

Description

When academic researchers were asked, biggest frustration in getting their papers published, and the issue of different [formatting requirements](#) for different journals showed up in the top two or three. Having to take time away from their research and teaching obligations to develop a reasonable level of competence in [APA, MLA, or CMOS](#) is widely perceived as a burden. In some instances, a specific discipline can have two journals with different preferred [citation styles](#), which doubles that burden.

Unless the institution has an in-house formatting and citation specialist, researchers are left with the choice of doing it themselves or budgeting for the services of an outside professional. In either event, there is a forced delay, even before the paper is submitted for consideration, and if the [journal submission requirements](#) are not met correctly, that consideration is usually an [automatic rejection](#).

Additional frustrations over the length of the peer review process and the likelihood of extensive edit requests, even if your paper is accepted for publication, tend to create an adversarial and unproductive relationship between researchers and journal editors.

Your Paper Your Way

In 2011, Elsevier launched a pilot project in one journal – [Free Radical Biology and Medicine](#) – to determine if there was a way to reduce the time-consuming submission requirements and the frustration that those requirements engendered in the researchers who submitted their work to that journal. The pilot service was called [Your Paper Your Way](#) (YPYW), and it proposed a re-alignment of the submission process, such that formatting and citation requirements did not have to be met until after the [paper had been accepted for publication](#). In operational terms, this meant that:

- The initial submission could be made in one file with no specific [formatting requirements](#) other than the content should be legible enough for initial refereeing.
- References could be in any format, provided the style was consistent.
- Editable source files – text, figures, tables – would only be required after acceptance for publication.

A Positive Response

Elsevier's follow-up to the pilot was a survey of 3,958 authors, 70% of whom found the new process to be a positive experience. When the 870 reviewers who had to adjust to the process change were surveyed, no significant difference in reviewer satisfaction was found, although there were several positive comments in reference to the ease of checking figures and tables in the text document rather than separate files, which had been the prior requirement.

An Acceptable Policy

After a successful pilot, Elsevier rolled-out YPYW in stages, adding an additional 41 journals in 2012, and including all academic journals (over 650) in July 2013. This will hopefully prompt other publishing

houses to follow Elsevier's lead. Since the final submission still has to abide by the specific journal preferences, YPYW is a common sense policy that everyone should be able to embrace. As long as rejection rates in prestigious magazines remain high, why should researchers be required to re-format a paper for every journal to which their articles are submitted?

Category

1. Industry News
2. Publishing News

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