

Women and Research

Mission statement

To foster an active and inclusive research environment in order to enhance high quality research output.



August 2013

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From the Pen of Angela

Dear Researchers,

Welcome to our new, improved and much better looking newsletter!

The overall theme of this newsletter is supporting new research and new researchers — to go with our fresh new newsletter look. What is in this edition? We hear from recently confirmed Dr Jennifer Harlim about her PhD journey and the lessons she learned while studying. Dr Harlim also outlines the challenges of writing a PhD concurrently with getting research publications in her insightful piece.

Professor Rebekah Russell-Bennett, from Queensland University of Technology, shares her thoughts on reverse engineering a publication and offers helpful hints for her process.

But before we get into those pieces, I wanted to share something else with you.

I recently had occasion to read about the late Vietnamese cartoonist and artist [Choe](#) (Nguyen Hai Chi) whose cartoons were on show in Vietnam — where they have rarely been on display. One cartoon in particular caught my attention, pictured below. Like a lot of cartoonists Choe uses humour and jokes on the surface to portray a deeper message, metaphor or irony — or even a deliberate jab. This particular cartoon portrays his opinion of his country's strong and sometimes underappreciated women. I think this is something we all feel we can identify with. Sometimes it is good to have someone else to support you and share strength and resources.

And that is what Women and Research is all about!

We are here for each other. Good luck with your research and stay in touch.

Warm regards, *Angela*



My PhD Survival Guide by Dr Jennifer Harlim

If you asked me if I would like to do a PhD when I was a fresh graduate of a bachelor degree, my answer would have been an absolute “no”.

But in my first job, as an RA, I found I enjoyed the research process so much that I took on another research assistant position in the School of Economics, Finance & Marketing. Through these experiences, I decided to pursue a PhD so that I could learn more about the research process.

In 2009, I commenced my PhD study in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, looking at engineering education. I am happy to say that I completed my PhD study recently and this quote summarises how I feel about it:

“It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end.”
Ursula K. Le Guin

It is indeed true that while aiming to and finally completing a PhD is something to be achieved; it is the doing of a PhD that taught me the biggest lessons. I want to share a little about the strategies I used to cope and what I had learned from my journey.

Strategies and Tips on doing a PhD

When I first started my PhD, everyone cautioned me on the tough road ahead. Now that I have completed my study, I must honestly admit, while there are tough times, I did enjoy doing it. These are some of the strategies I used to cope with my candidature.

1. Working with supervisors

There is no doubt that the most important relationship that one will have when doing a PhD is the supervision relationship.

Different supervisor, different supervision styles. Personally, I viewed my supervisor as a mentor. I believe in a PhD, the candidate is accountable for his or her own research. One has to take ownership and be responsible for his or her own progress.

Needless to say, a PhD candidate needs to be self-motivated in driving his or her research forward. Nonetheless, this is done with the advice and guidance from the supervisor.

One of the systems that were in place during my candidature was a regular weekly meeting with my supervisor. At a specific day and time of the week, I had a meeting with my supervisor. This process was helpful in keeping the PhD on track as this forced me to have some sort of progress to report to my supervisor every week.

Having this regular contact also ensured that should I have any issues I could discuss them with my supervisor easily.

2. Treat the PhD like a job

Doing a PhD is exactly like having a full-time job. I found the only difference with a PhD is that you have the freedom as to when you want to do your work.

Self-discipline becomes crucial when undertaking a PhD. During my candidature, I worked on my PhD between Monday to Friday, 9-5pm. Although at times, weekend and after hours work were required (mainly due to publication deadlines), this allowed me to maintain a boundary between my private life and my study. Having a balance between personal life and PhD study is essential.

Just like a full-time job, a candidate is also entitled to time off work. My advice is to take holidays (even a short break) during the candidature. Each time I come back from my break, I feel more invigorated to do my research. These breaks helped me to sustain interest in my research topic.

3. Plan yearly milestones

Planning is big in engineering. The very first thing I learned in my role as research assistant in engineering was the importance of milestones.

I applied the same concept to my own PhD study. Every year, on top of the little lists of things that I needed to do, I ask myself, “What would I like to achieve this year?” This guided me on what I should be focusing on for the year.

During my first year, I concentrated on literature review and data collection. I also produced a conference paper that year.

Dr Jennifer Harlim

I fell into research quite by accident. I started delving into the world of research in 2007 when I took on a role as a research assistant in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering. I only took on the position as a temporary work while I was looking for a “proper” job.

This quote summarises how I feel about my PhD

“It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end.”

Ursula K. Le Guin



Dr Jennifer Harlim



“In my school there is strong emphasis on publishing. We are encouraged to publish from the first year onwards.”

“I kept my end goal firmly in sight at all times”



“If a candidate chooses to start his or her PhD with a positive attitude, they are more likely to enjoy the process.”

In my second year, I focused more on data collection and analysis. This resulted in another conference publication.

During my third year (or what I call my “publication” year), I focused on publishing. Any literature review, data collection and analysis were done with a focus on publications. I was fortunate enough to end up with five additional publications that year, including two journal papers.

I spent my fourth year concentrating on final data collection, analysis and thesis writing.

4. Publishing as a priority

I believe the publishing process was vital to assisting me in my PhD completion. Learning to write from the get-go got me into the habit of writing. It certainly hurts when you receive your first double-blind peer reviewed feedback but I found over time, I learned to take the criticisms and improve my writing skills. And by the time I started the real work on my thesis, I had seven publications, which meant about 50-60% of the thesis was done.

Having publications also helped with the final completion seminar. It is unlikely that a panel would say that your research was not done well enough or in the wrong direction when it has already been double blind reviewed.

Be smart about which publications to target. Through discussions with my supervisor, we only targeted double-blind peer reviewed publications and we considered the rating and/or impact factor of the publications outlet. This applies even for conference papers.

Journal publication is often perceived as better but conferences also contribute in other ways for the development of an independent researcher, such as quicker turnaround times and honing presentation skills. I would recommend, as a minimum, doing one of each.

5. Getting help

As PhD candidates, we are allowed to get help and it is up to candidates to take advantage of their uni’s resources. Attend workshops and seminars. For example, I found the On-track workshops organised by the School of Graduate Research to be very helpful.

And there are college and school level research conferences which give HDR students an opportunity to get together and present their research. Such events provide a chance to develop presentations skills and network.

There are writing groups, including Angela’s one, that offer the chance to practice your writing. Angela’s writing workshop got me into the Pomodoro technique, which assisted me in my final thesis write up. Writing groups give you the chance to get into the habit of writing, learn tips and improve writing skills.

Twitter is another fantastic resource when doing a PhD. There are a number of fantastic people to follow on twitter such as @thesiswhisperer, @researchwhisper, @PhDForum and @litreviewhq.

One of the most understated sources of help is the people sitting in your shared office. I absolutely advocate making friends with other people who are sitting around you.

A shared office is often seen as a negative thing but not when you are doing a PhD. You can take each under your wings, find out about opportunities and, most importantly, when times are tough, it is nice to have friends who understand what you are going through.

6. Lessons Learned

Finally, at the end of any journey one should reflect on what they learned. I learned that it is not about doing what you love, but to love what you are doing.

That way you are more likely to enjoy the process. I learned to judge the best length for my writing from this piece of advice : “Write all that you need to write, in the shortest possible way.” I have applied this principle to all my writing.

Most importantly, I learned that it is possible to have fun while doing a PhD, it does not have to be painful. My PhD process was not easy but it was enjoyable.

The most important thing is to be wise in how you spend your time during the short three or four years of study (for full-time PhD).

A PhD journey is not easy, but it can be a positive experience.

The Reverse-Engineering Approach to Journal Writing

by Professor Rebekah Russell-Bennett

One of the most useful tips I was ever given as a PhD student by my supervisors was that I didn't have to reinvent the wheel when it came to writing journal articles. There were conventions and styles to writing an article that transcend content and can be the difference between a desk-reject and an acceptance.

While I had a vague understanding of what this actually meant at the time, it has been in subsequent years, as I have mentored my own research students in their academic writing, that I have truly appreciated the wisdom of this tip. I propose five steps to reverse-engineering an article.

Step 1. Pick your target

As a marketer, there is a core concept that we are taught in Intro to Marketing classes; work out your target market and then deliver a product that satisfies theirs, and your, needs. Sounds simple doesn't it? Then why is it that so many people submit articles that in no way demonstrates this understanding and therefore earn themselves a desk reject?

Which journal should you target? The answer to this question is dependent on the quality of your contribution and your career strategy. There is no point submitting to a journal which requires substantially unique and novel contributions if you are replicating a study (it will be death-by-repetition to the review team).

Next work out your research focus and where you want to take your research career. Is being published in a journal that is new and unranked going to get you that promotion/job/brownie points with the boss or should you pick a traditional safe journal? While there is ongoing debate about journal rankings (not helped by the Australian Federal Government's banning of the ERA list due to their 'surprise' that universities use them for recruitment, promotion and tenure), what we do know is that journals are ranked in the minds of the people that count.

So while the existing ranking lists may not be perfect at least it gets the list out of people's heads and down on paper where we can see them. In my field, the Australian Business Dean's Council Ranking List (ABDC) is about to be revamped and will again take pride of

place on CV's, research career talks and mental inventories. So use the lists to help you identify where you might like to publish.

Step 2. Identify the requirements

Most journals contain a 'notes for contributors' or 'submission requirements' and this is the place to start. Don't submit an article that uses prose abstract form when a structured abstract is required. As a reviewer when I see the wrong form used I automatically zoom in on the article and see what else has been overlooked.

Step 3. Find exemplar articles

This step is a little trickier than the first two; once you have identified your target journal then do a search for articles that use the same method as you have/want to use and articles that are on the same topic. The reason for picking exemplar method articles is that there is a convention for reporting results that use a particular method and analytical technique and you need to know what these are.

When I was targeting *Journal of Business Research* with a structural equation modelling (SEM) piece, the exemplar articles that used SEM all revealed that I needed to report a single measurement model rather than report congeneric models for each construct (thus I was saved from a desk reject on that one). There are also conventions for the development of wording of hypotheses; the way you state a hypothesis that relates to ANOVA is different to one that relates to a regression analysis technique. Remember if your article looks like a duck and sounds like a duck, then maybe the rest of the ducks in the academic duck pond will let you join them.

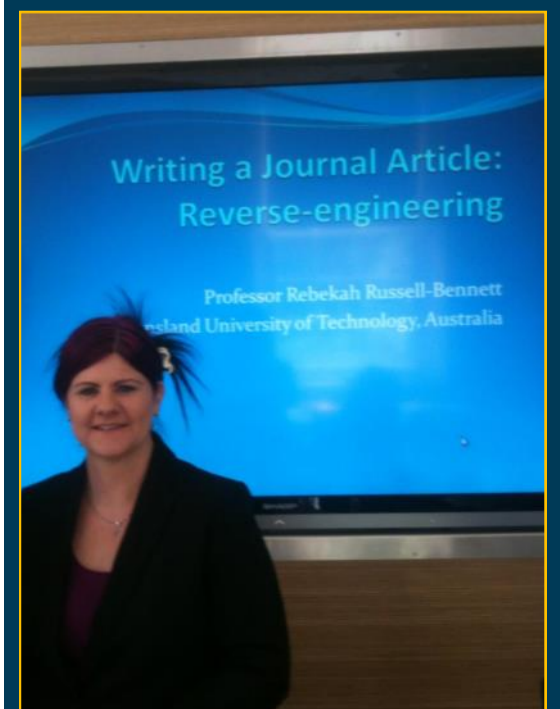
The second type of exemplar article you need is one that relates to your topic. While there is a lot of debate about citing articles from the journal you are publishing in, it makes sense to follow the conversation about a topic in a journal. From a strategic point of view, if an academic has published an article on your topic in the journal you are targeting they are a lay-down misere to be approached as a reviewer – pay homage to those that have gone before and don't overlook key contributions in that journal.

Professor Rebekah Russell-Bennett, Queensland University of Technology

A Google search on the term 'reverse-engineering' reveals that the process tends to be represented in the software and manufacturing fields, but not so much in knowledge industries like academia.

The search revealed four main reasons for doing reverse-engineering:

1. Increased chance of success (the 'if it looks like a duck' principle)
2. Increased efficiency (the 'don't reinvent the wheel' principle)
3. Effective use of limited resources ('write it on a shoestring' principle)
4. Detailed steps for designing your own object (the 'build it and they will come' principle).



Professor Rebekah Russell-Bennett



Workshop

Professor Russell-Bennett has a three hour workshop showing people how to reverse-engineer an article.

The workshop has been road tested in Australia and internationally to great enthusiasm and requests for encore performances.

She is not available to do weddings, funerals or bar mitzvahs.

Step 4. Deconstruct an exemplar article

For this step I recommend selecting one exemplar article from your target journal but you might pick two or three. Pick one that matches the same method, is well-written and easy to understand, written perhaps by a leading academic in the field (they must know how to write well because they have been so successful!?) and is within the last five years (remember editorial requirements change as editors change so pick articles under the watch of the current editor if possible).

Then deconstruct the article using the following eight steps. It is important to use highlighters and notes on your exemplar article (although you might run out colours and the post-it notes might get messy!). I do the deconstructing electronically using the 'comment' function in word.

1. What is the heading structure (number of levels, phrasing) and how many words for each section?
2. What is the style – is the title quirky or does it use every variable in the model? Is the language US or UK? Is there a preference for passive or active voice? What is the readership age of the article? (for the readership age index go to [Readership Age](#)).
3. What is the contribution of the paper, how is it phrased and what sections of the article does it appear? How does the contribution relate to the research problem, research gap and research question, and where do they appear?
4. How is the purpose of the paper stated and how are key frameworks and/or theories introduced? What section of the paper do they appear?
5. What is the logic tree of the article? How does the article structure create logic flow? Are there key words that seem to be used to create the logic?
6. Does the article use any synthesis techniques (e.g. Mindmaps, summary tables, visuals, lists?). Can you reproduce these?
7. What are the method conventions in the paper?
8. How does the article link the findings back to the literature in the discussion and conclusion? How is the article 'top and tailed'?

Step 5. Design your own article

Using the notes (either hard copy or an annotated word doc version of the exemplar article), list out your own structure – using the same type of heading structure and note the approximate number of words for each section.

Dot point out the purpose of each section based on your notes from the exemplar e.g. the introduction section should have the importance of the topic, the debate in the literature and the research gap.

Make notes in the relevant sections of any conventions that belong e.g. the wording of propositions or hypotheses, the reporting of results (draw up your tables and leave them blank). Finally make sure that the introduction and discussion/conclusion are consistent.

Now you are reading to start writing your own submission and you are no longer suffering from 'blank page syndrome'.

continued on P.6

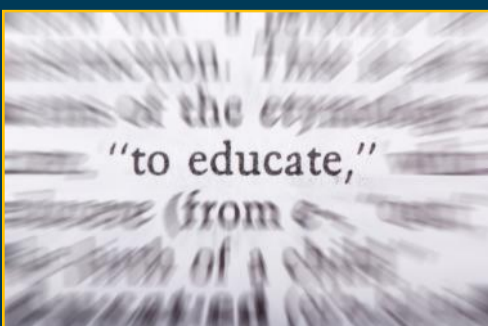
Calls for 2014 Education Track: Submissions and Reviewers

Are you interested in education in the field of marketing? Or interested in reviewing papers for the marketing education stream at an upcoming conference? I am the co-chair for the Marketing Education track for the Australia and New Zealand Marketing Education (ANZMAC) Track for 2014. Details of this conference, hosted by Griffith University and held in Brisbane December 1-3, can be found here: [ANZMAC 2014](#).

My co-chair is Professor Don Bacon, who, amongst other roles, is the current editor for the Journal of Marketing Education. This journal is ranked B on both the ABDC and 2010 ERA listings.

Women and Research members might want to start thinking about submitting. And if you are interested in reviewing for this conference track please let me know.

I look forward to getting your submissions! Angela



Benefits of Pomodoro

One of the benefits is you get a better understanding of how long particular tasks take you and you become more accurate in judging the times required.

Another benefit is you become very acutely aware of the distractions you used to rely on as procrastination devices. So be warned!



continued from P.5

Does it work?

As a final note, you may be asking, 'yes, well that all sounds very good in theory but does it work?' Well I can say quite firmly, 'yes'.

My acceptance rate for submissions to B journals (using the now-defunct ERA ranking list—or the list that shall not be named) have

100% acceptance rates. And my submissions to journals ranked A in that list have a 75% acceptance rate.

Now while I haven't done a t-test to check for significant differences between my results and the typical acceptance rates my eye-ball test indicates that I am doing OK.

So good luck and happy writing!

The Pomodoro Technique by Dr Angela Dobebe

I've been using the Pomodoro Technique now for almost two years and I cannot speak highly enough of it. It certainly works for me.

What is it? A time management method developed by Francesco Cirillo over 20 years ago. Basically, you use a timer (in Francesco's case it was a tomato shaped kitchen timer) to block work periods, usually 25 minutes, and keep these work periods separated with short breaks. When you are on pomo time you are working, no distractions. That means no phone, no updating your Facebook status, no checking 'just one more email', no getting another cuppa before you sit down and really getting into that paper for sure this time, no really I will — nothing!

Every three to four pomos you can have a longer break and that gives you some time to check emails and grab a cuppa, but then you get back into it once more. The advantage of using a timer to control the work periods is that if you do fall victim to a distraction you have to start the timer again.

Software is available for this technique, I use one for an Android phone, which I love as it counts up how many pomodoros you've done and you can work your way up to higher ranks of pomo achievement. You could even compare you pomo ranking with colleagues. I've found I am better able to focus on the job at hand and just get in and get it done. And I'm trained at focusing now, so I don't always use the software.

As for tips to help with the actual writing process, these are the ones that have best helped me.

1. Start now. Don't put it off any longer!
2. Identify a solid research question or statement (research purpose) for the paper and an idea of both your audience (target journal) and the primary outcomes. Keep them all simple and specific. What is this paper's unique contribution?
3. Map out the paper first (either as a diagram or words) but plot it out so you know the sections and the links between those sections.
4. Write a rough draft, following your outline. Don't judge it until the entire first draft is complete. Use the pomodoro technique to keep you focused and productive.
5. Review, revise, review, revise...
6. Get it friendly reviewed.
7. Get it professionally edited.
8. Submit to your target journal.
9. Celebrate with your chosen reward.

Happy Pomodoroing!

Dr Angela Dobebe is an academic research professional with a passion for word of mouth marketing (wom), from traditional face-to-face through to social media and electronic wom. Her research interests include education and the higher education industry. Angela is an experienced quantitative and qualitative researcher who has published 45+ papers.

In the field of wom, she has contributed to the understanding of the key drivers of positive wom and the organisational strategies that facilitate it. She is currently developing a framework to assist commercial marketers improve the effectiveness of blogs and micro-blogs: building on co-creation and collaboration to communicate with loyal and passionate community members.

Her research interests extend to marketing education and education issues including academic workload and student performance. Angela is currently working with Griffith University's Associate Professor Sharyn Rundle-Thiele to develop an understanding of the full impact of ERA and the differences in academic workload and performance on promotion.

Angela has developed strong links with industry with a commitment to bridging the relationship between theory and practice. Her current industry contacts include services such as tourism and life insurance, and charitable organisations related to blood donation and abandoned animal rescue.

