Book Review

Anne Sigismund Huff (1999). *Writing for Scholarly Publication.* Sage, London, UK

by Jeffrey Muldoon[*]

The well-known aphorism known as either "*Publish or Perish*" describes very precisely the pressure, especially for young or new scholars, who want to proceed successfully in their academic careers. Indeed, this aphorism could also be stated as "*Publish and Perish*" when its pressure leads to the devaluation of quality research efforts and discourages, even kills, the will of these scholars to conduct research in several disciplines (Dani, 2018) or use certain time-consuming methodologies (Smith, 2022).

Twenty-five years after its publication, Anne Sigismund Huff's book, *Writing for Scholarly Publication* can be a very useful title for every scholar, academic, and practitioner to read, especially those involved in the accounting field of study, to avoid this risk and at the same improve the quality of their research products. Indeed, I believe that, in each Ph.D. track, coordinators should recommend that each candidate study this book before defining their first research effort. The structure as well as the content of each chapter in this book will help them successfully identify the research question they plan to address and the proper methodology possible answer to it.

Ms. Huff's useful book has 11 chapters that are divided into three well-organized sections.

The first offers two chapters that outline the philosophy that is discussed in the more practical chapters that follow. In them, these chapters contend that scholarly writing is actually a form of conversation, and also argue that writing is valuable in and of itself as a form of scholarly thought. To this extent, this Huff metaphor suggests that writing is an important, indeed a vital, form of interaction that occurs among scholars that has the potential not only to add to each participant's store of information but also to alter their opinions and priorities. In her opinion, writing is conversation that takes place over time that draws in people from different institutions, at different points in their academic careers. Taking into account that writing is both time-consuming and difficult, the author recommends that scholars do anticipate getting better at it and indeed discovering more pleasure in doing it.

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To reduce the underlying complexity of writing and to prevent writing from becoming a process that is wrestling with alligators (Dillard, 1990) and thus the pleasure that can come from writing, six practical recommendations are offered in the first two chapters.

First of all, people, topics, and specific works that provide the intellectual foundation of a research project must be recognized clearly.

Second, the potential colleagues of your "writing community" must be identified so as to better understand to whom the "creative" conversation can be addressed.

Third, at least three tasks that can be completed to form and then sustain the writing community should be acknowledged.

Fourth, the history and anticipated future of one of your most recent writing projects can be summarized by charting its "accordion path".

Fifth, the times, places, and conditions that best facilitate your writing and its success should be identified.

Sixth, the key strategies for protecting and enhancing the best writing times must be identified and defined clearly.

The second part of the book offers three chapters dedicated to the choice of topic, the identification of the "conversants," i.e., the specific written works that the author hopes to directly engage with the writing, and the use of "exemplars" to speed the scholar's understanding of these conventions. These are based on the author's choices that will make publication of the writing more likely. In terms of topics, this process is a crucial choice, when considering that, on the one hand, a topic should maintain the scholar's interest over the full period required to advance understanding and, on the other hand, too many people write papers on their own personal interest that then attract little enthusiasm from others in their field and beyond. To overcome these issues, brainstorming can help, as it can increase the variety of topics to choose and address in the writing. The personal interests of scholars should be juxtaposed with the interests of others in the field when deciding among writing alternatives. For identification of the conversants, ideally, before the research even begins, the writer/researcher will focus on the questions to ask and the best way to answer them to make publication more likely. It is also important to follow the rules of good clear conversation.

The third and last segment of the book offers six chapters that discuss the basic components of successful scholarly writing.

The first of these chapters (Chapter 6) focuses on the title and the abstract. These are just two small parts of a research paper but they are crucial,

as they will attract the "right" audience for your contributions, develop their interest in reading the work in its entirety, and summarize its contributions to the literature in a way that readers will remember, whether or not they read it fully.

The second chapter of this segment (Chapter 7) deals with the necessity of making an outline. It allows the scholar to experiment with the order of presentation and helps the scholar when defining and highlighting the value of the work that the scholar is writing.

A third chapter (Chapter 8) focuses on the introduction and conclusion, two sections of every research paper that are as important as the title and the abstract. While the Introduction is the first statement of any length on the chosen topic, the conclusion's contribution is reminding readers of the key contributions of the paper. In both sections, scholars should demonstrate that – given the issues raised in past conversations and the language characterising the contributions of the research and the paper – the scholars do have something worthwhile to add to the conversation in that particular field.

A fourth chapter (Chapter 9) addresses the presentation issues that can clarify thinking about the subject of the research and its paper and thus lead to subsequent research and writing. This discussion also focuses on those issues of communication that will make it even more likely that the work will reach a good and useful audience. Finally, it allows for scholarly conversation to offer early input on the work itself.

A fifth chapter (Chapter 10) is dedicated to the body of the paper. It offers precious suggestions for how to manage time and minimize incomplete writing projects by taking into consideration the frustration produced by not submitting to publication. Based on the assumption that 'good research is founded on good theory', scholars must always be aware that even in an extreme 'positivist' domain (Friedman, 1953; Watts & Zimmerman, 1986), interpretive knowledge is still important in the development of new theory. Thus, in the body of any research product, the literature should be reviewed, and the research hypotheses should flow from the theory that is analyzed. In addition, a methodology coherent with the research hypotheses must be very detailed and relate to the main findings of the research that will be offered in the paper.

In the final chapter (Chapter 11), this book focuses on the revision, submission, revision and publication process and their precise steps. Naturally these are very stressful steps for the author/s, as revision is a critical aspect of all scholarship. However, this book still suggests celebrating submission

as a victory in and of itself and, whenever available, considering the possibility that reviewer comments can detail that effort. To this extent, the scholars should address the recommendations for change provided by the referees, but not feel they must carry out all suggestions offered and take into due consideration that, unfortunately, some reviewers are not just anonymous co-authors with positive interest in improving the quality of a submitted manuscript.

I believe this well-written tome with its well-suited and focused chapters provides insightful and relevant suggestions to academics and practitioners who want to discuss and then produce writing for scholarly publication. Overall, this book deserves receiving broad attention and reading, as it is a good starting point for young scholars who are dealing with accounting topics in their Ph.D. programs and also an opportunity for elderly scholars to refresh their knowledge of the publication process using the exciting personal experiences of the author that may help them improve the quality of their own future research projects.

References

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