



PUBLICATION OF YOUR PAPER ON NOISE

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Abstract

Many first time authors and some experienced authors approach the preparation of a paper for consideration for publication in a refereed journal with some apprehension. Even writing a paper for conference proceedings is not always an easy task. This paper will serve as the introduction to an open forum on the preparation of a paper for publication and, for refereed journals, how to survive the review process. The benefits of publication are outlined, including the different options available for the dissemination of information useful to the noise control community — such as refereed journals, professional conferences and trade magazines. An overview of the content in a good journal paper is presented, including technical content, organization, formatting and language. The process of revising a paper in response to reviewers' comments is discussed. We also outline policies on plagiarism, submission of a paper to more than one journal, and publication in a refereed journal of papers previously published in conference proceedings.

Keywords: Publications.

1 Introduction

The dissemination of information is the key to the successful application of noise control technology. Two of the primary mechanisms for disseminating information on the effects of noise, characteristics of noise, sources of noise, and techniques for the control of noise are through papers presented at conferences and papers published in professional journals. Knowledge exchange, including publication of research results related to noise control, is one of the primary missions of the Institute of Noise Control Engineering of the USA (INCE/USA). To address this mission, INCE/USA organizes INTER-NOISE congresses sponsored by the International Institute of Noise Control Engineering (I-INCE). In addition, INCE/USA organizes NOISE-CON conferences when INTER-NOISE is not held in the Americas; in addition, the European Acoustics Association holds Euronoise conferences

when INTER-NOISE is not held in Europe. Published proceedings include all of the written papers submitted prior to the conference. Although these papers are not reviewed by peers, i.e., they are not refereed, they are readily available online and can impact the reputation of both the authors and the Institute if they are not well researched and written. Noise/News International also publishes articles of broad interest to the profession which are not peer-reviewed.

In addition to papers presented at conferences, INCE/USA publishes papers in the *Noise Control Engineering Journal (NCEJ)*, where paper submissions are reviewed by peers. Other refereed journals available to noise control engineers for publication of results of research and development include, for example, the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (JASA)*, *Applied Acoustics*, the *Journal of Sound and Vibration (JSV)*, *Acta Acustica United with Acustica*, and the *ASME Journal of Vibration and Acoustics (JVA)*. Nearly all submissions to one of these journals will require revisions in response to reviewer comments prior to publication. Acceptance of an article without one or more rounds of revisions and possibly re-reviews is rare, and should not be expected by submitting authors.

The content of this paper is based on our experience as editors of the journals mentioned above, and our goal is to provide useful advice on the preparation of papers for publication on noise control engineering.

2 Why publish?

There are two reasons for publishing the results of your work. First, at a point in your work where a task is complete or it is time for a “memory dump” on a continuing project, the preparation of a paper for publication forces you to collect your thoughts, organize them and write them down. This process forces you to look over all that you have done and organize it before it may be lost or key parts of the work forgotten. In the writing process, you attempt to put together a cohesive argument with supporting evidence, and that often reveals gaps in your research that you, or others in the future, may need to address. In the first place, this is useful to you, the one doing the work. Secondly, results from your work may be useful to others, so that they can start to build on your work and not repeat it. Any research should start with a literature search to find out what has already been accomplished in related areas. Thus, it is imperative that the literature be as complete as possible so that the field of noise control can advance.

3 Publication ethics

An attempt to publish the same paper twice in different journals is obviously wrong. Even if you are successful in getting the same paper published in order to pad your resume with another publication, listing the paper twice would do more damage to your reputation than the benefit resulting from the increase in the number of published papers by one. Nevertheless, some authors have submitted the same paper to two journals to increase the probability of getting the paper published. After one journal accepts the paper for publication, the paper is withdrawn from consideration by the author from the other journal. However there is a relatively small pool of reviewers with good reputations in acoustics and noise control: consequently, papers submitted to more than one journal often are sent to the same

reviewer. The reviewer brings this to the attention of both editors. The paper will in all likelihood then be rejected by both journals and the reputation of the author tarnished.

Plagiarism is another obvious violation of publication ethics. Plagiarism is most often thought of as copying, without credit, the work of others, but also includes undue repetition of passages from the author's own prior publications (i.e., self-plagiarization). Plagiarism is also relatively easy to detect because the person plagiarized could easily be chosen as a reviewer, since the pool of reviewers in the technical area of the paper is often small. Also, software is now available to publishers that can compare the text of submitted papers to all previously published articles in relevant areas in order to identify passages of more than a few words taken from other publications. Thus plagiarism is unethical, can be easily detected, and can substantially damage an author's reputation. In academic institutions, plagiarism is considered to constitute academic misconduct and can result in sanctions up to and including dismissal. Finally, it is particularly important that figures taken from other sources be accurately credited, and it may be necessary to obtain permission from the publisher of the original sources to reproduce all or part of a figure.

Having a paper published in the proceedings of a conference is easier and quicker than publication in a refereed journal because it eliminates time taken by review and revisions. Therefore, papers often first appear in conference proceedings. Authors may then wish to publish a paper in a refereed journal on the same subject. To avoid publishing the same material twice, which can constitute a copyright violation, some journals require that submissions contain at least 50 percent new material beyond the original conference publication. In addition, it may be necessary to secure permission from the holder of the copyright of the conference proceedings to publish all or part of a conference article elsewhere. This is particularly true for journals, e.g., *JSV* and *Applied Acoustics*, that are not affiliated with professional organizations that hold conferences. The INCE/USA policy is less stringent. In fact, INCE/USA encourages the publication of INCE/USA and I-INCE conference paper in *NCEJ* (since in this case, copyright is not an issue) and will actively seek to identify the most interesting and substantial papers presented at one of their conferences so that the authors can be invited to submit the paper for publication in *NCEJ*. Note, however, that an invitation to submit an article to *NCEJ* does not exempt the paper from the usual review and revision process. Authors are strongly encouraged to modify, expand and/or edit conference papers with the review process in mind. Direct submissions of previously-published conference papers without any changes are often not well-received by reviewers and once reviewers take a stand against publication, it is often difficult to get them to change their position. To increase the probability of getting a paper accepted for publication, it is better to revise a conference paper *before* its submission rather than *after* review.

4 Ingredients of a successful paper submission

To be accepted, a submitted paper must contain new material that has not been published before (with the exception of conference publications under the restrictions noted above). It is unlikely that a re-hash of material available in the literature will be accepted for publication, and the author being unaware of the previous work is not an acceptable argument for publication, however well the author's work was done. Therefore, research for a paper should begin with a thorough review of the literature on the subject of the paper.

The paper must be well-written in coherent English with proper grammar. Frequently it is difficult for reviewers to overlook poor writing and focus on the technical content. The organization of the paper should be easy to follow and logical. The development of models or descriptions of experiments should precede a discussion of results. Validations of models should also precede the application of the model.

Information contained in the paper should be of interest to readers of the journal to which it is submitted. It is likely that papers that are on subjects outside the focus of the journal will be rejected by the editor of the journal without review. If your paper is rejected by one journal, then take care when looking for an alternative journal. In some cases, the editor will provide some guidance on more suitable journals for submission of your paper.

The **Abstract** should present to the reader an overview of the contents of the paper. After reading the Abstract, one should have a good idea of the problem that is addressed, and the approach taken to address the problem. It is not always necessary to include a summary of the results, but it is helpful to identify the key findings of the research work in a concise way. The abstract should give the reader enough information for the reader to determine if they want to read the entire paper.

After the abstract the primary sections that should be included in a paper are as follows: Introduction, Approach, Results, Conclusions, References, and, when appropriate, Acknowledgements.

The **Introduction** should contain a clear statement of the problem: e.g., what is being addressed in the paper and why is it important. An outline of what has been done by others should provide the background to the current publication. This involves a search of the literature and a summary of the key findings that are relevant to the problem addressed in your paper and which provide the starting point for your work. It is important, however, to keep this review within the scope of the paper. A clear definition of the problem is helpful in bounding the literature search and focusing the literature on only relevant information available in the literature. Avoid excessive referencing of your own previous publications. Once the stage is set *via* a summary of published results, then a description of what new results are being added in the paper can be easily and clearly defined.

The **Approach** should contain an adequate description of the mathematical modeling or experimental methods. Where appropriate, references should be used to avoid the inclusion of information readily available elsewhere. Descriptions, when supplemented by information in the literature, should be sufficient to allow the reader to duplicate exactly the mathematical modeling and/or the measurements described in your article. All symbols and terms used in either the text or equations should be clearly defined.

The **Results** should be clearly presented. Here is where figures should be clear and easy to read, and all figures should be referred to individually in the text and in the order in which they appear. You should examine papers in the journal to determine what is likely to be the size of your figures in the published paper and choose font sizes in your plotting software to make sure that in their final published form, the labels and numbers on the axes are easily readable. Avoid lengthy legends on the plots that cover up the data, or dominate the figure and so distract the reader from the data being presented. Note that each journal may have specific rules about formatting of figures: follow those rules even if you do not like them. Font types and sizes should also be consistent from figure to figure and variables in figures should look the same as they do in the text and in equations. Captions should be complete

and concise. Results should be adequate to support the point being made and figures or tables should be designed to make the points clearly. For example, if you are asking a reader to compare results, it is easier for them to do so if those results appear in the same figure rather than in a series of figures on different pages in the paper. Numbers in a table are also more easily compared if they are in a column and all the exponents are the same. When you ask people to compare a series of figures, make sure, if possible, that the scales and the ranges covered are the same in each figure. The inclusion of more than one figure to support the same conclusion should be avoided. Present only enough results to support your conclusion. However, from an ethical standpoint, if you have results using the described approach that do not support your conclusions, they should also be presented and the reason why those results do not add support to your arguments should be explored. Because you are the one that has done the work and should therefore be more familiar with the research than most readers, they will look to you for analysis and interpretation of the results. Outliers and unusual results should be commented on.

The **Conclusions** should be concise. Here is where you focus the reader on what you think are the important findings. Avoid reviewing the entire paper and/or repeating information in the main body of the paper. While being positive about your contributions, avoid making extravagant claims for your work, i.e., conclusions not backed up by what is presented in the paper, and include a brief description of the limitations, context and assumptions underlying the work.

References are almost always required. The style used in the reference list varies from journal-to-journal, and you can save the editor and yourself considerable time by becoming familiar with that style before submission of the paper. An editor may require a submission to be revised by the author to conform precisely with the relevant journal style before the paper is sent out for review. It is very important that references be precisely accurate to ensure proper citation of the work of others (and of your own) in search engines such as Science Citation Index and Scopus. Most journals require that references be listed in the order in which they are referenced in the paper.

Acknowledgements can, and should, be used to give credit to colleagues and sponsors who have facilitated the research, but who did not contribute to the authorship of the paper.

Finally in this section, a word on formatting of the paper. Follow the specific journal paper preparation instructions to the letter. However, note that sometimes formats are different for the review and the final version of the paper. Papers that look neat, are well organized, are short and well written put reviewers and editors in a better frame of mind.

5 The review process

There are three elements in the publication process from the submission of a paper to its publication: review, revision and publication. The publication of accepted papers includes formatting, layout and printing: this will take a few months. The only involvement by the authors at this stage is proofreading the paper in its final publication form. The review also requires a few months. Normally at least two reviewers are approached and, because of increasing pressures on reviewers, or sometimes plain forgetfulness, it is increasingly difficult to obtain reviews by the deadline set. Inevitably this delays completion of the review process. Experts in the field are asked to review papers without compensation. Because of this, and because reviews require at least several hours of time, and as much as several

days to do a really thorough review on a long paper, it is rarely the highest priority for a reviewer with a busy schedule. Often the paper is put on a pile to wait for free time. When that free time arrives, if the paper is poorly formatted and badly written, the reviewer will give up on reviewing and go off and do one of the one million other tasks that are on their to-do list. Editors are responsible for obtaining reviews as soon as possible. However, there is a balance between the reviewers' and author's desires. Because reviewers donate their time and are a valuable asset to editors, leverage on the reviewer by the editor is limited. Editors can remind the reviewer only so many times and request reviews only so often without seriously annoying them. The requested review period is typically about two months after agreeing to review the paper. After that, friendly and gentle reminders are sent. If this does not produce a review, the editor must start over and look for another reviewer.

The one element under complete control by the author is the revision of their paper in response to the reviewers' comments. Often authors have moved on to other tasks and do not want to return to revise a paper on an old topic. Some papers that have been accepted conditioned on revisions in response to reviewers comments are never published, and the work done to conduct the research and write the paper is largely lost. It is important that revisions are made as soon as possible to avoid losing momentum.

Authors must keep in mind that reviewers are not the enemy. In our experience, most reviewers make suggestions to improve the paper, and "bad" reviews most often result from a lack of clarity, logic, precision or thoroughness on the author's part. Reviews by peers who have experience in the area of research of the paper are provided free and usually constitute good advice. Incorporation of their comments usually results in a better paper for which you, the author, will receive all of the credit. Your name is the one that appears on the paper, not the reviewers', since all reviews are conducted anonymously. When in doubt, go with the reviewers. On minor points, go with the reviewers. The more modifications you can make in compliance with reviewers' comments, the more likely it is that your revised paper will be accepted. When responding to the editor, it is necessary to provide a detailed list of responses to each reviewer's comments and of the revisions that were made in response to the comments. It is also important to identify the pages where the changes have been made and to highlight those changes: that way, the editor, or the reviewer, can quickly turn the paper around once it is back in their possession. The provision of this information helps the editor see what revisions have been made and why, and can substantially expedite the acceptance process. It is not required that you rigorously comply with all reviewer comments. However, when you disagree with a review comment, provide a clear and detailed response to the editor supporting your decision. *Ad hominem* attacks on the reviewers are, of course, absolutely not useful, and most often reflect badly on the author.

6 Conclusion

The main points in this paper are:

- The preparation of a paper for submission for publication helps the author organize their thoughts as well as identify and address gaps. Publication is the primary method of disseminating information upon which others can build, and so advance the state-of-the-art in Noise Control.
- Publishing the same paper in more than one journal, submitting the same paper to more than one journal at a time and plagiarism of either your own work or that of others are all violations of basic ethics of paper publication.

- Papers should contain new information of interest to reader of the journal to which the paper is submitted, and should be well researched, written and organized.
- The review process should be considered to be helpful. The reviewers are not the enemy. Take advantage of their free advice to improve the paper. When in doubt and on minor points, it is best to lean in the direction of the reviewer. In addition, it is necessary to comply rigorously with all of a Journal's format requirements.