

Chapter 1

You Too Can Get It Write: The Pursuit of a Life of Scholarship


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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides the reader with principles for writing and research that the authors have developed over their lifetimes. They have published close to 600 refereed articles, monographs, books, and book chapters between them and have learned what works and what doesn't in professional writing and research. Further, each of the authors has been involved with implementing technology-driven doctoral programs and they share the lessons learned from these experiences. The suggestions they offer are not intended to be exhaustive but rather are designed to provide the reader with a framework for success in writing and research. They share their successes and failures and the necessity for accepting and using feedback and critical reviews in a positive and productive manner. Additionally, they address the issue of technology in research and writing and how these tools can aid those developing a research agenda. They offer hope to those beginning a research and writing agenda and believe that if they can succeed others can as well.

INTRODUCTION

In most institutions of higher education scholarship is fundamental to establishing and maintaining a successful academic career. Faculty are expected to conduct research and share their results in peer-refereed journals. In fact, in many institutions, continued employment and subsequent promotion are linked to conducting quality research and publishing in well-respected journals. Certainly, what Ernest Boyer (1990)

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characterized as the scholarship of teaching and the scholarship of application (service) are important, but research and professional writing are critical to maintaining a faculty position in higher education. Even so, as few as 10% of faculty account for over 50% of the literature in some areas (Moxley, 1992). Not surprisingly, beginning graduate students rarely have experience with the demands of professional writing and view the skills required to become a scholar beyond their reach.

As advanced graduate students, we experienced a dramatic transformation; it was no longer about a doctoral degree; rather it was the acceptance of a lifelong commitment to scholarship—the intellectual pursuit of truth. We accepted that, by virtue of our degree programs, we had both the privilege and responsibility to not only ‘consume’ the professional literature, but also contribute to it. We recognized the reciprocal nature of the scholarship of discovery and the scholarship of teaching (see Boyer, 1990). As we concluded our doctoral studies, we refined a research agenda that projected well into the future and represented a way to draw upon the accumulated literature to contribute to it. Finally, we began to sense that scholarship can foster a sense of professional accomplishment and personal satisfaction. We firmly believe that you too can make important contributions to your discipline.

In this chapter, we provide you, in a concise manner, with some basic principles that may very well help in developing and implementing a research and professional writing agenda. What we will provide is what we have learned from many years of successful writing for professional journals, textbooks, scholarly books and book chapters, as well as externally funded grants, and other scholarly activities (e.g., professional presentations, workshops and serving on editorial boards for scholarly journals).

Each of us has lead the implementation of large scale technology driven doctoral and research programs at major universities. This experience has led us to some common knowledge that is reflective of best practice and sound theoretic foundations related to the professional development of faculty. Faculty who are successful in writing and conducting research will provide the foundation necessary to develop a successful doctoral and research program.

In contemporary university settings, it is imperative that faculty have technology skills that enable them to obtain and disseminate information. But, faculty members have to have more than just good technical skills. They must also posses the ability to work collaboratively and plan and implement a research and writing agenda as well as access to technology and assistance in using and maintaining these technology tools.

There are numerous well-written books on professional writing but what we will provide are personal lessons that we have learned the hard way through our own success and failure. We will leave it to others to offer theoretical foundations. What we are presenting here is the collective knowledge of of three professionals who have been integrally involved in the leadership of doctoral and research programs. Collectively, we have written about 600 peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, and professional monographs. We readily acknowledge that not all our efforts lead to a successful outcome. There have been many writing and research projects that failed or never led to a publication. We believe that we have learned something from each of these experiences. Furthermore, the inspiration for this chapter comes from the fact that many of our best professional writing projects have involved working with others. We believe that we have learned something about what works and, at the same time, what things to avoid. Our goal is to contribute to your ability to achieve a successful and gratifying professional career.

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