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Reviewer Essay: On Publishing SoTL Articles

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Abstract

Excerpt: With its most recent acceptance rate of 11%, IJ-SoTL represents one of the most difficult places to get a manuscript published. These three tips can help move you closer to that 11%:

Keywords

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On Publishing SoTL Articles

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With its most recent acceptance rate of 11%, IJ-SoTL represents one of the most difficult places to get a manuscript published. These three tips can help move you closer to that 11%:

Follow the directions.

It seems simple, but a shockingly high number of submitted manuscripts do not conform to the specifications listed for submissions on the journal's web page. Formatting instructions are provided so that reviewers have a constant template from which to evaluate a manuscript. Every minute we spend attending to a formatting detail that is incorrect or looking for a piece of information that isn't where it's supposed to be is a minute we don't get to spend critically reviewing the substance of the manuscript or making suggestions for how to make it stronger.

Most reviewers when they read a manuscript riddled with such errors assume one of three things:

- a. the authors knew about the formatting requirements but were too lazy to follow the directions;
- b. the authors knew about the formatting requirements but were extremely careless;
- c. the authors didn't know about the formatting requirements because they didn't bother to look them up before submitting.

None of these things will lead to a favorable review. It is disrespectful to a reviewer's time to submit a piece that is not properly formatted and the best part is that this is a problem that is relatively easy to fix!

Understand your audience.

IJ-SoTL is an interdisciplinary, international journal. Submissions from all disciplines are welcome, but the implications of the piece *must* extend beyond any one discipline. If you are doing SoTL work in your discipline, how do your findings inform teaching and learning in related or affiliated disciplines? Additionally, the journal is an English-language publication. If you struggle with academic writing in English, please consult with someone who can help you. If a reviewer cannot understand what you have written, you won't get a favorable review. Finally, put your local findings in global context. The teaching and learning environment is not the same in every country. Differences between countries can have significant influences on attempts to replicate findings internationally. Be sure to address these possibilities and speak to how the global audience can "take away" something from your piece, even if their context is very different.

Embrace rigor.

Many people who do not understand SoTL research criticize it for lacking methodological

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rigor. The research published in IJ-SoTL does not. First, be sure you have appropriately grounded your study in the relevant theory and that your hypotheses flow logically from that theory and the prior literature. Second, be sure your investigation is methodologically sound. Control groups and experimental design are preferable, but if not possible, at least don't compare apples to oranges. Third, report all statistical information *with effect sizes* and use tables appropriately (See Tip #1.). Finally, in the Discussion section, be sure to interpret your results in the context of what you hypothesized. Address the limitations of your investigation and be sure not to overstate your findings. Point out areas for future research to guide or spur on other SoTL scholars.

These three simple tips can make a world of difference in the quality of the manuscript you submit and ultimately in your chances of success in getting the piece published in IJ-SoTL.

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