



REDUX: Publishing for PhD students

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Playing a bit part in organising a workshop on academic publishing for PhD students at the next annual conference of the [British Association for South Asian Studies](#), I was forced to think about how I found attempting to publish journal articles while writing a thesis. The main contributors to this project are prolific professors and journal editors – basically people who know about this sort of thing. My contribution, as a relatively recent graduate, is advice very much from the bottom of the academic food chain. My main thought on the subject was that



it requires patience and preparation.

Like it or not, publishing is increasingly important for post-PhD employment in academia and it might pay off to not wait to till you finish your thesis before you start thinking about it seriously.

Unlike the other workshop co-organisers, I'm far from an authority on the subject of publishing, but here are four things that worked for me and may be of some use to students currently writing up.[1]

Firstly, **write an article and a chapter at the same time**. You can 'double-up'! A 12,000-word chapter will never be the same as a 7000-word essay. Draft the chapter, then craft the article. Use a conference or workshop to focus your essay and sharpen your arguments, as well as give you something solid to work towards.

Once you have gone from chapter to article, shared it with some colleagues, aired it publicly and incorporated some stellar conference comments, had it ritually blessed and carried the printed version with you everywhere you go for several weeks, you are probably ready to submit it.

Redraft the chapter while you wait for peer review comments. When you receive your reviews you may find that some of the suggested emendations already exist in your reworked full-length chapter. Then, when you have resubmitted your changes to the article and responded to reviewers, get back to the chapter.[2]



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Teach strategically. As my thesis took shape and I had an idea about what I could potentially publish from it – certain bits do start to stand out – I then applied to teach the courses that would give me some intensive exposure to relevant literature. This also gave me time and space to engage with it whilst I earned the money I needed to continue studying. A degree of selectivity being one of the few benefits of not being a salaried academic. I knew I wanted to write a paper on money, so taught an honours course in Economic Anthropology. Whilst teaching on this course, I wrote '[Catching the Pulse: money and circulation in a Sri Lankan marketplace](#)', which is now in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.

Thirdly, **collaborate with faculty.** This does not necessarily mean co-author, but rather, work with a member of your department to create an environment conducive to focusing on what you want to write. Organising a conference with the aim of putting a collection of essays together is a very good way of doing this.

There are often small bits of funding available for conference organising when you are a student, but when you finish your PhD and are cast off into the wilderness this may no longer exist. Make use of it while you can!



I organised 'Anthropology for Sale' with Jamie Cross, and from this we produced a special issue for *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, in which I have a single authored article (currently under review) and a co-authored Introduction. Granted, this article was not completed until I had finished my PhD, but the groundwork was laid a year before my viva. This stuff takes time.

Finally, **force yourself into projects you want to be part of**. Two years ago, at the Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison Wisconsin, I saw a fantastic panel on names and naming practices. It was a seriously all-star cast in the anthropology of South Asia: Jacob Copeman, Veena Das, and William Mazzarella to name but a few. Never the less, I knew I had material that could speak to the project so cornered Veena Das over dinner to tell her so, quickly learning that nobody corners Professor Das. She interrogated me viva-style about what I could contribute and eventually agreed to see an abstract and a draft. The paper fit the collection, was submitted with the set, went through an incredibly rigorous peer review process, and was published in [SAMAJ: South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal](#) the following year (2015). Veena and Jacob helped and encouraged me enormously.

If you find a project that your work speaks to and you want to be part of it, my advice is to dive right in, even if - as in my case - you are just a lowly PhD student!

I graduated from the University of Edinburgh in the summer of 2015 - this time last year. Publishing between then and now has been a heady blend of really intense bits of writing to deadlines (actual and self-imposed) and what can feel like really drawn out things, like waiting for reviewers' comments, to hear back from an editor, or receiving proofs. It takes time, and it takes up a lot of time. Weighed down by the thought of the massive body of work that is your thesis, the idea of writing articles or committing time and energy to anything other than thesis writing for that matter, may seem stressful, your supervisor may even advise against it. However, preparing articles while writing up can be done.



Moreover, it can be very beneficial, it can energise your teaching, sharpen a chapter or two, encourage you to collaborate with staff and help you look, and think, beyond your thesis.

[1] The BASAS annual conference holds a special event for [graduates and early career scholars](#). This event is a great platform for sharing ideas. The publishing advice in full will be given by Dr John Zavos, editor of *Contemporary South Asia*; Dr Deborah Sutton, editor of *South Asian Studies*; and Professor Nitya Rao. Next year's conference will be held in Nottingham, April 2017.

[2] I used this strategy to publish my first article, which was for *Contemporary South Asia*, '[On Sacred Ground: the political performance of religious responsibility](#)' (2014).

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