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Top 10 Tips on Writing for Professional Journals

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by **Frank G. Houdek**

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is a monthly magazine Professional trends, developments in the AALL and its chapters, Special Interest Sections

Spectrum is looking for articles written in a crisp, professional style. Although AALL articles should include some opinion pieces, personal accounts, articles on topics with an educational point. To ensure an article's credibility, it must be backed by research and interviews. The article should provide adequate detail, a logical progression of ideas, and concrete examples to support the author's conclusions. Footnotes are not encouraged and should be credited to the original source. For related ideas or information that do not fit in the main body of the article, *Spectrum* welcomes endnotes and sidebars.

For *AALL Spectrum* are the editorial director, I handle the day-to-day operations of the magazine. I work with authors as they develop their articles. Once the articles are submitted, I edit them to shape the magazine into a well-focused publication for the magazine's audience. I also serve as a Norris, AALL's director and serves as managing editor of *Spectrum*. She edits for grammar, clarity and oversees the myriad of tasks involved in producing the magazine, including layout, design, and advertising.

Library Journal, potential authors are strongly encouraged to submit articles for writing their articles. The content of *AALL Spectrum* is published once a year in addition to other factors, it is possible to simply publish

10. Write about a topic that you know something about: You should have something to say.
9. Write on a topic that interests you: Don't choose a topic because it is "hot." Choose it because you are passionate about it.
8. Familiarize yourself with the journal(s) to which you intend to submit your article:
 - Contact the editor early in the process.
 - Look at representative issues.
 - Pay attention to style sheets and author guidelines.
7. Know your audience: Who are you writing for and what are they interested in?
6. Know specifically, not generally, what it is you want to say before you start writing.
5. Pay careful attention to the organization of your article:
 - Use the introduction to "hook" the reader (but don't be so "clever" that the reader can't tell what the article is about).
 - Use the body to logically explain your argument(s) to the reader.
 - Use the conclusion to remind the reader of your main points (and don't introduce anything new for which you haven't already built a solid foundation).
4. Avoid using conclusive statements unless you provide adequate support (or make sure that such statements are clearly labeled as your "opinion" and are not put forth as "fact").
3. Mind the fine line between adequately emphasizing important points (the reader should know what you think) and verbosity (the reader should not be bored by unnecessary repetition).
2. Write with clarity, creativity and imagination. Ask yourself: "Would I read this to the end if I had not written it myself?"
1. Leave yourself plenty of time to revise and edit your submission — several times — before meeting a publication deadline. Let a "fresh," unbiased eye read and comment on the piece during this process. Try to take ego out of your reaction to what is said.

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