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating and managing your account in the journal submission system</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$n = 3743$

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Where do authors seek help when in doubt during the publishing process?

- I search online using a search engine: 39.0%
- I approach my seniors or colleagues: 38.6%
- I check on specific social media or an online forum for researchers: 8.5%
- I ask my librarian for resources or visit my university writing support center: 7.6%
- I feel lost and don’t know where to look: 6.3%

$n = 4277$

*Multiple selections allowed*

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Perspective-based questions for authors

I think...

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
### How do authors choose a journal for their manuscript?

**Factors considered, ranked from most important (1) to least important (7)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The journal should have a <a href="#">high impact factor</a> for my field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The journal should have published <a href="#">similar papers</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The journal should offer a <a href="#">short time-to-publication</a> or have a rapid publication option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My <a href="#">colleagues and seniors</a> should be reading the journal regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The journal should have a clear and professional-looking <a href="#">website</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The journal should be <a href="#">open access</a> or have an open access publishing option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The journal’s <a href="#">submission process and charges</a> should be clearly mentioned on its website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*$n = 3876$
Again, this broadly matches our previous survey findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Journal editors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A - Topics &amp; types of articles generally published</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B - Journal impact factor or prestige</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C - Target audience</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - Review time</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E - Editorial board members</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F - Country of origin</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G - Open access status</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>5.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scores indicate the average rank assigned to each parameter on a 1-to-7 scale, where 7 = most important.
Perspectives on journal instructions for authors

In general, how well do you think journal guidelines for authors are framed?

- Clear and complete: 27%
- Clear but incomplete: 42%
- I don't know: 11%
- Unclear and incomplete: 4%
- Unclear but complete: 16%

n = 3799

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
And in our previous study...

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Perspectives on open access publication

Have you ever published in an open access journal, or chosen to make your paper open access in a subscription-based journal?

Reasons for publishing open access (% respondents)*
- Increase research reach (34.3%)
- Coincidence (29.5%)
- Preference for OA (15.3%)
- Publication guarantee by the journal (13.6%)
- Institutional/funding body mandate (7.3%)

Reasons for not publishing open access (% respondents)*
- Coincidence (34.3%)
- Affordability (29.5%)
- Lack of understanding (15.3%)
- Mistrust in quality of OA journals (13.6%)
- No adequate benefits of OA seen (7.3%)

\( n = 3875 \)

*Multiple selections allowed

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Author-Journal communication

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Do authors approach journals without hesitation?

Have you ever written to the journal for queries or clarifications during the publication process?

Yes 55.6%  
No 44.4%

If yes, how did you find their response?
• Prompt and clear (42.7%)
• Delayed but clear when it came (28.4%)
• Prompt but not clear (17.7%)
• I didn’t get any reply (7.8%)

If no, why not?
• I didn’t have a query (51.1%)
• I didn’t know how to contact the journal (14.8%)
• I didn’t know I was allowed to contact the journal (16.6%)
• I was scared to contact the journal (17.4%)

n = 3760

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Time to publication

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
### Perspectives on time to publication

**What is the shortest time in which you’ve had a paper published (from submission)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t had a paper published yet</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 months</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6 months</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 months</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How long do you think it should ideally take to publish a paper in a journal (from submission)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It doesn’t matter how long it takes if the quality of publication is high</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 months</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3 months</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*n = 3775

Duration of manuscripts at different stages in the journal workflow

“In your experience, how long does a manuscript remain at the following status points on the journal submission system?”

“WITH EDITOR”

- Less than 5 days: 17%
- 5 to 10 days: 28%
- 10 to 30 days: 19%
- More than 1 month: 36%

“UNDER REVIEW”

- Less than 1 month: 19.4%
- 1 to 3 months: 8.0%
- 3 to 6 months: 16.4%
- More than 6 months: 47.0%

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
“In your experience, how long does a manuscript remain at the following status points on the journal submission system?”

**“DECISION IN PROCESS” OR “AWAITING DECISION”**

- Less than 5 days: 14%
- 5 to 10 days: 26%
- 10 to 30 days: 31%
- More than 1 month: 29%

Authors’ understanding of ethical issues and best publication practices

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Authors’ awareness of potentially predatory journals

Has a journal ever contacted you guaranteeing publication or promising rapid publication?

Yes 45%
No 55%

n = 3875

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Experience with potentially predatory publishers

If yes, have you ever submitted to such a journal?

If yes, what was the outcome?
- My manuscript was accepted and published as promised (68.3%)
- The journal demanded unexpected article processing charges (14.4%)
- The journal stopped responding to my queries after I submitted my manuscript (6.6%)
- Other (11.3%)

If no, why not?*
- I didn’t trust the journal (67.8%)
- I didn’t recognize the journal (40.4%)
- I already had another journal in mind for my paper (21.8%)
- I’m not sure (4.8%)
- Other (0.1%)

*Multiple selections allowed

n = 1726

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
How do authors define plagiarism?

Which of the following, in your opinion, constitutes plagiarism?*

- Reusing text from your own previously published study, without citing your study as the source: 57.3%
- Reusing text from your own previously published study, and citing your study as the source: 15.6%
- Using text from a previous study/someone else’s work, without rewording or using quotes: 85.8%
- Rewording/paraphrasing someone else’s ideas from a previous study, without citing the source: 81.1%

n = 3637

*Multiple selections allowed

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
How well do authors understand authorship criteria?

Which of the following, in your opinion, should be named a co-author on your paper?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A friend who helped with editing and proofreading the manuscript as you have difficulty writing in English</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A famous researcher in your field, because that will increase your chances of acceptance</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A researcher who participated in conceptualizing the research, conducting the study, drafting the manuscript, and provided final approval</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A colleague who provided some material or equipment for your research</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your department head because he/she should be listed on all papers from that department</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Multiple selections allowed

$n = 2708$

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Familiarity with good publication standards

Which of the following bodies/guidelines are you familiar with?

- COPE
- ICMJE
- Declaration of Helsinki
- GPP2
- CONSORT
- All of the above
- None of the above

n = 3733

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
What would authors like to change in the system?

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
What aspects of journal publishing do authors want changed?

Would you like to change something in the publishing system?

- Yes (check my comments below)
- No. I am satisfied with the system

51.7% 48.3%

Survey on Author Perspectives: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD

n = 3712
What aspects of journal publishing do authors want changed?

Main pain points and author-suggested areas of improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Time to publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Peer review process/quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fairness/objectivity/bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Affordability (costs/charges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pressure to publish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Process standardization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$n = 3712$

Sample author comments about the journal publishing system

Yes, the system needs to be faster and less bureaucratic.

Why take months to close to a year just to say no.

There should be an effort to uniformize manuscripts requirements (such as file type, file size, figure embedding and so on and so forth).

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Sample author comments about the journal publishing system

- High impact journals charge too much to publish the article
- It should have a defense system where authors can file complaints
- Expand bilingual or trilingual journals in order to internationalize science.
- Young researchers should have a different section for publication in each peer reviewed journal.

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Sample author comments about the journal publishing system

More access to resources / help for publication

(Journals should) use instant communication tool like QQ, WeChat

I believe that the pressures should be reduced in order to get a really good, reproducible study

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Key takeaway... There’s a lot that’s broken!

Let’s begin by fixing the basics!

1. Understand author perspectives
2. Reduce time to publication
3. Increase transparency in peer review
4. Eliminate bias
5. Communicate effectively with authors
6. Create new opportunities for young researchers
7. Offer learning resources on good publication practices

SURVEY ON AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES: http://bit.ly/2mWpvGD
Get involved!

Participate in the Editage Insights survey and share it with your authors!

https://www.editage.com/survey-author-perspectives-on-academic-publishing
Question period / Open discussion

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