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## **Diversifying the Publishing Academy: Increasing Access to Scholarly Publishing Education for Graduate Students**

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## PRACTICE ARTICLE

# Diversifying the Publishing Academy: Increasing Access to Scholarly Publishing Education for Graduate Students

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** This article highlights the importance of providing accessible scholarly publishing education and support to graduate students by presenting a case study of how the University of Louisville's Publishing Academy was modified to be fully online and intentionally focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

**Literature Review:** The literature review examines existing scholarship related to publishing support for graduate students, focusing on literature discussing the importance of publishing for doctoral students and describing successful publishing and writing support programs.

**Overview of Publishing Academy:** University of Louisville's Publishing Academy is a biennial scholarly publishing program for graduate students founded in 2016. Planning and execution of the spring 2021 iteration of the Academy occurred during the global COVID-19 pandemic and during a time of national civil unrest due to racial inequity and injustice. The context of the times necessitated changes to the Publishing Academy, including moving the Academy to a fully virtual format and intentionally focusing on DEI in developing Academy sessions and faculty panels.

**Next Steps:** Next steps for the Publishing Academy are considered based on participant feedback and organizers' observations.

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## INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries frequently offer general research support, such as in-depth literature searching workshops and citation management training for graduate students; however, specific scholarly communications topics, such as writing for scholarly publication, are less frequently addressed (Gannon-Leary & Bent, 2010; Perini & Calcagno, 2013). Support for scholarly publishing, data management, and other scholarly communication topics are increasingly needed and are the type of challenges that librarians can help address.

The University of Louisville is a public research university located in the largest metropolitan area in Kentucky. The university is home to over 23,000 students with over 6,500 graduate students. There are over 100 graduate programs offered at the University of Louisville across 11 different schools and colleges. The University Libraries system includes six libraries, with Ekstrom Library serving the majority of programs and students on the main university campus.

The Research Assistance and Instruction Department in Ekstrom Library developed the Publishing Academy for graduate students in collaboration with the Graduate School. It was first developed in 2016 and offered on a biennial basis. The Publishing Academy was traditionally held in person in Ekstrom Library. The program was aimed at helping students navigate the publishing landscape and covered topics such as writing for publication, responding to peer review, selecting journals in which to publish research, and journal impact metrics and included faculty panels of full-time tenured faculty and those new to the profession (McClellan et al., 2017).

Planning for the spring 2021 Publishing Academy occurred amid the global COVID-19 pandemic and increasing awareness of and calls for social and racial justice. This prompted several changes to the Academy—primarily moving the program online and being intentional in including a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) focus in the Academy. This paper provides an overview of the updated spring 2021 Publishing Academy, an analysis of the changes made, and recommendations based on student feedback and the authors' experience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the “publish or perish” idiom has long been associated with pretenure junior faculty members, new graduate students planning an academic career face the same challenge (Alvarez et al., 2014). This pressure is noted and lamented by Cassuto, who states that “the murderous academic job market” leads to an increased need for early professionalization services for graduate students and is “not without many drawbacks” (Cassuto, 1998, 2015). Austin &

McDaniels (2006) studied doctoral students' preparation for academic professions and observe that "graduate preparation for the professoriate is often not organized in a particularly systematic nor developmentally focused way" (Austin & McDaniels, 2006, p. 129). Austin & McDaniels (2006) note that many graduate students learn about faculty life through careful observation of their professors. Although current doctoral students do participate in parts of the research process, some lack experience with the full range of research activities, including grant proposal and publication writing training (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). Perini & Calcagno (2013) examine whether writing for publication and professional presentations is addressed in doctoral training and found that some programs cover professionalization topics and provide students with professionalization skills better than others (Perini & Calcagno, 2013). The authors note "there is a robust body of research that supports the idea that presentation and publication are necessary components of academic professionalism" (p. 13) and define professionalism as "the professional role of doctoral students once they have graduated and entered their place in the academy" (Perini & Calcagno, 2013, p. 14).

Library literature indicates "that graduate students are interested in learning more than literature research skills that librarians have traditionally taught" and shows that librarians have responded by teaching data management, analysis and visualization workshops, grant and academic writing skills, and more (Fong, 2019, p. 374). Fong (2019) notes that librarians need to acquire new skills and knowledge and also follow the 2012 Association of College and Research Libraries recommendation to seek campus partnerships. This sentiment is shared by Perini and Calcagno (2013), who propose that librarians possess the capacity to guide students across programs and disciplines in the acquisition of professionalization skills; however, there must be cultural adjustments and acquisition of new skills by librarians.

Numerous academic libraries and librarians have addressed graduate students' needs and adapted to the new demands using creative solutions. For example, Knievel (2008) describes the development of the online tutorial "Publish Not Perish: The Art and Craft of Publishing in Scholarly Journals" at the University of Colorado. The author notes that the strategies for publication "represent a higher order of need" than traditional library workshops focused on literature searches (Knievel, 2008, p.179). A fully online workshop emerged centering on five modules: an overview of publishing, idea generation and journal research, manuscript preparation and submission, the editorial process, and customizing a publishing plan (Knievel, 2008). Knievel (2008) notes that the tutorial "has so far been popular locally, nationally and internationally and serves as a clear indication of the importance and need for instruction in this area" (p. 185). Craft & Harlow (2020) describe the creation of a professional development program focused on scholarly communications needs of graduate students at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG). Based on an increasing number of questions about publishing, copyright, and predatory journals, the UNCG librarians

developed a series of scholarly communications workshops offered both in person and online (Craft & Harlow, 2020). The modules created were open access, research identity management, scholarship metrics, and scholarly communications basics (Craft & Harlow, 2020). Similar to Knievel's observation of the high use of the online tutorial, Craft and Harlow (2020) highlight the positive response to their workshop, continued requests for scholarly communication training, and the library's intention to grow the program.

In the spring of 2016, the University of Louisville Libraries ran the inaugural five-week-long Publishing Academy to develop literacy in scholarly publishing for graduate students (McClellan et al., 2017). Noting that there is a gap between professional expectations for graduate students, particularly regarding publishing, and academic instruction, McClellan et al. (2017) saw this as an opportunity for the libraries to better serve students, fill the instructional gap, and collaborate with other campus entities. The initial Publishing Academy included topics such as writing for publication, responding to peer review, selecting a journal in which to publish, and finding journal impact factors. The University of Louisville Libraries partnered with the Graduate School to develop, implement, and assess the workshops. They worked with additional partners across campus such as the Writing Center, the Endowed Chair for Scholarly Communication, and faculty scholars. A strong connection between information literacy and digital scholarship produced an opportunity and need for librarians to help junior faculty and graduate students “understand the complexities of digital publishing environments” (McClellan et al., 2017, p. 544).

Although evolving to better meet the needs of graduate students happened over a number of years, librarians quickly recognized the need to evolve to support DEI efforts in 2020 as the Black Lives Matter movement protests following the murder of George Floyd and the COVID-19 pandemic brought issues of inequities and injustice to the forefront of public awareness. Many higher education leaders formally acknowledged the need to address racial and social inequities in higher education and issued statements about the commitments to racial justice at their institutions (Bartlett, 2021). Scholarly publishing is not exempt from structural racism and implicit bias (Subbaraman, 2020). On July 10, 2020, scientists around the world went on strike, stopping their research and scholarly activities to support the Black Lives Matter movement and bring attention to racial bias in science, higher education, and scholarly publishing (Subbaraman, 2020). A behavioral scientist, Jasmine Abrams, advised allies to take specific actions in support of Black faculty such as intentionally citing and sharing the work of Black scientists (Subbaraman, 2020). Discussions of diversity and inclusion in scholarly publishing predated the nation's 2020 racism reckoning. The Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC) began meeting in 2017. C4DISC acknowledges that “like academic institutions more broadly, scholarly publishing is marked by the underrepresentation of minoritized populations” and there are “various social and

cultural factors that have historically contributed to inequity of access to publishing opportunities, recognition of scholarly merit, and prospects for leadership roles in the mobilization of knowledge” (Zuroski and Baskin, 2019). C4DISC contends that diversity and inclusion in scholarly publishing is a “moral imperative” and that “the future of scholarly communications will be positively impacted by attracting a pool of highly talented and creative professionals from diverse and/or historically excluded backgrounds who possess a wide range of skills sets and viewpoints” (C4DISC, 2021). Therefore, libraries providing scholarly publishing support for graduate students have a responsibility to intentionally address DEI in scholarly publishing.

The literature indicates a clear need for publishing support and services for graduate students and specifies that with some professional development opportunities, librarians are in a great position to provide such services. Furthermore, with the global pandemic, ongoing increase in fully online degrees, and renewed attention to social justice among higher education administrators, faculty, and students, publishing support services should be available online when possible and should address the biases and lack of diversity in scholarly publishing. This case study provides an overview of how the University of Louisville libraries provide publishing support services to graduate students in the biennial Publishing Academy and reviews how the Academy moved to an online format with an integration of DEI content.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PUBLISHING ACADEMY**

Ekstrom Library in collaboration with the Graduate School and other campus partners developed and ran the inaugural Publishing Academy in the spring of 2016. Graduate students from multiple disciplines enroll in the Academy and learn about the publishing landscape and tools they can use in preparation for publishing their scholarship. The Academy is offered as a four to five-session series with sessions that build on one another, although each one is unique and engaging due to interaction with various facilitators and student activities. From the beginning, the goals of this initiative were focused on knowledge and engagement. In its previous iterations, the Publishing Academy included face-to-face sessions with panelists, speakers, and students all in the same room each week. This was not the case in spring 2021. With the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement altering the landscape of higher education and the world alike, the authors, who were the primary organizers of the spring 2021 Publishing Academy, had to adapt the Academy to reflect the circumstance of the times. This led to the Publishing Academy transferring to a fully online format with increased emphasis on DEI content.

Planning for the Publishing Academy, which was held in March 2021, began in November 2020. The authors scheduled a series of meetings with the Director of the Graduate School

and other librarians who helped facilitate the Academy in previous years. The organizers decided to host the Publishing Academy entirely on the online platform Blackboard Collaborate. This allowed students to safely engage in discussions around scholarly publishing while living through a pandemic and political unrest. Although engagement in the online environment looks different than in person, technology helped bring the facilitators, students, and panelists together in a new way. The Publishing Academy organizers created modules within Blackboard Collaborate and were able to provide access to additional content for each session, including pre- and post-Academy reading materials. Because the sessions were held online, the Academy organizers could also enrich each session with real-time links to information shared and ensure each session was recorded.

In addition to the adaptations due to COVID-19, the authors recognized the importance of including a focus on DEI in the Publishing Academy, particularly due to the heightened national and local awareness of police violence and antiracism. Louisville is the home of Breonna Taylor, a young Black woman killed by a police officer in her own home in March 2020. A few months later, the University of Louisville President declared that the university will strive to become “a premier antiracist metropolitan university” (Bartlett, 2021), highlighting the importance of antiracism across the university. The authors recognized this declaration as an invitation to integrate DEI content into the Publishing Academy. For the two faculty panel sessions in the Academy, the organizers invited panelists based on the diversity of their research interests and subject areas as well as considering race, gender, and nationality to ensure diverse representation on the panels. The authors also decided to develop a new session for the Publishing Academy focusing on DEI issues within scholarly publishing. Although there is opportunity to expand DEI content in future iterations of the Publishing Academy, dedicating a session to DEI and scholarly publishing ensured that this content became a part of the learning objectives of the Academy and was not merely an afterthought.

The Graduate School is primarily responsible for recruiting graduate students to attend the Publishing Academy, whereas liaison librarians also do outreach to faculty and students in their liaison subject areas. There were 15 students who registered for the 2021 Publishing Academy from a broad range of academic disciplines. Although the highest registration was in the first iteration of the Academy in 2017 with 17 students, the 2021 Publishing Academy had the highest number of academic disciplines represented. The broad range of disciplinary representation demonstrates the need for graduate publishing support across academic units. Participant disciplines in the 2021 Publishing Academy included mechanical engineering, entrepreneurship, interdisciplinary studies, biostatistics, experimental psychology, nursing, humanities, geography, English, anthropology, epidemiology, curriculum and instruction, health promotion and behavioral sciences, and urban and public affairs.

## **Week 1: Introduction/experienced faculty panel**

The first session of the Publishing Academy was a tenured faculty panel. The session opened by welcoming the students and introducing the libraries, an overview of the Academy, upcoming sessions, and housekeeping about the online format in Blackboard. Then, the tenured faculty panel began. Five tenured faculty from across academic units participated in the panel: computer science and engineering, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and education. The panelists discussed their research interests and walked students through their publishing process. Panelists discussed how they select publication venues, evaluate publication metrics, and advice for responding to peer review. The panelists also gave students advice about the writing process and described establishing writing routines, how they collaborate with others on their writing, and the ways they seek feedback on drafts. Those panelists who serve as journal editors or reviewers discussed selecting manuscripts for publication and advice for prospective authors. In keeping with the focus on DEI in this iteration of the Publishing Academy, panelists were also asked to discuss what DEI issues in research and scholarly publishing are currently being discussed in their fields and what steps are being taken to respond to these issues or support DEI in their disciplines. After the tenured faculty panel, the session concluded with the graduate student participants introducing themselves, their research interests, and something they learned or were surprised by from the faculty panel.

## **Week 2: The scholarly publishing landscape: Journal metrics, copyright, and open access**

The second session focused on journal metrics, tools for evaluating and finding journals for publishing purposes, and copyright. The discussion of journal metrics included information about Impact Factors, H-Index, and Altmetrics, including links to resource pages for future use. Evaluation and journal exploration databases like Ulrich's and Incites Journal Citation Reports were demonstrated along with library research guides to equip students with the information needed to make the best judgments about journal quality. Journal matching tools like Endnote Manuscript Matcher, Springer Journal Selector, and Elsevier Journal Finder were also suggested as options for locating quality journals. There was a conversation around predatory publishers and how the open access journal system can be manipulated for profit. This led to a presentation by the Open Access Repository Coordinator about open access and the University of Louisville's institutional repository, ThinkIR. The session concluded with a presentation about copyright and authors' rights by the University Libraries' Endowed Chair for Scholarly Communication. This session was very well received by students, but because the sessions were shorter in this iteration of the Academy, there was less time for hands-on searching in the databases and using the journal matching tools.



**Week 3: Writing for publication and navigating peer review**

The third session featured the University of Louisville Writing Center Director, who discussed writing for publication and navigating peer review. The session gave students an understanding of the nuances and differences between writing produced for class assignments and writing produced for publication. Best practices for adapting research or coursework for publication were also discussed as well as revising a manuscript based on comments from peer reviewers. Students provided positive feedback, and one student commented on how the session helped to alleviate anxiety around writing and publishing.

**Week 4: Dissertations, theses, and early career publishing strategies**

The fourth session was a panel of early career and nontenure track faculty from across academic disciplines including business, English, geography, and education. These faculty members discussed their recent publishing experiences and how they manage research and publication requirements with other professional obligations. The early career faculty members also shared strategies for transforming dissertation research into formal publications, including books and journal articles. The panelists were asked about factors that guide their choice of publication venue, and they all shared that highly ranked journals in their specific fields are necessary to publish in for their tenure case. The panelists also discussed how publications were valued on the job market and what kinds of questions they were asked about publishing during job interviews. This topic was of particular interest to graduate students working toward careers as academics. The panelists all shared about the importance of publications and publishing potential in the job market, and the graduate students were encouraged to have at least two or preferably three publications to be competitive. Beyond already having published, the panelists discussed the importance of having a research agenda and demonstrating publishing potential in the job market. One panelist shared that “to get the interview, they want to see promise of publication. Even if you haven’t published anything, they want to see that you have something submitted or in progress.”

**Week 5: Current trends in scholarly publishing/wrap-up and reflection**

The final session of the Publishing Academy was titled Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Scholarly Publishing and led by the University Libraries’ DEI Coordinator. The session discussed various systemic barriers that may prevent scholars from minoritized communities from being published as well as initiatives to increase diversity in scholarly publishing. Systemic barriers included privileged policies, inappropriate gatekeeping, and the formality of the publishing process. Initiatives to increase diversity included internships and fellowships, demographic data tracking, publishing fee waivers, supporting non-native English-speaking

authors, and organizations like the C4DISC. The session concluded by discussing current trends for DEI in scholarly publishing, focusing on open access and embedding equity and inclusion in journal mission statements.

## **Evaluation and impact**

Although the Publishing Academy is a partnership between the University Libraries and the Graduate School, the Graduate School is responsible for the formal evaluation of the Academy. Evaluation tools include a preassessment, individual session evaluation, and final evaluation. The preassessment asks students to rate their self-reported familiarity with publishing knowledge. After each session, students are asked to complete an evaluation. This includes assigning numerical ratings for factors like facilitator interaction, session quality, and other items like new implementable ideas and feeling supported as a graduate student. The students are also asked to provide qualitative feedback after each session, with questions asking the students what aspect of the session they found most useful, what could be improved, and what the students will do with what they learned in that session. In the final evaluation, students rate their self-reported familiarity with publishing knowledge in a post-Academy assessment, using the same questions as the preassessment. The postassessment demonstrated a significant increase in publishing knowledge after the students completed the Academy. The Graduate School sends the library a detailed assessment report after the Academy is complete that includes an executive summary including recommendations, participant demographics, the final reflection qualitative data, and the compiled data for each individual session.

It's important to consider the impact of moving the Publishing Academy online and focusing on DEI. Part of the intention of emphasizing DEI was to make scholarly publishing more relatable and accessible to graduate students from diverse backgrounds. In a final evaluation, one student wrote, "These sessions help make the process of publishing relatable and in turn help to reduce imposter syndrome. My own anxieties now look like common worries even among more experienced writers and [are] now a necessary part of the process rather than a large hurdle." Because evaluations are anonymous, the identity of the student is unknown. However, the comment illustrates the intended impact of focusing on DEI in this iteration of the Publishing Academy. The more a lens of DEI can be brought to programming, the more imposter syndrome may be reduced and steps toward correcting diversity imbalances may be increased.

Moving the 2021 Publishing Academy online made access more equitable for all students. Graduate students from across University of Louisville campuses were able to attend without the usual hassles of in-person attendance such as having to commute, pay for parking, and find the classroom location. A student living internationally in Brazil was also able to attend

the Academy. The previous in-person iteration of the Publishing Academy in 2019 had 11 registrants, whereas the online iteration of the Publishing Academy had 15 students registered. In their feedback about the Academy, students asked for the sessions to be even more accessible and inclusive. One student comment asked that the Publishing Academy be held asynchronously online to increase the likelihood that students can participate and successfully complete the Academy. Other students asked for more time to interact with each other. The authors will need to consider the conflicting feedback of asking for asynchronous programming and more interaction when planning future iterations of the Publishing Academy.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Overall, the 2021 Publishing Academy received positive feedback from the participants. It is important to strive to continue improving the Academy. Although there was more intentional focus on DEI in this iteration of the Publishing Academy, both in content and in panelist representation, this will continue to be expanded upon and centered in future iterations of the Publishing Academy. To achieve that goal, the authors will explore integrating a framework of DEI into every phase of the Academy from planning to promotion to session content and evaluation. It's important that as many students as possible see themselves reflected in scholarly publishing.

Based on student feedback, the next Publishing Academy will be longer. When the Academy was moved to an online format, sessions were shortened because organizers thought students may not be engaged in front of their computer for a 90-minute session. However, several students mentioned that they would like more interaction and activities which a longer session can provide. Another consideration is to develop a two-part Publishing Academy, one in the fall and one during the spring semester. The format of the Publishing Academy moving forward will likely be hybrid with an opportunity to participate asynchronously as well as options for in-person engagement. Transitioning to the online format helped provide more equitable access to graduate students. Student feedback ranged from asking for an asynchronous option to asking for more opportunities to engage and interact. Organizers are considering having the next Publishing Academy fully accessible online and offering in-person options for the first and last sessions.

Partnerships are essential to the success of the Publishing Academy. The Graduate School is a key partner in planning, promotion, and assessment. The session led by the Writing Center is one of the most highly rated sessions each year. It is vital to continue these existing partnerships, and the organizers plan to build additional partnerships to strengthen the Publishing Academy in future years. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the Academy, including

students participating from the university's Health Sciences campus, organizers plan to collaborate with librarians from the Health Sciences library for the next iteration of the Academy.

Each year of the Publishing Academy provides another opportunity for graduate students to gain knowledge around scholarly publishing to prepare them for future success. Each iteration of the Publishing Academy is updated with new content as scholarly research and publishing evolves and changes. The new components in 2021 with the virtual format and DEI focus allowed the organizers to push the boundaries of the Academy and encourage students to deepen their thinking around the topics while also making the Academy more accessible to students. Although these changes will continue in future iterations, organizers also plan to evolve with the scholarly publishing field and incorporate data searching and data visualization as key components in the next Publishing Academy.

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