

Journal of eScience Librarianship

Volume 8

Issue 2 *Special Issue: Research Data and Preservation (RDAP) Summit 2019*

Article 3

2019-12-18

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Repository Citation

Lee K, Katman TP. Writing With Librarians: Reporting Back on Turning Your Poster or Presentation Into an Article. *Journal of eScience Librarianship* 2019;8(2): e1168. <https://doi.org/10.7191/jeslib.2019.1168>. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/jeslib/vol8/iss2/3>

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EScience in Action

Writing With Librarians: Reporting Back on Turning Your Poster or Presentation Into an Article

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Abstract

Objective: The objective of this article is to report on the process and effectiveness of a workshop presented at the Research Data Access and Preservation Summit 2019. Reporting back on how the workshop was developed and the impact it had on participants can inform future workshops on writing for librarians. Workshop materials are available in an associated OSF project.

Methods: The authors approached workshop development holistically—that writing is a craft that requires habits and networks, and that participants are interested in hearing the technical guidelines of writing and submitting an article. The workshop dedicated time to activities meant to build a plan for writing. Data presented in this article was collected using Qualtrics, and is reported on in aggregate. Participants responded to the survey before the workshop started and after the conclusion of the workshop.

Results: Participants reported that the workshop gave them a plan for how to move forward with transforming their presentation or poster into an article, and that they generally felt more empowered to write.

Conclusions: This article suggests that it is important to provide an avenue for authors to develop professionally around writing. Attendees were eager for an opportunity to develop their writing, and to learn more about the opaque processes related to publishing an article, like how double-blind peer-review works and the different types of articles. The authors hope that others can reuse the materials presented at the workshop and provide more avenues of professional development for librarians and library professionals.

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Keywords: writing, academic writing, workshop, RDAP 2019

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Disclosures: The substance of this article is based upon a workshop at RDAP Summit 2019. Additional information at end of article.



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Introduction

Presenting a workshop on writing came from a place of personal growth and frustration—the authors both struggle with finding time to write, have anecdotally heard from others how challenging it is to find a topic to write about (and the associated anxiety that what someone is writing about is not ‘important’ enough to submit to the literature), and general frustration around the unnecessarily complex language used in academic writing. The audience for scholarly writing is often a small group of peers, which makes it even more intimidating to enter the scholarly conversation (Badley 2019).

Many disciplines are not formally taught the craft of writing. The interview data from 1,323 participants from a range of disciplines demonstrated that 15% of respondents were taught to write formally (by taking a course or similar educational activity), and the remaining 85% were taught informally (47%; learning to write on their own, through trial-and-error) and semi-formally (38%, facilitated writing experiences, including workshops and mentoring) (Sword 2017, 64). Further, few librarians have access to an evidence-based librarian-practitioner research center, like the Center for Evidenced Based Library and Information Practice (<https://library.usask.ca/ceblip>), making professional development around creating scholarship—from generating a study idea to writing the paper—very challenging to achieve.

Writing formally about our ideas, projects, successes, and failures can be intimidating, especially when you have no guide. To help support our peers, we developed a workshop that gave attendees a strategy for how to move forward with their own writing. This included providing a supportive framework to empower our peers to write, and activities that guided participants through their thoughts and attitudes towards writing, as well as the time and space to articulate a plan for moving forward with their article submission.

Finally, we hope to practice what we teach - the workshop focused on transforming a poster or a presentation to a paper, and we feel that the same approach can be done for a workshop. It seems poor practice not to do so! Because we planned to report out on the workshop to our peers, we knew that there would be extra preparation. We wanted to responsibly and ethically collect data, and to do so we needed to receive training around responsible conduct of research and gain approval from our Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). The process to receive training and get IRB approval was insightful and is something we hope to explicitly see others do, especially when working with patron data (Briney 2019) or as part of larger learning analytics processes (Jones and Salo 2018). Whether we write up our results from a systematic review, a survey, or a narrative of a project, if people are involved “[the IRB approval] process is required” (Collins and Cook 2017). Thus, when conducting library research, we must shift away from the view that the data we collect on our patrons is considered part of “service improvements,” and therefore not subject to the IRB process. Instead, we must have confidence that information we collect and the work we produce is worthy of publication, and we must seek IRB approval for these activities, because we must protect our patrons and their data.

Creating the Workshop

We created this workshop to give presenters at RDAP 2019 support to turn their presentation

or poster into an article for this Special Issue of the *Journal of eScience Librarianship (JeSLIB)*. This allowed us to be very specific in our approach, as the kinds of articles and the audience were largely predetermined. This is the second RDAP Special Issue of *JeSLIB*, so we had examples from last year to work with. The previous year's submissions gave us a base from which to start thinking about what we wanted our participants to get out of this workshop. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the workshop, including topics and activities, and all workshop materials are available as an Open Science Framework project, at <https://osf.io/89cy2>.

We also approached the creation of this workshop as something we would want to attend—neither of us received formal writing training at any point in our education or our careers. Thea Atwood, Data Services Librarian at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, has a bachelor's degree in cognitive neuroscience—a field that relies heavily on article publications, and received her Master of Science in Library and Information Science degree from Syracuse University in 2012. Her internal narrative is that your success is demonstrated by how many articles you publish and how many citations you receive, even though this is challenging to fit into the work of a librarian without a research requirement. She has largely sought informal education around writing, including attending workshops, reading, and talking to colleagues about writing and how it becomes integrated into our work. She struggles with the impostor syndrome and feeling strategic in her writing. As of this writing, she has co-authored four articles that appear in academic journals (one of which was from her previous academic trajectory as a cognitive neuroscientist), and co-authored one white paper. One of her publications was a transformation from a poster (Atwood, Goldman, Hohenstein, Mills, and Wyman 2016) to an article (Atwood, Condon, Goldman, Hohenstein, Mills, and Painter 2017). Kristin Lee is a Research Data Librarian at Tufts University. She has a bachelor's degree in geological science and worked for six years (as a student and a full-time employee) in the mineral exploration industry. Most of her early writing was technical reports and documentation, and she realized when she started her bachelor's degree in international development that there was a lot to learn about academic writing. She received her Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Western Ontario in 2011. She really began to understand the research process and writing for academic audiences when she worked at the University of Saskatchewan and became involved with the Centre for Evidence-Based Library and Information Science. For the year prior to the RDAP Summit in 2019 she was the Chair of the Education and Resources Committee of the RDAP Association, the group responsible for workshop programming. She was also one of the guest editors of the RDAP Special Issue of this journal for the 2018 RDAP Summit. Her goal was to provide a space at the conference for presenters to talk about writing an article from their work to hopefully increase submissions and help people get a jump on the process of writing their papers.

The participation and enthusiasm of the *JeSLIB* team was invaluable in making the workshop a success. We used the Guidelines for Authors section of the *JeSLIB* website (*Journal of eScience Librarianship* 2019) in putting together our discussion on the structure of an article, and Regina Raboin, Editor-in-Chief, and Julie Goldman, Managing Editor, provided additional details. The *JeSLIB* team were also able to provide a list of things they commonly see when authors submit their work. We incorporated this list of common errors throughout the workshop and added a section at the end that had tips for presenting the best paper possible. The double-blind peer review process is a key component of submitting to *JeSLIB*, so we covered

how to blind your paper and how to make it straightforward to submit the unblinded copy if the article is accepted. We also touched on the peer aspect of the peer-review process. We are both reviewers of *JeSLIB* and other journals, and we wanted to remind our participants that reviewers are truly their peers, and give advice on how to track the changes made to a document post-review.

In addition to the mechanics of writing for *JeSLIB*, we wanted to incorporate our own experiences struggling to write and publish academic articles into the workshop. One of the main goals of the workshop was to make sure participants left feeling that they had an achievable plan to complete their articles by the submission deadline, so we focused on creating workable writing habits. We discussed Helen Sword's writing BASE approach (2017), which includes four principles to help authors better articulate their needs around writing, as well as the habits that empower authors for success. Sword focuses on our **behaviors** and places, reframing writing as an **artisanal** craft, how to turn to our **social** networks and support systems to foster success, and the **emotional** responses to writing—in short, our behavioral, artisanal, social, and emotional habits (Sword 2017). Each component of the BASE approach works to help authors reflect on their practices and discover areas of improvement. Sword's holistic, rather than prescriptive, writing advice felt far more authentic and empowering than other methods investigated for the workshop (e.g., Robert Boice's "Professors as Writers: A Self-Help Guide to Productive Writing", or Paul J. Silvia's "How to Write a Lot").

We provided time throughout the workshop to complete a series of exercises. The exercises were designed to support each section of the workshop, and took participants through the process of thinking about how they make time to write, the kind of article they think most fits their work, and how they might structure their time to successfully complete their manuscript by the deadline. We wanted the environment in the workshop to follow the principles and pedagogical style of the Carpentries workshops; a focus on having a space where no one would feel embarrassed to ask questions, and sharing knowledge and experiences was encouraged (The Carpentries 2019). We also wanted the tone of the workshop to be positive, giving advice on how to be most successful instead of framing things as "don'ts" or errors. The authors talked about what we had learned from past experiences and where we struggle when we sit down to write. All of this promoted thoughtful and respectful discussion throughout the workshop.

Workshop Outcomes

We created a pre- and a post-workshop survey for participants, for which we were granted an IRB exempt status (Tufts IRB protocol #1904043). The goal of the surveys was to provide insight into how participants felt about writing and publishing before and after the workshop. The pre-survey had four questions, and the post-survey replicated the pre-survey questions with four additional questions, for a total of eight post-survey questions. The pre-survey was completed by eight workshop participants, and the post-survey was completed by seven participants. Participants were not required to complete the survey, which is why the pre- and post-survey response rates differed.

Surveys are used in this paper for general impressions of the workshop, and for feedback on areas of success and areas of improvement. The authors are not looking to make any statistical claims.

Pre-workshop and post-workshop questions and responses are discussed below.

Question 1

Table 1: Pre-workshop survey: How confident are you about the following?

	Very confident	Confident	Not confident
Submitting articles to journals	0	3	5
Writing blog posts	3	4	1
Writing proposals for presentations and panels	1	6	1
Writing proposals for posters	4	4	0

Table 2: Post-workshop survey: How confident are you about the following?

	Very confident	Confident	Not confident
Submitting articles to journals	1	6	0
Writing blog posts	4	3	0
Writing proposals for presentations and panels	1	5	1
Writing proposals for posters	6	1	0

Participants generally reported increased confidence in most areas related to writing after the workshop. Pre-workshop, participants largely felt uncomfortable submitting articles to journals (5 participants, or 62.5%), post-workshop, participants largely felt confident (6, 85.7%), with one participant reporting they felt very confident (1, 14.2%).

Question 2

Question 2 was to determine how many participants were required to publish as part of their tenure, tenure-like, or promotion processes. The results of this question were the same for both the pre- and the post-workshop survey:

A little over half (4, 57.14%) of our participants are required to publish, with one participant skipping this question in the pre-workshop survey.

Table 3: Pre- and Post-workshop survey: Does your tenure or promotion process require that you publish?

	Yes	No
Does your tenure or promotion process require that you publish?	4	3

Question 3

Question 3 was a conditional question—if participants selected “yes” to question 2, Qualtrics displayed this question. Question 3 assesses the level of participant’s ownership over writing time. Since four participants selected “yes” in question 2, we have four respondents for question 3:

Table 4: Pre-workshop survey: Do you feel like you can take the time for writing as part of your work?

	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably not	Definitely not
Do you feel like you can take the time for writing as part of your work?	1	2	0	1

Table 5: Post-workshop survey: Do you feel like you can take the time for writing as part of your work?

	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably not	Definitely not
Do you feel like you can take the time for writing as part of your work?	1	3	0	0

We see a move towards the “yes” direction in the post-workshop responses for whether or not participants feel they can take time to write during their workday.

Question 4

The fourth question asked participants if they felt like research was part of their work. Pre- and post-workshop responses were similar:

Table 6: Pre-workshop survey: Do you feel like research is part of your work?

	Yes	No
Do you feel like research is part of your work?	7	1

Table 7: Post-workshop survey: Do you feel like research is part of your work?

	Yes	No
Do you feel like research is part of your work?	6	1

The following four questions were asked after the workshop was completed and were a mix of multiple choice and open text.

Question 5

Post-workshop, participants largely felt they had an actionable plan to move forward:

Table 8: Post-workshop survey: Do you feel like you have an actionable plan to complete your article?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Do you feel like you have an actionable plan to complete your article?	5	2	0

Questions six, seven, and eight were open response questions.

Question 6

Participants reported on what they found most useful about the workshop. Seven participants responded to this question, and wrote that they liked covering the article logistics (4 comments), approach or the format of the workshop (3 comments), explicitly mentioned the activities (3 comments) and appreciated the advice on writing (2 comments).

Question 7

Participants commented on what they found least useful about the workshop. Two participants gave feedback, one on lack of time to collaborate, and another disliked the introduction with the Helen Sword book. Two stated different iterations of “not applicable.”

Question 8

The final question of the survey was a ‘catch-all’ question, which asked participants if there was anything else they would like to communicate to the presenters. Perhaps our most heartwarming question, the five responses we received included general statements that this was a well-received workshop (4 responses), that the format worked well (3 responses), and

two suggestions for future iterations of the workshop, including suggestions for a discussion on previously submitted articles, and to provide more time for collaboration.

Discussion

Supporting RDAP presenters who wanted to contribute to the Special Issue of *JeSLIB* was the catalyst for the creation of this workshop, but that is not the only reason we thought this workshop was important. As mentioned in creating the workshop section, we incorporated areas we struggle with (and topics wanted to understand better) into the materials. A 2016 article by Shaw and Sz wajer determined that only about 32% of the presentations given at the Canadian Health Libraries Association were published as articles (preprint). The reasons given by survey respondents were primarily time, but the open text field also included comments that suggest that there is “a possible ‘confidence gap’, acting as a form of self-censorship” (Shaw and Sz wajer 2016 preprint). Shaw and Sz wajer also note that survey participants commented that their work wasn’t appropriate for an article because they “felt the presentation to be practice and not research based” (2016). What qualifies as “research” in librarian and information science is not well-defined and it will be helpful to include conversations about how “we, as a profession, want to value and promote various types of research output, what we mean by research that is tied to practice, and how we value that research” (Hoffmann, Berg, and Koufogiannakis 2017). The partnership between a community with a large population of practitioners, like RDAP, with the *Journal of eScience Librarianship* gives an added incentive and encouragement that the work presented at the conference is worthy of a journal article.

As we did background research, it became clear that guidance on how to take your work from a poster or presentation and turn it into an article is sparse. Hart and Sabatino wrote a practical guide on the presentation-to-article transformation for graduate and undergraduate students in the context of writing centers (2015). In their article “Academic Writing and Publishing: A NASIG Preconference Workshop,” Collins and Cook talk about publishing in general and the key points of publishing an article (2017).

While there is growing support for library staff to learn data and research skills, like the Institute for Research Design in Libraries (<http://irdlonline.org>) and the Canadian Association of Research Libraries Librarians’ Research Institute (<http://www.carl-abrc.ca/strengthening-capacity/workshops-and-training/librarians-research-institute>), these opportunities are only available to a select group of librarians at specific times.

The survey data demonstrates that participants found the workshop helpful, and that participants feel as though they had an actionable plan by which to move forward with transforming their presentation at the conference into an article. Although we did not seek for the data to demonstrate any statistical significance, especially with such a small cohort, participants reported improved confidence in their writing, and especially so for submitting writing to a scholarly journal, which was the focus of the workshop. Further, in the post-workshop survey, participants reported that they felt confident in their ability to take time to write as part of their workday. While we did not ask for any qualitative data for this question, much of the workshop’s focus was on empowering participants to take the time to write, honoring their writing time as they would any other appointment or consultation, and giving structure to one’s writing process. The workshop focused on giving ourselves permission to

write and report out on our work—and that writing and reporting out are important aspects of our careers and worthy of our attention.

There are some modifications we could make for future iterations of this workshop. One of the participants mentioned more time for collaboration; this could be added to the workshop in the form of trading outlines and asking for feedback, or creating formal structures for finding a writing accountability partner. We could also assign readings in advance so that we could devote more time to discussion and activities. If we provided a selection of readings and asked participants to read one or two, they could choose the articles that were meaningful to them and bring the information to the workshop for a jigsaw exercise, a teaching technique that relies on participants working with one another to put together pieces of a whole concept (Social Psychology Network).

There were several factors that made the workshop at RDAP 2019 effective. The *JeSLIB* Special Issue provided workshop attendees with a clear goal to work towards. It also provided us with a clear base on which to build the workshop materials, especially the activities around structuring the article and the timeline, which was called out as something participants particularly appreciated. The workshop was small, with eight attendees, which allowed for open group discussion, candid questions, and individual attention. Regina Raboin and Julie Goldman joined us and provided information straight from the journal editorial staff. The support from *JeSLIB* was key and we were glad to have them as part of the workshop's development. As there is a continuing relationship between RDAP and *JeSLIB* there is a lot of potential to refine the workshop and build in examples from previous years, another suggestion from the survey. We recognize that these are not conditions that will be present every time a workshop like this is offered, but we are confident that our approach will translate to other contexts.

The materials from this workshop could be used and revised in several ways. They could be presented as a webinar; however, the technology would need to allow for break-outs into smaller rooms for discussion. The materials that are specific to the format of *JeSLIB* could be made more generic or about another journal, and the workshop would be a good tie-in to another conference. The workshop could be offered in connection with a library school poster session or modified for a session with students in any program. All of the materials are available in OSF at <https://osf.io/89cy2> (Lee and Atwood 2019a).

Conclusion

The surveys collected as part of our workshop suggest that librarians participating in this workshop find professional development opportunities on writing habits, techniques, and breaking down the article submission process valuable to their career growth. Especially for librarians who have not published before, it can be intimidating to figure out the different types of articles available for reporting out, and the mechanics of article submission. This workshop clarified the mechanisms around submission, and participants commented on how easy the materials were to understand. We hope that others can reuse the materials presented at the workshop, and improve access to professional development opportunities for librarians and library professionals.

Finally, the authors note that this workshop was incredibly successful due to the presence and collaboration with the editors of the *Journal of eScience Librarianship*. Without their earnest participation and guidance, fellow workshop participants would not have an opportunity to see the care and thought that the editors put into the journal, nor would participants have heard insights gleaned from providing feedback to hundreds of scholars, and the authors would be limited to drawing from their own experiences.

Thank you—to the editors of *JeSLIB* and to our attendees—for making this workshop such a resounding success.

Supplemental Content

Appendices 1, 2 & 3

An online supplement to this article can be found at <http://dx.doi.org/10.7191/jeslib.2019.1168> under “Additional Files”.

Data Availability

Data associated with this article are available from the University of Massachusetts Amherst’s Data Repository at <https://doi.org/10.7275/5ecx-3w13> (Lee and Atwood 2019b).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge Brian Baldi at the University of Massachusetts Amherst for his role in providing a framework on writing habits and community development; the RDAP Education and Resources Committee for providing an opportunity to give the workshop; and Regina Raboin, Julie Goldman, and the staff at *JeSLIB* for their encouragement, support, and enthusiastic participation. This workshop would not have been as successful without your insight and assistance.

Disclosures

The substance of this article is based upon a workshop presented at RDAP Summit 2019: “Turning your Poster or Presentation into a Paper – *JeSLIB*” available at <https://osf.io/89cy2>.

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