Book Review

Title: *The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing*

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The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing comprises 21 chapters by 36 emerging and established academics, including 14 women, most from United States (US). It is edited by the current assistant editor and former editor of the ISI journal *Human Resource Development Quarterly (HRDQ). HRDQ* criteria are met by only between 10 and 20 per cent of articles submitted. The specific aim of the Handbook is to 'enable emerging scholars and anyone else wishing to improve their writing skills to better understand the parts of a manuscript and how they fit together and support each other to create a quality publication' (p. xiii). Two specialists in adult literacy are co-authors of one chapter, and another is co-authored by a language specialist; but the background of most authors is Human Resource Development (HRD), education, and management. Several are current or former editors of prestigious academic journals with awards for writing. These successful practitioners focus on the 'how' of 'scholarly writing'; the Handbook largely eschews scholarship or controversies about academic publishing, except for a chapter on barriers faced by Asian students. Its main concern is to offer guidance on publishing from the dissertation, though editorials, book reviews and opinion pieces for refereed and non-refereed journals are also discussed. 'Integrating critical reading with self-critical writing' is a key consideration. The former involves finding, critically reading and taking notes on research and theory articles, finding suitable journal outlets and studying their guidelines; the latter requires developing research problem and purpose statements, formulating and justifying arguments, planning, drafting and revising using good models, finding 'authorial' voice and meeting journal criteria. Strategic aspects include pros and cons of co-authorship, mentoring, engaging with editors, and responding to reviewer feedback.

It is not easy, in one volume to address skill development needs of novices and experienced writers, with varying levels of competence in English, on genres of 'English for Academic Purposes' (Feak & Swales, 2011). However, the Handbook has interest for linguist researchers. For example, in Chapter 10 – '*Developing a Research Problem and Purpose Statement'* -

Jacobs describes linguistic 'moves' – though he does not use Swales & Feak's (2004) term - to construct an account of a problem with a research space that a purpose statement can aim to fill. Jacobs argues that all forms of systematic activity, whether change, research, development or evaluation are actions in response to 'problems'. Problems reflect tensions between conflicting 'truths'; the 'purpose statement' is the researcher's explanation of how s/he will resolve the tension.

The editors provide little scholarly context or problem statement for the Handbook. Nor do they explain and justify author selection, chapter titles and sequencing. However, problem and purpose may be tentatively summarized thus:

1. The vast majority of manuscripts submitted to elite HRD and tourism journals in US by, primarily doctoral students fail to meet criteria for scholarly research writing.
2. Their authors have worthwhile knowledge to communicate to 'academe'; they should be encouraged to publish from early in their graduate studies and assisted to reach elite journal standards. Publishing can bring benefits – Rocco (Chapter 1: '*Reasons to Write, Writing Opportunities, and Other Considerations')* quotes one source who suggests that the average scholarly publication could be worth USD$200 a year for every year you work.
3. The above 'tension' can be resolved if writers follow Handbook authors' advice.

The subsequent logic – with my comment - is:

(a) The chapters will address the range of aspects of 'scholarly writing'. This term is treated un-problematically; it is defined only at secondhand by Nackoney, Munn and Fernandez (Chapter 3: *'Learning to Write: Wisdom from Emerging Scholars')* as 'content "grounded in literature and/or empirical research" (that) goes through peer review and an iterative revision process' (p. 27). Since editorials, perspectives and book reviews are not peer reviewed, as explained in Chapters 2, 15 and 16 the definition is unsatisfactory. No justification is provided for topics included and omitted: the latter include action research reports, abstracts, key words, introductions, referencing, new technologies and tables/figures. In regard to the last, one of my professors famously commented that the best thesis he ever read was written on the back of a postcard!

(b) Authors will distill their experience and write with insight, care, explicitness and honesty – as indeed many do - about how to achieve publishable writing. However, the red editorial pen might have been used more effectively to minimize overlap, for example on advice to read journal author guidelines.

(c) The target audiences will read, and be able to apply advice to develop their writing or teaching of writing; authors implicitly assume motivated students and an 'illuminative/prescriptive/shared insights/tips' model of learning writing as compared to one based on 'drafting/feedback/revision/development' taking account of audience and text (Hyland, 2002).

(d) Improved writing skills will be reflected in higher submission and acceptance rates to elite journals. Perhaps so in a 'publish or perish' academic culture, but not necessarily. For example, in Thailand, where the number of international doctoral programs requiring an academic journal publication in English has exploded, the local solution has been to create journals that accept articles with writing standards that the majority of graduates can meet. The fact that these journals do not qualify for citation indexes is neither here nor there: they enable doctoral/article production lines of a different quality from that which concerns the editors of the Handbook – gatekeepers of the 'regime of truth', or 'legitimate knowledge' (Foucault, 1980). Moreover, Handbook authors adopt different positions on publishing. Osman-Gani in Malaysia and the Dutchman, Poell (Chapter 19: *'International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Scholarly Publishing'*) argue that editorial policies and hidden cultural barriers prevent many able Asian students from publishing in quality Western journals – though I can vouch that a recent Thai submission to *HRDQ* received exemplary editorial feedback and support. While Nackoney et al. (Chapter 3) encourage doctoral students to 'take the publishing plunge', the Australians, Lee and Aitchison (Chapter 5: *'Working with Tensions; Writing for Publication During Your Doctorate'*) contrast emerging doctoral modes and purposes that impinge on the decision to publish, and illustrate identity and emotional issues that may arise from doing so.

Thus the Handbook - a 'pocket reference' and compendium of knowledge in a field – has a narrow discipline focus and pretentious title, is less than explicit about rationale, requires stronger editing, takes a partial view of learning academic writing, and makes challengeable assumptions about both benefits from, and barriers to publication.

Contents are in four parts. The primary audience for Part 1 – *'Becoming a Published Scholar'* (Chapters 1-6) is 'graduate students and their advisers'; Part 2 – *'Improving Writing Techniques'* (Chapters 7-10) is for 'anyone who writes for publication'; Part 3 – *'Preparing Scholarly Manuscripts'* (Chapters 11-16) is 'for all scholars'; no audience is prescribed for Part 4 – *'Reflecting on the Writing and Publishing Process'* (Chapters 17-21), but the subsequent *'Resources: Further Reading for Scholarly Writing'* is for 'anyone developing a manuscript, or thinking about developing one' (p. xiv). Its structure is: *'Beginning the Writing Process', 'Writing Process: From Idea to Submission', 'Considerations before Manuscript Submission', 'Peer Review Process'* and *'Experience of Teaching and Learning to Write for Publication'.* Each chapter is of around 5,500 words with main and sub-headings, dot-points and numbered/unnumbered lists, followed by references. There is contributor bio-data, but no list of tables/figures/exhibits. The 11-page author/subject index is mainly names and sub-headings derived from chapters.

Current writing projects influenced my reading sequence. First was, naturally Chapter 16 (Hatcher and McDonald: *'Creating and Publishing Nonrefereed Manuscripts: How to Write Editorials and Book Reviews'*). The book review section offers eight guidelines, four characteristics of good and poor reviews, three sections on writing the review – contents, audience and evaluation, and an unnumbered list of 'book critique' questions. It also discusses conflict of interests and expertise as ethical issues. However, only single author books are discussed, not joint-authored and co-edited volumes, such as the Handbook. Hartley, a writing scholar, is cited; his composite text, Hartley (2008) is downloadable free, but not referenced.

Chapter 17 by Donmoyer, sometime editor of *Education Researcher* and *Theory into Practice* explains *'Why Writers should also be Reviewers'* – of submitted manuscripts. He offers five 'lessons': taking the reader's perspective on one's writing, respecting the logic of grammar rules, providing constructive feedback that avoids 'good-ship-lollipop' or 'ogre' reviews, learning through studying positive models of writing and comparing one's critique with others'. Donmoyer encourages teachers to have students review each others' assignments, and emerging scholars to volunteer their services to editors as reviewers.

Looking for helpful ideas for my Thai doctoral student, I turned to Normore's Chapter 6*: 'The Process of Transforming the Dissertation or Thesis into Publication'.* The word 'transform' occurs ten times, 'paring down' (12 times), 'carving' and 'developing' (twice), as well as 'condensing', 'crafting', 'mining' and 'converting' – hinting at author uncertainty in conceptualizing the task. Normore advocates planning for publication from the start of one's dissertation; he also cites a source on identifying the 'five most important points from the (completed) thesis'. But he offers no advice on how to do either. The authors of Chapter 2 – (Skolits, Brockett and Hiemstra*: 'Publishing in Peer-Reviewed and Nonrefereed Journals: Processes, Strategies, and Tips'*) more helpfully suggest basing articles on different foci in the research report – policy issues and gender differences, for example. Normore's expressed support for the Handbook is at the cost of undermining the editors' rationale – 'these individuals (i.e. graduate students) have too much collected knowledge and have (*or could easily develop*) – (my italics) - the ability to put that knowledge in a useful form for utilization' *(sic*) (p. 77).

At the time of writing, I have a co-authored article about 'positioning' under *HRDQ* review. Chapter 15 is: '*Writing Theory, Conceptual, and Position Articles for Publication'*. Its author, Gary McLean, recently received an honorary doctoral degree from Thailand's National Institute of Development Administration. He deals with each type of article in turn. The third sub-heading is 'Opinion Articles' – including Editorials, Perspectives, Letters to the Editor and Book Reviews. McLean cites dictionary meaning of 'opinion', but disposes of 'position' in one sentence: 'An opinion article may also be called a *position paper* or *position article'* (p. 217) (author's italics). He offers five pieces of advice on writing 'opinion pieces', with 'insider' illustrations from his HRD journal editorials and articles. His treatment of 'position' reflects lack of alignment (consistency) between chapter title and content – a cardinal sin in academic writing (authors of Chapter 13 emphasize 'consistency' five times in their first two paragraphs). This is so blatant that one wonders if editors want to illustrate that experienced authors may break the rules. To equate 'position' with 'opinion' articles without qualification or justification is somewhat cavalier, as any web search would indicate. McLean's content also overlaps with Chapter 16 where 'position papers' and authors taking a 'position' or 'stance' on an issue (p. 223) are mentioned – all quite confusing.

Explaining conceptual and theoretical frameworks is a challenge for writers irrespective of their experience. These aspects are discussed by Ellinger and Yang (Chapter 9: *'Creating a Whole from the Parts: Qualities of Good Writing'*), and in Chapters 12, 13 and 14, where Rocco and Plakhotnik, Newman and Newman, and Newman, Newman and Newman explain both what would 'increase the likelihood of publication', and questions with which reviewers and editors will interrogate reports of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research studies respectively. Ellinger and Yang differentiate theoretical and conceptual frameworks,

maintaining that the latter 'normally does not rise to the level of a theoretical framework, at least at the level of substantive theory' (p. 119); an ERIC expert, Susan Imel (Chapter 11: '*Writing a Literature Review'*) defines literature review, recommends Cooper's (1985) taxonomy as structure (Cooper is referenced as H.M./N.M./H./H.M., though only H.M. and N.M. are indexed), and provides checklists for reading 'research' and 'theoretical' articles analytically. A 'Writing the review' page poses nine questions for authors to consider, as well as 'useful' opening sentences and phrases. Three short paragraphs discuss assessing quality. The reference to 'Boote, D.N. and Penny, B., 2005' is cited correctly on p. 124 and again on p. 315, though Penny, a fictitious researcher! - is indexed. Rocco and Plakhotnik refer to conceptual frameworks that underpin the basis for a qualitative study - that '*must contain an overview of the relevant literature'* (p. 165) (my italics highlight this unsupported and contentious editorial policy assertion) – and also inform its methodology. The Newman articles identify testing and developing theories as one of nine/ten research purposes that feature in both Chapters 13 and 14. The mixed methods chapter is of special interest; neither American Psychological Association (APA) nor American Educational Research Association (AERA) has yet suggested relevant publication standards, though it – mixed methods - is the 'largest and fastest Special Interest Group (SIG)' of AERA *(sic*, p. 193); they provide a four-category conceptualization of the 35 extant mixed methods designs and meta-analysis involved in each. In Chapter 4, Wallace and Wray - from Wales - '*Scholarly Reading as a Model for Scholarly Writing'* - argue that constructively critical readers are more likely to become self-critical writers. Their discussion of 'argument' and 'critical' - terms that confuse many Thai, and illustration of relationships between argument, claims and warrants go beyond that provided in Booth et al. (1995) – unreferenced here, but listed in *Resources.* Using a 'writing as journey' metaphor Epstein (Chapter 7: *'Writing with Authority: Pitfalls and Pit Stops'*) shows how to avoid three stylistic 'pitfalls' – verbosity, ambiguity and unsubstantiality/unsustainability, and how to use 'pit stops' for reflection to revise drafts, contextualize for audience and present both sides of an issue. Lee, from England (Chapter 8: *'Finding Voice: Appreciating Audience'*) discusses 'authority' in terms of 'authorial self' or 'voice', that emerges with becoming sure of 'oneself and of the field, and being able to convey that surety' (p. 106). Her self-admitted 'angst' derives from her perception of the paradox of trying to reconcile 'voice' production with recommending an 18-point tool kit of web-derived writing 'tips' - illustrating the challenge of trying to meet needs of different audiences.

The number of co-authored papers is said to have doubled between 1945 and 1995. Rocco (Chapter 1) prefers to write with others; her protégés include current graduate students Nackoney et al. (Chapter 3) who explain benefits and some drawbacks of collaboration. Electronic figures to illustrate how to manage texts and take notes are hard on eyes of any age, even in the print version. In Chapter 20, *'Working with Coauthors'*, established doctoral graduates Nevin, Thousand and Villa, with 35 'coauthored endeavors' (p. 274) going back to 1990 offer six tips for activating five dimensions that constitute the 'emotional roller coaster' of collaborative teaming. Courtenay, Cervero and Dirkx (Chapter 21: *'Writing as Mentoring'*) review research on elements, benefits and phases of mentoring, but it is unclear whether they are referring to something additional to the advisor role.

In his *Foreword*, Creswell, an eminent research methodologist identifies the 'sign of a good book' as its ability to 'draw readers in and cause them to reflect on their own experiences' (p. xi). The Handbook certainly did this for me. An example is the revelation that, in the last two years Anglo-American adult educator Brookfield (Chapter 18*: 'Addressing Feedback from*

Reviewers and Editors') had two conference paper submissions rejected outright, and only one manuscript published without revision over his career. His advice on coping with article rejection is thoughtful.

This Handbook may achieve the aim of more submissions to *HRDQ* and other elite journals, but whether their quality will improve is an open question. Certainly Chapters 12-14 provide greater explicitness than most journal guidelines to assist beginner formulaic writing. However, knowing assessment criteria is one thing and writing succinctly to meet them another. Bridging that gap is especially difficult for some academics in 'non-centre countries' (Burgess & Martin-Martin, 2008; PRISEAL, 2011) where English is not a first language, or a language of instruction, and where researchers may be disadvantaged in accessing publications, conducting and publishing research. But it also applies to academic writers outside the mainstream US audience that editors and most contributors appear to assume i.e. ethnic minorities, disadvantaged, disabled and Non-English Speaking Background. Only Jacobs, and to a lesser extent Epstein provide examples of constructing and editing texts; no author tells how they shaped an award-winning article or book; we know that they 'did it' but remain in the dark as to 'how'. There is one account (Chapter 20) of a writing team's 'Eureka' moment; Lee (Chapter 8) goes furthest towards illuminating what 'advanced' scholarly writing involves, challenging the implied claim that only non-refereed writing 'encourages imagination and novelty' (p. 226). Given the HRD background of editors and many contributors, too it is surprising to find no acknowledgment of training, career and organizational development implications. These include online publishing and access, the 'impostor' syndrome (mentioned in Chapters 3 and 5, but not indexed) associated with transitioning from student/scholar to scholar/editor, compatibility of a 'publish or perish' organizational culture with quality publications, and anachronism of a higher education system where career advancement depends upon taxpayers funding academics to voluntarily write and review manuscripts and edit prestigious journals whose articles go behind pay walls for commercial publishers' profit. Overall, promoting scholarly writing and publishing involves taking a wider view of the topic and of the range of linguistic, technological and other strategies available for addressing it.

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