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The Online Author's Survival Guide

Kivmars Bowling

Senior Managing Editor, Compass Journals, Wiley-Blackwell

Hello and welcome to *The Online Author's Survival Guide*! My name is Kivmars Bowling and I'm the Senior Managing Editor here at Wiley-Blackwell for the online review journals, *Literature Compass* and *History Compass*. Today I'm going to talk to you about the perils and pleasures of publishing your work online, and give you some practical tips to help raise the profile of your digital scholarship.

When the Compass journals were first started 7 years ago we were entering new territory for both our authors and us, as the publisher – online-only review journals in the humanities and social sciences tracking recent and future trends across various disciplines. Fast, accessible, and timely.

We quickly found that publishing solely online creates both new challenges for you as an author, but also opportunities that were never possible in print.

Let me pose three questions here that I'll hopefully be able to answer for you in this podcast:

What are the principles you should be aware of when preparing your online article?

How can you raise the profile of your work after publication?

And finally, in an online world that is constantly in flux, what has remained unchanged?

A quick aside: all the links I mention today will be available on the Compass Conference website alongside this podcast.

So, our first question: What are the principles you should be aware of when preparing your online article?

First off: make your article easy to find! Much as we hope that readers will regularly browse the journal, the reality is that many will be using a search engine to find – or not find – your article. Whether readers are using an abstracting service, their library's federated search or Professor Google, it's vital that you construct your title and abstract to make it easy to find.

Officially this is termed 'Search Engine Optimization' but it really is very straightforward – simply make sure that your title and abstract contain the key phrases and words that your article covers. While allusive and dense titles may pique the interest of your peers, search engines are unfortunately less forgiving. Or rather, it's not the search engine, but the search terms that your readers will put in that you should bear in mind.

For example, a title of 'Australia's Forgotten Victims' is poetic but does not contain likely key phrases used in a search by potential readers. Whereas 'Genocide and Holocaust Consciousness in Australia' is much more descriptive and really tells the reader what they might expect if they click on that link to your article.

You can find a link to more detailed optimization guidelines on the Compass Conference website.

Secondly: make your article networked! Or in other words: always include a comprehensive bibliography in your online article. Many libraries will have Open URL reference linking in place – this will pick up the works you cite and tell readers how to access those titles in the library holdings if they're available. This kind of automated linking online ensures your article is embedded in a network of citations. And having a full bibliography in turn encourages others to cite your article as it offers a gateway to the topic.

Your article can and should also include links to the major scholarly websites and digital projects related to your topic – however always be sure to cite stable URLs. Once your paper is published, the links cannot be updated.

Our third and final principle when preparing your article: make the most of digital materials! This represents the most obvious change from the print world, where color is discouraged because of cost and other media are excluded for practical reasons.

We want your color images, data sets, sound files, video, animation, maps and anything else that will add a new dimension to your scholarly article. Talk to your publisher if you have an idea.

If you cannot find the video clip that you want, could your university's audio/visual facilities help? Or could you obtain the material from a colleague (with their permission)? Or find it online in a public-domain database? Or an online resource that would license you the material for free?

All of this can – and should – be part of an online article. It brings the article to life for the reader, (especially so for people looking for teaching ideas). Some materials do require permission from the copyright holder, and it is the author's obligation to obtain this, but there are many sources of free materials. The printed version of this Survival Guide, available on the Compass Conference website, has a list of resources to help you get started. Also included are links to open-source software to help you manipulate your material, for example, Audacity for audio editing and Gimp for image editing.

Use your imagination, and your article will be better for it, in terms of readership and usage.

So, your article has been published in all its glory, with its accessible title and abstract, its networked bibliography and enhancing digital features. Now we come to our second question:

How can you raise the profile of your work after publication?

Clearly the journal's reputation and the usual activities undertaken by the publisher will get your article out there. But in an online world flooded with content there are nonetheless many ways you can help to make your piece stand out. Here some suggestions but work with your publisher in identifying which ideas may work for your article.

First off: use your contacts! At Wiley-Blackwell our Author Services enable many authors to nominate up to 10 colleagues or opinion leaders to receive a copy of their new article.

But, even simpler, once your article published, email the URL to your friends and colleagues. Even those at non-subscribing institutions will get the abstract free and may be encouraged to recommend the journal to their library or read your article on a pay-per-view basis.

Secondly, we come back to one of our earlier principles: make your article networked! Have you linked directly to your article from your university or personal webpage or your blog?

Do you belong to personal or professional social networks such as [Facebook](#), Twitter or [LinkedIn](#)? Add the link to your article to your profile; inform your friends/contacts.

Are there blogs or listservs in your field that may be interested in discussing or reviewing your article? Does your article tackle a controversial topic or challenge received wisdom? Talk to the publisher about providing the blogger or listserv moderator with a review copy or sending them a message to alert them to your article. The publisher may even be able to make your article free for a limited time.

Do you maintain social bookmarks on sites such as [Digg](#), [StumbleUpon](#) or [del.icio.us](#)? If so, add your article to your list, or encourage friends and colleagues to do the same.

Is your article directly relevant to a scholarly topic on [Wikipedia](#)? If so, add it to the Bibliography for that entry.

Finally, are you part of a community on [SecondLife](#) or other virtual communities? Are there ways to promote your article within SecondLife? Wiley-Blackwell, for example, already has a location in SecondLife.

Thirdly, consider the possibilities for teaching. If your piece is suitable, encourage your friends and colleagues to use your article in their teaching. Selected Compass articles even have a free Teaching & Learning Guide that accompanies the original piece, providing ideas on how to incorporate the article into teaching.

Look out also for the 'Add to VLE/CMS' button next to each Compass abstract – that makes it easy to include the article in your course management system such as Blackboard or WebCT.

An article that has broad teaching potential can certainly attract an increased readership.

Fourthly, conferences. Is there a conference coming up which directly relates to your article? Would delegates be interested in reading your piece? Again, the publisher may even be able to make your article free for a limited time.

Conference website: <http://compassconference.wordpress.com>

Is your article related to your conference presentation or those of your colleagues? Can the discussion be enriched by reference to your article, or even discussion of the issues raised?

Finally, news media. Is your article particularly newsworthy or topical? Talk to the publisher about sending a press release to the mainstream media.

Now, these are all just initial ideas – always talk to your publisher if you have thought of other creative ways to raise the profile of your article!

We've looked at how to prepare your article, and how you can help to raise its profile after publication. Publishing online presents many new opportunities, but there are of course some things that never change – and rightly so.

So we come to our final question: in an online world that is constantly in flux, what has remained unchanged?

When we first founded the Compass journals there was still a suspicion of online-only publishing, even from a major reputable publisher. In the intervening years this has lessened greatly and tenure committees are increasingly evaluating online publications alongside print, although there is still work to be done. But, for an academic journal publishing online there are certain key principles that remain constant:

First and foremost of course: high quality, strong and comprehensive scholarship.

Secondly, a robust peer review and revision process that ensures that quality.

Thirdly, a professional copyediting and production process that ensures the final PDF and on-screen versions match a print journal in terms of production values.

Fourthly, the inclusion of all published articles in the main abstracting and indexing services that are key to each discipline.

In addition there are some procedural elements that have also remained unchanged:

The importance of length

One of the most widely held myths about online publishing is that size does not matter. But size does matter to your readers.

Each journal's profile is partly defined by the length and style of the articles it publishes, and so consistency is important for meeting readers' expectations.

Many will read part of the first page of your article on-screen, and then print out the rest if it interests them. You have only one page to grab their attention, which is another reason to construct your abstract and title very carefully. Concise articles are easier to handle in this context than very long ones – your readers don't want to print out a mini-monograph. If your Editor has specified the word limit for your article, then it's always a good idea to keep to it where possible. As with print journals, extra pages also entail copyediting and typesetting costs in the online medium.

Errata

Also unchanged is the procedure here. Whether published online or in print, the final published article still becomes part of the permanent scholarly record. It is not possible, therefore, to simply correct errors directly within the final version. As with print, errata for significant errors or addenda are published in the next issue of the journal and linked back to the original article.

Copyright

Finally, as with print, there are still copyright restrictions as to how you can use your article once published. Compass authors, for example, receive a PDF offprint via Author Services, which they are free to distribute to close colleagues, friends, students but not to post on the web at any time. Authors are also free to reuse the article in personal compilations of their work (with acknowledgement of the published version). Twelve months after publication on Compass, the author may put their original Word document anywhere they like on the web, as long as a link appears to the published version with Wiley-Blackwell.

So, in conclusion, this *Online Author's Survival Guide* has tackled three key areas to bear in mind when publishing online:

The principles you should be aware of when preparing your article

How you can raise the profile of your work after publication

And what remains unchanged even in the online world

Conference website: <http://compassconference.wordpress.com>

I hope this introductory guide has been useful. As we all know, the flood of ever-changing online technologies is exciting but can also be a little daunting at times – the main aim here is for you as an author to also think about how we can harness this medium to promote the best scholarship and encourage debate. Publishers always try to take the lead, but I know we're always keen to hear about creative ideas from you as an author.

Finally, printed version of this *Online Author's Survival Guide*, along with the links mentioned, is available via the Compass Conference website or via the Compass Journals website at www.blackwell-compass.com.

And for more strategies to get your article noticed, listen to the podcast in this workshop series on 'The Secret to Online Publishing Success'.

Thanks for listening!