

## From Revise and Resubmit to Your Name in Print

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(Originally written for the *We the People* blog of the Richards Center at PSU)

Possibly the best advice I got from my committee two years ago was their suggestion that I take my masters' paper, revise the heck out of it, and submit it to the *Journal of American History*. No one thought I would actually get the piece in, but rather that it would be a great professional experience for me. Basically with journals of this caliber, they told me, you only have a couple options: they don't think it works for them at all (in which case they send it back pronto) or they send it to readers and the readers say it doesn't work at all (in which case it still only takes a few months, and you get first rate feedback from the readers). My committee and I were pleasantly surprised (or amazed, in my case) that I received a recommendation to revise and resubmit the manuscript for publication. After resubmission and another eight months, my article was actually accepted. I screamed and ran around the office when I got the email, a slight breach of professional decorum that I'll allow myself this time.

What I had not realized was that getting an article \*accepted\* into a prestigious journal is only half the battle. Getting the article \*in print\* is almost as difficult and time consuming! That is what I have been asked to talk about here: what happens after acceptance.

The acceptance came with a permissions contract I had to sign and return. Sounded simple enough, but it also came with the stipulation I make some changes to the article. This version came with advice from three reviewers and the editor. The reviewers ran the gamut from wanting my piece rejected to really loving it – yes, even an acceptance can come with some rough comments. The editor guided me here, giving me a list of what he really wanted me to address based on reviewer comments, but also bluntly told me to disregard some pieces of reviewer advice (frankly, it was pretty flattering to be told I could dismiss the comments of a distinguished professor). So when I finished that running around the office I started revising. I only had two weeks to make the changes so I had to make this an immediate priority.

After these revisions were approved, I was contacted by a footnote editor. I generally consider myself organized and think I keep fairly good records of what archival boxes I dug around in and which records and record groups I was citing. But it turns out my footnotes were nowhere near journal ready! Many lacked the level of detail the editors needed. The level of attention the editor wanted was extraordinary, to the point of telling me I cited the wrong page in 300+ plus page books. Frankly, it was impressive. The lesson here, though, is that you should take thorough notes for citations that your most neurotic, anal-retentive colleague finds over the top. You'll need them.

Then came images. This was really the craziest part, and I kind of had some fantasy that journals did all the logistical work for this sort of thing, which is a belief I want to disabuse you of now. You do the work, lazy. So first I found some images I loved. I had one beautiful one from the *New York Times*, for example, that featured Mayor LaGuardia putting on a one-act play about food stamps. Perfect. But, first, I had to call four or five different people at the Times and send about a dozen emails, all trying to track down this image in their archives. Then they told me they would need to send an intern to check if there even was a good copy of the photo around – this could take up to two weeks and require a non-refundable \$100 search fee. The cost of obtaining copyright if they did have it, to print a half-page image in a small-circulation academic journal, was \$300 extra. So, considering I am a rather frugal grad student, that wasn't going to happen.

I called a bunch of other archives that held images I wanted, but it was a messy process trying to figure out whom to call for high resolution images from, for instance, a long defunct social work magazine. It was also pretty much impossible to convince some contemporary magazines that they in fact must have archives from the 1930s somewhere. Understandably these folks are worried about getting out today's issue, and your bizarre request for a political cartoon from 1935 will not endear you to them. Archives, you may find, only go back to the dark ages of the 1990s. In the end if you are anything like me you'll start to wonder why you didn't study some picture-free social science topic.

Federal archives proved my absolute saving grace. If you do not work in modern American political history, I have a newfound respect and pity for you. I imagine every image I will ever use, for the rest of my academic career will come from the National Archives and Records Administration, where things are handy and mostly copyright free. I found two images I could use from NARA II in College Park, Maryland, and another one from the FDR library in Hyde Park, New York. I had to hire a private contractor from NARA (they keep an approved list) to collect the first two images in a sufficiently high resolution for the journal. Though they charged a \$10 delivery-by-email fee, I was pretty impressed that the total cost was only around \$70. The FDR library proved absolutely incredible on the matter, bumping me up the line with a minimum of degrading begging on my part and sending a 600dpi image on a CD-ROM directly to the publisher for less than \$30. Such a major win after a frustrating, long process!

Then the journal even selected one of these photos for the cover of the issue in which my article will appear, which made some of the hair-pulling that went into tracking them down worth it. [Important side bar! Dr. Bill Blair and the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center, who previously funded some of my research, were incredibly generous in reimbursing my photo payments. The Center is very supportive of their graduate students. Generally, finding someone to pay for your photo-ventures is worth it, because the journal will not be footing the bill].

In retrospect, Of course, if I had taken great scans at the archives I would never have needed to send away for these pictures on a very tight deadline, of course. I had photos on my average-quality digital camera, but these babies need to be super clear. My advice would be that if you work in archives that allow flat-bed scanners, get one. Take perfect scans in high res (say 300-600 dpi) of anything you might want, then document it extensively (see above) so you can deal with copyright as needed. Now, I was just working at NARA and in no way followed my own advice (I mean, how many grad students have \$300 laying around?). If you can pull it off though, I promise it will save money and stress come publication time.

Finally, alas, it came to copy editing. They ripped my grammar to shreds, and I knew better than to put up a fight. Or, as I would have put it in an academic essay, "my grammar was ripped to shreds but fighting I knew better than." It was hard on the ego and yet another time-consuming step on the way to publication, but it's hard to complain when editors are working to make you look smarter.

Next, I had to put together an abstract describing the article. This is a pretty normal part of being an academic, of course, but I had spent so much time engrossed in properly spelling the name of some bureaucrat I quote once that I couldn't remember for the life of me what the article actually set out to accomplish. I had to read the whole thing again, and then compress it into a mere 150 words. It was great to realize they have abstracts in every issue though. Most of us academics get our articles online and from library databases, which means I had no idea this great "quick and dirty" information on some

of the freshest and most exciting research out there is available so easily. Really, it's a graduate student's best friend.

Finally, the publisher contacted me directly. They emailed me galleys, and I finally got to see my article in journal format, which looked so professional and made the whole affair and my good fortune at getting this publication seem more real than it had before. I had less than two days to proofread the galley, make any necessary corrections and turn it around! It seemed crazy at first, but actually I didn't change anything. When it is at that point, all typeset and prepared, changes are a major inconvenience for them, so unless they missed a misspelling somewhere, there usually isn't anything that needs correcting. After all was said and done I found a place where I mistyped a book publication date – by 20 years! – which is something I could have changed at the galley stage had I seen it. Hopefully the author I was citing doesn't mind me telling the world she published her first book when she must have actually been in junior high. You should read galleys closer than I do, but the point is the turnaround was quite simple. I had to mail in one more permissions form and voila...my pre-publication work was done....or at least I hope it is, you never know!

Basically, you should know that when you have an article accepted at a journal, that is only the beginning, not the end. You have to redirect lots of time and energy to the process. It could be overwhelming at times, and I admit I complained along the way about the fast turnaround required and the difficulty of figuring out what to do with images. But, I was also fortunate that the editorial staff I worked with were very professional and helpful, and that my own department helped me out however they could along the way. And, of course, you should know the crazy hoops and timesucking corrections are absolutely – and I mean ab-so-lutely – worth it.

Now, this is just my experience: one article, one issue, one journal. Just within the Richards Center we have two other graduate students going through the publication process right now, Will Bryan and Evan Rothera. Hopefully they can chime in with their experiences too. I would personally also love to hear from anyone who doesn't have the luxury of the state and federal archives that saved me, or any other complicating circumstances! Get the conversation started!