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On Methods for Improving Academic Quality in Comprehensive Academic Journals: Postprint

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Abstract

China is currently a major publishing country for academic journals, but there remains considerable room for improvement in academic quality, particularly regarding manuscript quality in comprehensive academic journals. This article proposes recommendations concerning manuscript sourcing, selection of external reviewers, composition of revision letters, and service awareness, thereby enhancing the quality of academic journals.

Full Text

On Methods for Improving Academic Quality of Comprehensive Academic Journals

Abstract: China is currently a major journal publishing country, yet considerable room remains for improvement in academic quality, particularly regarding manuscript quality in comprehensive academic journals. This paper addresses strategies for quality enhancement, offering recommendations on manuscript sourcing, selection of external reviewers, writing effective revision letters, and cultivating service awareness.

Keywords: comprehensive academic journals; academic quality; improvement

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The academic quality of comprehensive academic journals primarily depends on manuscript quality, which serves as the foundation for a journal's academic

standing. To enhance academic quality, journals must proactively source outstanding manuscripts through multiple channels and strategies rather than passively waiting for submissions. Excellent manuscripts are those that reflect the development direction and research frontiers of a particular field, demonstrate theoretical and substantive breakthroughs, and maintain authenticity without plagiarism. In essence, high-quality manuscripts should exhibit cutting-edge relevance, authenticity, and scientific rigor.

1. Sourcing Excellent Manuscripts

Journals must move beyond traditional passive submission models, as continuing to rely on unsolicited manuscripts will make sourcing increasingly difficult. Proactive, multi-channel acquisition of quality manuscripts is essential for improving both source material and journal influence.

First, journals should leverage their own editorial boards. Board members are established experts and scholars in their respective fields whose academic work represents disciplinary development directions and research frontiers. Their involvement is crucial, and journals should regularly solicit contributions from them. By actively engaging board members, journals can tap into their deep understanding of their fields, their ability to identify emerging research directions, and their capacity for scientific evaluation. This approach not only yields high-quality submissions but also motivates board members to recommend excellent manuscripts and authors, thereby harnessing their influence for journal development.

Second, journals should capitalize on their editorial staff. Many academic journal editors hold master's or doctoral degrees, providing valuable academic backgrounds. Journals can invite their supervisors or related experts to submit work. Additionally, editors should actively attend academic conferences in their specialties. These conferences provide a major platform for establishing connections with field experts and scholars, expanding the journal's author pool, and identifying excellent manuscripts from conference presentations.

Finally, journals should utilize various funded research projects. Major research initiatives often address specific problems or pressing societal needs, producing highly innovative and practical papers. Editorial staff should closely monitor these projects, particularly national research funding programs, and establish early connections with relevant experts and scholars to secure first-publication rights for their findings.

2. Strengthening Peer Review Quality

The current three-tier review system assigns different focuses to each stage. The initial review requires a comprehensive reading to assess political appropriateness and formatting standards, with reviewers providing their own comments. The secondary review also involves complete reading, addressing political con-

cerns and issues raised in the initial review, and producing a detailed report. This stage emphasizes holistic evaluation from political, social, and scientific perspectives to make publication decisions. When specialized manuscripts exceed editorial expertise, external review becomes essential—a critical mechanism for enhancing manuscript quality.

First, careful selection of external reviewers is paramount. No editor can master all disciplinary fields, and neglecting unfamiliar areas may cause journals to miss excellent manuscripts, ultimately harming long-term development. External reviewers should possess deep professional knowledge, understand disciplinary frontiers, maintain rigorous academic attitudes, provide fair and objective evaluations, demonstrate strong writing skills to articulate manuscript strengths and weaknesses, and work efficiently. Therefore, reviewers should be selected based on research alignment with manuscript content to ensure objective, professional assessments that significantly contribute to journal quality.

Reviewer comments should address the manuscript's academic value and contribution to disciplinary construction, requiring reviewers to articulate their assessments of innovation and scientific rigor accurately. This demands high academic standards and a strong sense of responsibility from reviewers. When soliciting reviews, editors should avoid excessive demands; technical formatting issues need not be delegated to external reviewers, as their role is primarily academic evaluation rather than editorial tasks.

3. Writing Effective Revision Letters

Writing revision letters constitutes a crucial editorial task that significantly impacts a journal's academic level, quality, and competitiveness. These letters serve as essential guidance for authors revising their manuscripts.

First, revision letters must be grounded in expert opinions—the product of reviewers' time and effort. Editors should respect these opinions, faithfully conveying them to authors without introducing personal bias, distortion, or misinterpretation.

Second, the purpose of revision letters is to help authors improve their work. Reviewer comments should be concise yet comprehensive: neither excessively verbose and ambiguous, which may confuse authors and hinder revision, nor overly brief, leaving authors uncertain about required changes. Editors should process reviewer comments to faithfully represent expert opinions while ensuring clarity.

Finally, editors must cultivate service-oriented awareness toward authors. Both peer review and revision letters ultimately serve authors and aim to enhance academic quality. Editors act as bridges between reviewers and authors, conveying critical and questioning language without distorting expert meaning while maintaining equal, consultative communication with authors. This approach ensures fidelity to expert opinions while remaining emotionally accessible to authors.

4. Enhancing Service Awareness for Authors

Academic journals must elevate their service consciousness, recognizing that quality service expands readership and authorship, attracts superior manuscripts, and increases market presence, thereby enhancing academic quality and influence.

First, a gap persists between journal publishing capacity and societal demand, as graduate students and research institution personnel face publication requirements for graduation, promotion, and awards. This imbalance has fostered a complacent attitude among some journals, diminishing service consciousness. In today's competitive market, inadequate service awareness threatens journal survival and development. Only by prioritizing service to readers and authors can journals expand their influence, attract excellent submissions, and encourage readership, creating a virtuous cycle. Journals should conduct internal education on service importance, establish institutional regulations, and implement reward-punishment systems based on reader and author feedback. All staff must internalize service consciousness, abandoning the "emperor's daughter never worries about marriage" mentality and embracing market awareness. Quality service inspires readers and authors to recommend the journal, expanding its community and enabling broader dissemination of national research achievements.

Second, journals must respond promptly to submissions. Excessive response delays may lead to multiple submissions, as authors uncertain about acceptance and facing publication pressures may seek alternative venues, causing quality manuscript loss. Journals should optimize workflows and enhance efficiency through institutional time limits at each review stage, including external review. Slow reviewers should be removed from the pool, and processes from submission to publication should be rationally scheduled through interdepartmental collaboration, reducing publication cycles and improving timeliness.

Finally, journals should provide greater convenience to authors. With internet technology enabling online submissions, journals must improve their websites, establish online editorial management systems, and facilitate submission and tracking. Collaborations with databases can expand solicitation reach. Given the continuous nature of scientific research, editors should build author databases, monitor researchers' progress, and prioritize publication of their latest findings. Regular communication can foster friendships, securing long-term contributions from excellent authors and thereby enhancing overall journal quality.

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