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# Writing journal papers from thesis: My experience

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# Outline

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- Introduction
  - What is thesis/dissertation?
  - Can I publish thesis or dissertation?
- Publishing paper(s) from thesis: Tips
- Publishing paper(s) from thesis: My experience
- Lessons



# Introduction

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- One does not “publish a thesis” or “publish a dissertation”.
- Rather, one publishes one or more articles (or, in some fields, a book) **based on** the research for a thesis or dissertation.

# Introduction cont'd

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- At least in some places in the United States:
  - Strictly speaking, a *thesis* is for a master's degree and a *dissertation* is for a doctoral degree.
  - Often, however, the terms are used interchangeably.
- In general, a thesis and dissertation are similar but a dissertation is based on more extensive research and is longer.

# Publishing paper(s) from thesis: Tips

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- Know the difference between a journal paper and thesis in terms
  - Main purpose: To show mastery of concepts or present new key findings?
  - Main audience(s): Thesis advisor(s) or general readers/reviewers?
  - Writing style: Write liberally or tightly?

# Publishing paper(s) from thesis: Tips cont'd

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- Realize that thesis material is likely to need considerable reworking to be publishable.
- Promptly write one or more papers based on your thesis research: Time is important.
- But avoid trying to publish many papers when one or two substantial papers will be enough.
- Consider presenting aspects of your thesis at conferences, workshops and other avenues.



# Publishing paper(s) from thesis: Tips cont'd

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- Seek publication in journals that publish lots of good work in your field.
  - From doing the literature review for your thesis, you should know these journals.
- Obtain and follow instructions to authors.
- Make good use of peer reviewers' and editors' suggestions.



# Publishing paper(s) from thesis: Tips cont'd

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- Know that everyone's work sometimes is rejected. If one journal doesn't accept your paper, try another.
- In doing future research, and in writing future papers, apply what you learned in doing and publishing your thesis research.



# Publishing paper(s) from thesis: My experience

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- Graduated from Texas A&M University in December 2010 with a master's in science and technology journalism
- Published two papers from it:
  - one in March 2012
  - the other in September 2014.



# Looking for avenues to publish

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- Through the Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) Network, I got to know of a call for papers on “Future of Science Journalism”.
- Wait a minute: Two of my 23 questionnaire items addressed the science journalism in Ghana in the next 10 years!



# Writing the first paper

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- Wrote the draft paper and asked my thesis committee members for feedback.
- Couldn't copy from my thesis verbatim: Had to address potential readers differently.
- Paper got accepted and was published in March 2012, about a year after graduation.

# Writing the second paper

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- The main focus of my thesis remained unpublished.
- Selecting a journal wasn't easy.
- Decided against publishing in the same journal that published the first paper—  
Wanted to test the waters!



## Writing the second paper cont'd

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- Then came another call (from a journal I was considering), looking for papers on science communication conducted from different continents.
- Got the information first from a professional colleague working in Brazil (Talk of networking).

## Writing the second paper cont'd

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- Sent the first draft to co-authors for feedback
- Really appreciated the difference between thesis and journal paper
  - Thesis had 12 figures and 30 tables, but the journal's policy is ONLY five (tables and figures combined)
  - Had to select only the most relevant ones that reflect the research questions/results
  - Had to include more recent, relevant literature in the introduction and the discussion.

# Writing the second paper cont'd

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- First outcome: Revise and resubmit
- Review process was long, but learned a lot!
  - had to substantially revise my literature review
- Paper finally published on 5 September 2014 in a SAGE journal ranked 12 out of 72 in Communication.

# Lessons

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- Don't fall prey to “predators”
  - I twice rejected the offer of publishing my entire thesis from a publishing company in Germany
  - I wanted to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals, but not the **WHOLE** thesis by a publishing firm!

# Lessons cont'd

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- Take the initiative

Your supervisors may be interested in your research, but don't wait for them to start the process of writing.

- Getting your degree with your thesis is one thing, letting the research community know about your study through journals is another.

## Lessons cont'd

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- In selecting the right journals, consider the papers you have cited, but be open to professional networks as well.

- Finally, when you publish the papers, let others, including your school, know about them early.

(First paper was covered as news:

<http://www.scidev.net/global/education/news/ghanai-an-journalists-call-for-more-science-coverage.html>

(Will see if second paper too enjoy same fate)



Thank You