

**“ASK THE PROFESSOR”
about ...
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS,
JOURNALS AND PUBLISHING STRATEGY**

Pātai: (Question)

Recently, I presented a talk at a conference and am considering writing up the paper for the conference proceedings. However, I also thought that it might be nice to submit our research to a journal so as to reach a wider audience. The two questions that have arisen are:

- 1) *Can one submit to a journal a paper that has the same or similar content as one that is being submitted as a conference proceeding?*
- 2) *What are the relative career merits of publishing in a proceedings or a journal?*

Emeritus Professor Les Williams replies:

These questions are often raised, so thank you for posing them here. It is important to approach publishing in the right way for a number of reasons and I'd like to draw attention to a previous article in this column by Professor Alison Jones (Jones, 2007, 3, Writing Workshop 4). In that paper, Jones provides an excellent summary of these reasons.

However, in responding more specifically to your first question about whether or not it is acceptable to essentially re-publish a proceedings paper as a journal article, the short answer is that it is not acceptable. The tikanga (etiquette) of publishing does not support duplicating publications. Jones describes it as “double dipping” (2007, p.2) and although there is an exception for books or edited volumes (where the defined scope goes well beyond a single article), once an article is published, it should not be ‘re-submitted’ for publication unless some new developments give it a new dimension and meaning.

In career terms, the practice of ‘double-dipping’ never leads to any good because at those crucial times when one's CV is being evaluated, anyone with experience can spot “publication padding” very quickly. And that usually finishes any serious consideration of that person. So it's a unprofessional. It is also unprofessional to submit the same paper to two or more publication vehicles simultaneously. Going against such basic tikanga does not earn respect from professional peers. (I have served on many evaluative committees and candidates who have violated such tikanga are quickly exposed, with a cost to their career prospects).

Your first question also asks how different do “similar” articles have to be. Again, some people play games with this, but it soon becomes obvious and can be detrimental to one's career. So the key criterion is the relative independence of the papers (see Jones, 2007). While two papers may have a common data source or central theoretical framework, they may be approached in two

different ways; or one could examine different parts of a model or of a different set of issues. For example, one could publish a paper on particular aspects of the methodology used in a pilot study in a volume of proceedings, because it is a new technique. In turn, a second paper that used the technique could focus on a separate set of results and findings and be published separately in a journal article. A second example is that a conference paper could discuss potential directions of a research approach or a model; while the related research article that is published elsewhere, is about the data, the analyses, the interpretations and the conclusions. The key point here is that there should be a logical distinction of material and purpose between the two papers and as a consequence, each offers a different way of advancing knowledge. This holds for any two papers.

With regard to your second question, conferences are an important part of the scholarly endeavour because they bring people together to present and discuss their research and their ideas. The papers and conversations can be very valuable and insightful and the published proceedings provide a record for dissemination and reference. Academic journals on the other hand, are more about publishing new contributions to knowledge through investigations to do with model-building and theory-building.

Proceedings and journals differ also in their frequency of publication; with proceedings typically being annual or bi-annual and journals often publishing several issues within a year. Furthermore, conference proceedings do not usually have the wide-spread dissemination and readership that is characteristic of good academic journals. So while the conferences and proceedings have their place, if one wishes to contribute new understandings to the body of knowledge, then the place to do that is through highly-regarded, international peer-reviewed journals. That is where the energy should be targeted. In the evaluation of CVs, conference papers and proceedings are simply not rated highly, but publications in appropriate journals are key outputs.

It is sensible therefore to use the single "shot" for the publication of your work carefully. In the planning stages of a research project, think it right through beyond the investigation to identify and prioritise the potential publication vehicles or journals. If you are unsure of its suitability, enquire by writing to the respective editor. Later, when you then begin to write, use the format that is appropriate for your target journal and craft the style of the paper accordingly.

Academic publishing is a serious business and it has an important role in career advancement. It would be wise therefore to plan it strategically and to stay within the accepted system of ethics so there will be no question about your own principles.

Reference

Jones, A. (2007). How to publish an academic article. *MAI Review*, 3, Writing Workshop 4, 3 pages.

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