

## **PUBLISHING AND THE EARLY CAREER CLASSICIST**

This collection is based on presentations given at a half-day workshop held at the Institute of Classical Studies in May 2011. It is aimed at those approaching the end of, or who have recently received, their PhDs, and who would like some advice on thinking strategically about publication of their research, to raise their publishing profile most effectively and to maximize their attractiveness to potential academic employers.

There is already advice available in the public domain telling early career academics how to get published. A very useful booklet is published by the Institute of Historical Research:

[http://www.history.ac.uk/sites/history.ac.uk/files/IHR\\_guide\\_Get\\_published.pdf](http://www.history.ac.uk/sites/history.ac.uk/files/IHR_guide_Get_published.pdf)

This ICS booklet is intended to complement, rather than supplant such advice. The first six extracts are from relatively junior academics – who finished their PhDs in approximately the last 5-10 years – detailing problems they had, how they went about getting their first publications, what worked for them and what did not, what they would do differently with hindsight, and (based on these) their personal advice as to what current early career Classicists should consider. Where they have something that they can uniquely (among the panel) advise on, this has been brought out – whether this is related to a niche area within Classical Studies, or consists of an unusual way of bringing oneself to attention and gaining CV ‘points’.

This is followed by advice from Prof. Chris Carey – a previous Head of Department at (successively) RHUL and UCL – who discusses what potential employers, both for temporary and permanent posts, will want to see from applicants. We end with advice from Prof. Barbara Goff – Acting Director of Research at the University of Reading at the time of the workshop, now Director of Teaching and Learning – who discusses the REF, and what this will mean for all early career Classicists (I use this phrase loosely, rather than in the specific way the REF’s own guidelines do).

Each scholar’s advice has been presented in his or her own style, rather than homogenized, in order to reflect the individuality of the contributors and contributions. It will also be noted that sometimes contributors agree, and sometimes they don’t. Take from this what you will! The workshop was generally seen to give extremely useful advice to participants, and we hope this ‘proceedings’ will be equally so to those who download it.

**Ed Sanders (Royal Holloway, University of London)**

[ed.sanders@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:ed.sanders@rhul.ac.uk)

**Christos Kremmydas (Royal Holloway, University of London)**

[christos.kremmydas@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:christos.kremmydas@rhul.ac.uk)

- Start early – devise your “battle strategy” early on
  - Two-pronged strategy (book review + journal article/chapter)
- Or
  - Three-pronged strategy (book review + journal article + book)

**Things to consider while devising your strategy**

- time available
- Scholarly ‘weight of publication’ (relative weight of articles/book chapters vs. reviews).
- Relevance of article to your main research area (ideally your first couple of articles should be spin-offs from your PhD but you should not dismiss an article on another research area you maintain a strong interest in)
- Have you already ‘tried’ your ideas before an academic audience (research seminar, conference)? Was the feedback encouraging?
- Actively seek more feedback from your supervisor, junior scholars or members of staff in your department from an early stage
- Be bold but also realistic

**A suggested strategy (to be implemented throughout the PhD)**

- 2 conference papers in PhD years 2-4 (writing up)-

leading to

- 1 article in Years 2-3

and

- 1 article in Years 3-4
- (1 book review in one of years 2-4)
- Start making plans for turning your PhD thesis into a book (or several articles) after your viva. This issue may be raised during the viva. Do take the recommendations of your PhD examiners seriously but do ask other academics who are familiar with your work.

James Robson (Open University)

[j.e.robson@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.robson@open.ac.uk)

Getting published is a way of putting you and your research on the map and is an essential step for anyone looking for a job in academia. In the early stages of my career I certainly had my successes and failures. Reflecting on this, I offer the following pointers:

- **Take good advice where you can.** Find people who are prepared to read your work and give you feedback. By all means look for someone supportive, but make sure they are also prepared to be thorough, tough, and critical.
- If you can, **get a good sponsor:** preferably someone who rates you, is prepared to engage with your work and who will put your name forward to the right people.
- **Deliver papers as talks:** this way you will get valuable feedback on your work. If members of the audience make bland comments, be quietly annoyed: it's the difficult questions and arcane references that will help you to improve your work (though praise is good, too!).
- **Make contacts.** Talk to people in your field and to those who show an interest in your work, but also have the confidence to approach academics with whom you'd *like* to be in touch. A flattering email can go a long way here.
- Do bear in mind that **there is a danger of publishing too soon.** Your style, your approach and your ideas will all mature over time and you don't want something embarrassing hanging around on your CV. If you get a piece rejected it may even be a blessing in disguise.
- Have the confidence to **go for it.** But be prepared to have a thick skin.

**Softer Targets** – If you are looking for a quick kill, then destinations to bear in mind are:

- **Conference proceedings.** Delivering papers at conferences is something that you should be doing in any case, and conference organizers often look to publish proceedings afterwards. Do bear in mind, though, that it sometimes takes a long time for such books to be published.
- **Journals which specifically cater for early career researchers** (e.g. *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies*). You may also find some newer or 'national' journals (i.e. those based in countries with only a small Classics community) will more readily accept your work.
- **Newsletters and Outreach.** To be sure, publications like *Omnibus*, *Ad Familiares* and *Iris Magazine* don't 'count' on your CV in the same way as more academic publications. However, they allow both to demonstrate that you can address a broad, non-specialist audience and to disseminate your ideas.
- **Book Reviews:** though limit the number you do. Your CV needs depth as well as breadth.

These are all useful ways of cutting your teeth and garnering material for your CV, but the holy grail is still the monograph and substantial articles in leading international journals.

**The Book** – For most researchers, the first book will emerge out of the PhD thesis. For this:

- Do some careful thinking about which publisher(s) to approach. Who publishes books in your area? What's your market? What experiences have others had with these publishers?

- Be prepared to write a book proposal, preferably taking advice from someone who has been through the process already.
- Bank on having to make substantial changes to your PhD: you must engage with the process of turning an academic thesis into a book with a broader readership.
- If you are not successful first time, use any feedback you're given and keep trying (and do recall the advantage of having the 'under review' tag on your CV when applying for jobs).

### **Substantial Journal Articles**

Deciding on the journal to send an article to is hard: once more, it is best to take advice here. If you think your article is good, then by all means aim high, but be prepared to be rejected. Once again, the important thing is to have a thick skin and to use the feedback you are given to revise your piece. Then work down the food chain, trying less prestigious journals until one of them bites.

Some journals give feedback more quickly than others and there is also great variation as to how soon you might expect to see your article published. Don't be shy about asking the journal editor for advice on this. And one golden rule: never submit the same article to two journals at the same time.

As to subject matter, there are a variety of tactics to try here:

- **The 'stand out PhD chapter' article** (or maybe the second best chapter, leaving your real gem to be the centrepiece of your book)
- **The 'PhD appendix' article** (It can be useful to plan your PhD in this way, so that you have an instantly detachable and usable piece – in addition to the main bulk of your research that will form the basis of your monograph.)
- **The 'highlights of the PhD' article:** edited highlights that is, outlining a major finding and backed up by some sexy case studies
- **The 'great little idea' article:** the idea that one of your examiners was particularly taken by, though it didn't form the cornerstone of your thesis.

You may also have a red hot paper, of course, or a chapter that didn't quite make it into the final cut that you could consider turning into an article. One further piece of advice, though: avoid too much 'salami slicing', that is to say, publishing the same piece of research in multiple formats (book chapter, article, conference paper). It stands out a mile on your CV.

**And Finally ...** Two further things everyone should be told:

- **Be aware of the REF cycle.** If a research assessment exercise is imminent, then employers are going to look for people with strong publications in the bag already; if it is a long way off, then they will be more concerned with future potential. There is, in other words, an art to timing when your publications come out.
- **Get a good reputation.** Overstretching yourself, getting pieces in very late for edited collections, backing out of commitments at the last minute, publishing articles that are substandard: none of this is going to do you any favours in the long run. Push yourself, by all means, but also be realistic about what you can achieve and aim to do it well. And as part of this, ensure that you have *realistic* research and publication plans for the short, medium and long-term to present to any potential employer.

**Corinna Riva (UCL)** – An archaeologist's personal experience at the early career stage

[c.riva@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:c.riva@ucl.ac.uk)

Fieldwork vs. monograph:

A major issue for archaeologists applying for jobs upon completing their own PhD thesis (whether that is a post-doctoral scholarship or a lectureship) is whether to focus on setting up a fieldwork project or completing a monograph deriving from the PhD dissertation. Ideally, one would want to do both and therefore be able to present oneself at job interviews with a monograph and fieldwork under one's belt; realistically it is difficult to find the time to do both.

The question for me therefore was to choose between the two; choosing very much depends on personal circumstances. In my time, funding was widely available and this enabled me to set up my own project with two other colleagues. Nowadays, funding is much less so, but this should not preclude you from going onto a fieldwork project: one can still establish strong formal collaborations without the need to make large grant applications, which are often successful when the Principal Investigator is much senior to you.

The key advantage of taking up fieldwork after the completion of the PhD dissertation is that it provides you with fresh new research questions and new data straight away; this gives you plenty of opportunities to give papers on the project and publish (usually multi-authored) preliminary results already after the second season.

A fundamental disadvantage is that setting up a project involves a lot of administration that begins with grant applications and continues with the organization of practical matters related to the project (finding accommodation, for example!); a second shortcoming is that having a project requires maintaining constant contacts with the local archaeological government agency through various means (e.g. offering to give papers at local conferences, etc.) which is time-consuming and not highly valuable for REF. A different way to look at it, however, is to consider the factor of *impact* (now, a key aspect of the REF) that doing fieldwork may have on one's research. I, for example, established various collaborations with Italian academics and governmental organizations; one such collaboration saw our fieldwork involved in a local governmental project aimed at creating historical and archaeological geo-referenced maps of the region that would be used by the public for various reasons (e.g. planning permissions).

Publications: monographs vs. articles or edited books:

Publishing a monograph is, to my mind, a key objective for an academic at an early stage of their career. However, in my own experience, this is not essential if one publishes peer-reviewed articles, edited books and establishes a key role in a fieldwork project.

Editing books is good experience since they are often the result of conferences that one organizes and of which one subsequently publishes the proceedings. However, my advice would be not to overdo it and to do it with other colleagues: editing books is a lot of work with little return in terms of what counts in research output.

**Katherine Harloe (University of Reading)**

[k.c.harloe@reading.ac.uk](mailto:k.c.harloe@reading.ac.uk)

What to do and what not to do, based on my own experience.

1. Try not to be too timid. It is easy to delay sending off a paper to a journal for no good reason, only that you are nervous because you have never done so before. If you do this, you will very likely kick yourself later and wonder what you were making a fuss about. Don't let the best be the enemy of the good.
2. Take advice – keep in contact with your supervisor and examiners, people you meet at conferences, and others who seem kindly disposed to you and your work. You can ask them not only for feedback on what you have written, but also on what you might publish where.
3. On the question of journals versus edited collections, there are pros and cons on either side. Contributions to edited collections can get reviewed, which provides valuable feedback (and, if positive, a confidence boost and something to point out in job interviews). But if you submit to such a collection, you are at the mercy of the editors, who may be slow or fast in carrying out their work – or indeed at the mercy of the slowest contributor. Journal articles tend to be published more quickly, although see below for a qualification.
4. Not all journals are the same. You should ask around, as some are better than others: both in terms of the status they carry within the discipline and in terms of the professionalism with which they treat contributors. When I was a postgraduate (in philosophy), one journal was notorious as it took around two years to provide feedback on a submission – not the kind of wait you want at the beginning of your publishing career. So try to find out this information from senior members of your department or other sources of wisdom. Make sure you only submit to peer-reviewed journals. In 2011 it is also increasingly important to publish in a journal that is available online (as well as or instead of print). This will increase the readership for your work.
5. Most of 4 above also applies to presses that publish monographs. But remember that once a book has been published, if it is a good book it is likely to be recognized as such. Again, ask around to find out which presses publish work in your area. Which presses publish the books you find yourself reading?
6. Some book reviews are OK, and a good way of practising writing for publication. But don't spend time doing too many. They are not a demonstration of your ability in research, and will not impress a prospective employer as much as an article based on your own work.

**Kathryn Tempest (Roehampton University)**

[k.tempest@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:k.tempest@roehampton.ac.uk)

I began, like many, by writing book reviews for *Classical Review* and the *Journal of Roman Studies*. In addition, together with Christos Kremmydas, I organized a conference, the papers of which are currently being edited for a volume to be published by OUP: *Continuity and Change: Oratory in the Hellenistic Period* (Oxford, forthcoming 2013). An ideal way to get published, I thought, and it was – but it's a slow route and should not be relied on if you find yourself under pressure to produce items for the REF in time. The monograph and peer-reviewed articles remain the best way to establish your academic reputation but these take time – a rare luxury if, like me, you find yourself in a permanent post at an early stage. Luckily, I have always remembered the best advice I received as I embarked on my career: **make sure you get something out of everything**. However little a piece of work may seem, it should not be wasted. Furthermore, it is good to have a few strings to your bow and there are a number of alternative ways you can make yourself known in the publishing world (while simultaneously filling out the embarrassing gaps in your CV when you are applying for those first few jobs!):

1. **Pedagogical research.** All junior academics now will be asked to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning (or similar). Typically this will involve a research portfolio and here you can look towards getting your work published. For example, I undertook research on Classics and Employability. This topic was relevant to the Work Placement module I was developing at Roehampton in my first year and it was an area, I found, that had not been massively explored. It led to a conference on Classics and Employability in 2008, and a published article in the *CUCD* bulletin: 'Thinking about Employability', *Bulletin of the Council of University Classics Departments*, Vol. 37 (2008) 1-3. It was only a small piece of work, but the topic of employability has increasingly been on the University agenda as potential students are more and more being forced to consider the 'value' of their degrees.
2. **Team publications.** As a result of my work on employability, my colleagues and I at Roehampton realized that there were many ways that we were embedding employable skills into our curriculum design. The more we talked, we realized that these might be ideas other people would be interested to hear – and following the Classics and Employability Conference, we were invited to submit an article for the international journal: 'Embedding Employability into a Classics Curriculum', *AHHE* 9.3 (2010) 339-352. We have also published an article together online: 'Teaching the Language of Employability to Classical Civilisation Students': <http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive/3226>
3. **Works of General Interest:** A final 'alternative' publication arose from my piles of lecture and study notes! In 2008 I was invited by Continuum to write a book on Cicero. It emerged naturally from a module I had designed and taught at Roehampton on the Roman Republic, as well as from a large number of papers given to a range of general audiences (from GCSE groups to sixth-formers to INSET days and school teacher conferences). The result was *Cicero: Politics and Persuasion in Ancient Rome* (Continuum, 2011) and I have since been commissioned to write a similar style of book which is now under contract with Yale University Press: *Caesar's Assassin: Marcus Brutus*.

**Federico Santangelo (Newcastle University)**

[federico.santangelo@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:federico.santangelo@ncl.ac.uk)

What follows is a string of thoughts on the questions circulated ahead of the workshop. It is based on my own personal experience: quite a confessional, definitely not prescriptive piece.

1. Most decisions concerning one's approach to publishing are rooted in very personal itineraries. The decision on when and how to publish a monograph based on the dissertation depends on many factors. It is essential to consider the comments of the examiners carefully, and to listen to the views of the research supervisor. It is important to realize how the thesis and the book may fit in one's intellectual journey. For some people it may be desirable to publish the first book sooner rather than later. One may feel that there would be little point in devoting a lot of time to refining a dissertation towards publication as a monograph and that the current version is as good as it is going to be, at least in the short to medium term. For others publishing the book soon may be a way to establish oneself as a voice worth listening to in a field (or sub-field) where there is a lively debate going on, with new studies coming out at a steady pace; this can also be a risky operation, of course. Fortuitous or indeed lucky circumstances can also be a factor: one can be approached by a series editor with an invitation to submit a manuscript.
2. The merits of publishing with OUP and CUP are self-evident. Publishing houses on the continent can offer very good solutions too. Some of them (e.g. Brill and Steiner) have a handful of thematic series, with prestigious editorial boards, which use the peer review system competently and consistently. It is important to do some general research on what may be available in one's particular field. (A proviso: some publishing houses require authors to contribute to the printing costs, and may sometimes alert them to that only after the manuscript has been accepted for publication; this is something worth making enquiries before submitting a manuscript)
3. I tried to publish my first articles in journals that have international circulation and are available in a large number of libraries. I always sought journals that used a transparent peer review process; I have also chosen journals that had scholars on their editorial board who had a research interest in the topic of the article I intended to submit. This was not determined by the need to have a sympathetic reader, but by the hope to receive informed and detailed feedback; that did happen in most cases. I have also sought to send my contributions to journals that had a reputation for getting them out reasonably quickly; that didn't always work out as planned.
4. When I was thinking about getting my first few papers published, some leading academic journals, esp. on the Continent, did not appear to be committed to the double-blind peer-review system. Things have changed significantly in the last decade. The publication of the ERIH journal rankings (<http://www.esf.org/research-areas/humanities/erih-european-reference-index-for-the-humanities.html>), while being controversial and debatable in some respects, has been a positive factor. Hardly any journal that I know of these days does not use peer-review, normally with two referees involved. I should candidly confess that the publication of the Classics journals list has been informing my choices since 2007, although it has not necessarily led me to rule out



submitting to journals that do not have an A-rating if I found them more suitable for a certain publication.

5. Electronic journals have the great advantage of offering a quick publication to things that have been accepted. I believe that there is no reason for considering electronic publications less worthwhile than papers in academic journals that appear in hard copy. What must direct the choice of a contributor to submit to a journal is the process that leads to the evaluation of the manuscript: if an electronic journal uses the peer review system sensibly and transparently, there is no reason to discriminate against it compared to others. A parochial example: I am currently involved with the revival of the historiography journal *Histos* ([www.histos.org](http://www.histos.org)). The standards that we follow compare very favourably to those of all the A-rated journals.
6. Organising a conference and working on an edited volume based on the proceedings is a worthwhile experience, and indeed I would recommend it to any early career scholar. It may be difficult, though, to run it without the support of an institution – both logistical and financial. It may also be desirable to have a co-organizer and co-editor. If one chooses one's partner well the process can be greatly rewarding.
7. For an early career researcher who wants to start a career in the UK, having two good articles in well-regarded (i.e. A- or B-rated) journals is probably sufficient to get a post. It will be equally important to have a clear idea on how and when the first monograph will be ready for publication and, in general, on how their research is likely to develop in the coming years. However, having a good teaching experience is probably going to be an even more important factor, especially in institutions that are not research-led. It is also valuable to develop some experience of teaching topics that are not obviously related to each other. But this could be the topic for another workshop.

**Chris Carey (UCL)** – The potential employer’s perspective

[c.carey@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:c.carey@ucl.ac.uk)

## **1. General**

The British RAE/REF systems for all their faults (and they are many) have been beneficial for younger academic staff (the jargon is ECR, Early Career Researcher), since an important dimension has long been protecting the research potential of young scholars. The system regularly has (and the next one will have) a ‘tariff’ for young scholars; where established researchers have to offer four research outputs (i.e. books, articles, chapters etc.) for evaluation in each cycle, this is reduced for younger scholars proportionately to the time they have spent in a permanent academic post. Though the university system effectively exploits temporary staff (as it must, since the posts are usually filling in for a permanent member of staff on leave and the work of the absent teacher has to be covered), here too the good news is that you don’t have to be rushing into print. You can afford to think strategically about getting published. More on this below.

## **2. What the job advert requires**

A quick sprint through any recent set of job adverts (at any time) shows a straight dichotomy between job types/adverts. Adverts for permanent posts place a premium not just on teaching but on research and interview committees are interested in research completed, publishing plans and future research intentions. Members of the audience evaluating the presentations of shortlisted applicants (now a normal feature of the hiring process) will usually be looking both for research potential and for communicative skills (a difficult trick to pull off, since the audience will be a mixed one). In the case of temporary posts (often called teaching fellowships) the emphasis will invariably be on teaching and research often plays little or no role in the advert (though employers will usually want the PhD completed to ensure appropriate experience and to guarantee the absence of distractions which might get in the way of the teaching duties). It is always worth drawing attention to one’s research activity and outputs even when applying for a temporary post. And it may be that in the case of a tie between candidates the research track record might sway the decision. But in general it will be demonstrable teaching range and quality that counts. The instructions for the job presentation will often (though not invariably) be circumscribed to focus on pedagogy.

## **3. So what should I do?**

*Think strategically.*

- If you are hoping to enter the British job market, the RAE/REF framework means that you don’t have to rush into print. So you can afford to focus on quality – of output and of publishing medium. Quantity buys you little without quality.
- Fit your publishing into a larger career game plan. Academic life is much more professional even at the bottom of the age scale than it was even a decade or so ago. One needs to think and plan forward. This should include attendance at seminars, colloquia and conferences, which are an important step on the way to publication. Attendance first because you can learn not just from senior and established scholars but also from observing younger scholars

further advanced in the research and employment progression; and ask question – it both gets you noticed and accustoms you to the cut and thrust of debate. From attendance one can progress to offering papers. Look out for seminars which fit your interests and look also for ways in which your interests can enrich a programme which at first sight looks unpromising (sometimes the organizers don't realize how much they really need you). If you give a paper, look for opportunities to give it again; every piece of research benefits from iteration and criticism. A well received research paper can be honed over several presentations to become a potentially publishable article.

- As you research, look out for elements in your thesis which cannot be pursued in all the detail you would like within the word-limit but which could be released separately. These have the advantage of keeping you close to your core interests but allowing you also to expand on your ideas.
- Avoid unenlightened opportunism. Opportunities (for seminars, for publications) which take you away from what you really want to do are not opportunities. When asked to do something, always ask what the opportunity cost is, i.e. *what can I not do if I do this?* The ideal colloquium/seminar/conference paper is one closely based on things you intend to say in your thesis, i.e. something you have to say anyway. If your theme is Cicero and you are asked to give a paper on Linear B, the correct answer is unlikely to be Yes. Many experienced scholars never learn this lesson, because everyone craves approval. But if you can learn it now, you have a skill for life.
- Start small. It's quite useful to begin with reviews of books. You usually get to keep the book and you get to practise the skills of working to a deadline and to a strict word-limit. But try again to review books you actually want to read; the process actually makes you read them more closely.
- In preparing items for publication, draw on the criticism of your supervisor, of relevant staff in your department, and of contacts you have made during the course of your research. However, if you want to keep friends (especially scholars outside your department), always offer polished material for criticism. Reading critically takes time and there is an opportunity cost for any friendly advisers reading your work; one should avoid wasting their time with material which is not ready to be read.
- A publication, if you have one, is a useful dowry as an indicator of promise. But in press can be as good as publication. If you have a paper accepted for publication, it is a publication; i.e. it goes into your c.v. ('in press', 'forthcoming'). But it is normal for people to complete their PhD and have no publications to their credit. So don't worry if this is the case. If you complete your PhD and you have only a paper in preparation, this still has potential. As I observed above, the temporary job market (which is where most people end up immediately after completion) is not driven by publications. So you have a little more time than you think.
- Go for quality. Do not publish half-cooked items. And look for highly respected journals. A mediocre publication will bring advantages neither in the short nor in the long term.

*Your thesis*

So far I've left out the most important item, your thesis. Since publishability (as a whole or in parts) is a criterion for the award of the PhD, your examiners will usually discuss this at the end of the viva. If not, it is an agenda item for your next meeting with your supervisor after the viva. The decision then will be what to publish, where and how (i.e. monograph or articles, and if the latter in what form and through which journal). Once you have the examiner reports, you can proceed to plan. Other contributions to this collection will advise on getting your PhD published. My advice would always be, irrespective of the publisher, not to make major revisions before you approach a publisher but rather to indicate the changes you intend to make in your proposal statement. The publishers' readers will often have their own suggestions to make about changes and it is wasted labour to spend time on major revisions to a draft where new revisions may well be proposed. Plans for the thesis will almost certainly crop up in interviews and it is sensible to include them in the c.v./application. These do not have to be hard and fast; 'under negotiation with' etc. will do.

While working on your thesis, you should be planning your next research project. This does not have to be ironed out in detail. But when you are looking for a permanent job, employers will be looking not just for intellect and achievement but also for potential. They want to feel that they will acquire a colleague with a sense of direction. And in a UK market where publications are used as a quality measure for research funding, departments like to see plans for future projects which can in time generate outputs. So your applications should include a statement of where you intend to take your research next. Postdoctoral projects often build in different ways on the doctoral research. This is natural, inevitable and sensible. But it should not just look like more of the same.

**Barbara Goff (University of Reading)** – Early Career Researchers and the REF

[b.e.goff@reading.ac.uk](mailto:b.e.goff@reading.ac.uk)

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>

The REF, Research Excellence Framework, is the successor to the RAE, Research Assessment Exercise. It will happen first in 2014. Departments will submit their research for assessment by a panel of peers and will receive research funding calibrated to their results. The precise funding mechanism will not be released by government until after the results of the assessment. See what they did there?

All submitted researchers, except Early Career Researchers, must have 4 pieces of work in the public realm by 29 November 2013. Early Career Researchers will be permitted to have less than 4. Speaking approximately, for RAE 2008, you were expected to have 4 outputs if you were hired in 2003, 3 if in 2004, 2 if in 2005, 1 if in 2006. If the same rules apply, and you are entered for REF 2014, you will be expected to have 1-2 outputs in place. It may be damaging to your future prospects not to be entered.

So you can see that your PhD is only a gateway to a demanding career, rather than being a demanding career in itself. As an Early Career Researcher, i.e. a person newly hired in academe, you are under a great deal of pressure. You must research, teach, and administer, in that order. However, day to day, it feels as if the order is teach, administer, research, and sometimes even administer, teach, research. Try to remember the correct order as often as you can.

The cycle of research assessments (of whatever name) means that you must not only be constantly researching, but also constantly planning research. You need to plan your 2 publications for REF 2014, and then your 4 publications for whatever happens in ca. 2020.

You should expect your department to take an active role in your research planning (it may be called research management). If your department is not regularly interviewing you about your progress, ask for a meeting yourself, with your Director of Research and/or Head of Department. Discuss your proposed outputs, where you can place them, how you can strengthen them. Seek really specific specialist advice. Even if your department is leaving you alone now, they may suddenly turn on you at the end of next year and enquire where your research is; get a head start on them.

How to get good articles out? There is no magic bullet. Pick a good bit from your PhD thesis. Don't choose the best bit, and don't try for a digest of the whole thing. Take it to postgraduate conferences, and then to a national (e.g. Classical Association) or a specialist conference. Try to place it either in the proceedings of a specialist conference, or in an A-list journal. The notion of A-list journals comes from the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH); they are due to publish an updated list of Classics journals later in 2011, so you will readily see what journals will work best for you. Meanwhile, as a shorthand, be advised that most A-list journals will expect some secondary literature in languages other than English. Consult your department's Director of Research, or your external examiner.

Your second article could be something more like a future direction, or something left over from your PhD thesis. Again you should try for an A-list journal, and again take as much advice as possible.

Do not expect your publications in postgraduate journals to pass muster for the REF. Do not expect your book reviews to qualify. In fact, stop writing book reviews right now. Similarly, do not accept any invitations to contribute to, or edit, Companions or Introductions or Guides, or anything that might help the profession communicate beyond its boundaries. That is for 2020 at the earliest (unless the ethos of higher education undergoes a sea-change in the meanwhile - keep your professional ear to the ground!) Don't attend any conferences where there is no possibility of publication; don't organize any conferences unless you intend to publish them.

'Impact' is a new requirement of the REF, but it is not a requirement of each and every researcher, only of every department. If your published work has quantifiable and verifiable impact in this cycle, good, but it is not the most important part of your submission.

For 2020, you must publish your revised PhD thesis – unless you are confident that you can write a new different book in the time allotted. You will need 3 articles or similar outputs as well, of course. It may be possible in 2020 to submit B journals or more popular or Companion-style pieces; we cannot know for sure at this stage.

If you are fortunate enough to secure a postdoctoral fellowship, don't waste a minute of it. Even if you are exhausted after your PhD, this is irrelevant; expectations on you will be high, because of your success.

None of this is easy; try to stay buoyant by using your networks to keep on top of opportunities and developments.