

*Viewpoint*

# Creating a writing and dissemination toolkit for faculty scholarly writing and publishing

Mary Hannah-Griebel<sup>1</sup>✉, Amy Minix<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Indiana University School of Nursing, Health Sciences Building Room C3121, Bloomington, IN 47408

[mehannah@iu.edu](mailto:mehannah@iu.edu)

[orcid.org/0009-0008-5560-8060](https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5560-8060)

<sup>2</sup>Indiana University Libraries, Health Sciences Assistant Librarian, Bloomington, IN 47405

[orcid.org/0000-0002-4393-6939](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4393-6939)

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The authors declare no competing interests regarding this manuscript.



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## Abstract

Dissemination of research is an important component of a successful nursing career, and research shows that providing faculty with resources that facilitate publication can increase their productivity. The authors identified gaps in publication resources available to faculty at Indiana University School of Nursing in Bloomington and created a toolkit to fill those gaps. The purpose of this article is to introduce the Writing and Dissemination Toolkit and discuss the resources provided. A template of the toolkit is available and is customisable for use by faculty, staff, or students at other institutions.

## Keywords:

Dissemination, faculty, nursing, publishing, toolkit

## Introduction

Dissemination of research is an important component of a successful nursing career.<sup>1-4</sup> Writing and publishing helps nursing faculty develop leadership skills and disseminate research or evidence-based practice findings.<sup>4,5</sup> Publishing in peer-reviewed journals is an important component of preparing for promotion and tenure,<sup>5,6</sup> and it is important for nontenure-track nursing faculty as well.<sup>6,7</sup> Further, nursing faculty who publish in top journals contribute to their institution's rankings and can influence student recruitment.<sup>6</sup>

Nursing faculty at many universities have access to institutional support and resources to promote research and writing.<sup>2,3</sup> However, dissemination of research in a peer-reviewed journal can be challenging.<sup>5</sup> Barriers to publishing among nursing faculty include factors ranging from lack of confidence to lack of time and resources.<sup>1,5,8</sup> Faculty who have not engaged in the process of writing and preparing a manuscript for publication sometimes lack confidence in their ability to develop and publish their work.<sup>5</sup> Organizational culture is also a critical component to ensure scholarly publishing is encouraged or expected. Factors such as expectations for promotion and tenure or lack of release time to focus on scholarly pursuits can be difficult to change; however, bolstering support by providing resources or creating mechanisms to encourage publishing can help shift the paradigm.<sup>5</sup>

Research has shown that faculty who have access to programmes and resources to facilitate publishing increase their research and dissemination productivity.<sup>6</sup> Mentoring, writing groups, and editing assistance are valuable resources,<sup>1-5,9</sup> and toolkits can be an efficient way to disseminate these resources.<sup>10</sup> Creating toolkits to support writing is not a novel idea; government agencies, professional

organizations, and even publishers have curated materials to support publishing.<sup>11,12</sup>

Although there are many campus and departmental resources to support faculty with writing and manuscript development, our school did not have a comprehensive set of resources to guide faculty through the publication process – from writing to submitting a manuscript. To address this gap, we the authors, a medical librarian and a writer/editor, developed a toolkit to provide publication tools and resources in one location, in a self-paced format. We have historically provided individualized consultation and assistance to nursing faculty within our respective areas of expertise (outlined in the toolkit modules described later in this article). The toolkit is meant to (1) supplement, not replace, these consultations and (2) allow faculty to quickly locate information to navigate each stage of the publication process.

## Developing the writing and dissemination toolkit for faculty scholarly writing and publishing

### *Choosing a platform*

Common toolkit platforms include websites, PDF documents, or learning management systems (LMS).<sup>12</sup> Our goal was to create a Writing and Dissemination Toolkit for faculty scholarly writing and publishing (the Toolkit) that was easy to maintain and easy for faculty to use. We chose to develop the Toolkit in Canvas,<sup>13</sup> our university's LMS, because faculty already use it to administer their courses. They are already familiar with how Canvas works and where to find the Toolkit. It is easy to maintain and update, and faculty can easily be added or removed from the site. Canvas was also a good fit for our content, as it allows integration with systems faculty already use,

and information can easily be organized into modules.<sup>14</sup> Last, with recent US federal and university mandates for digital accessibility,<sup>15</sup> it was important to choose a platform that would be compliant. Canvas has an accessibility checker which screens for accessible colour contrast, missing text headings, alternative text for images, and tags for PDF documents.

*What we included in the toolkit, what we excluded, and why*

Our Toolkit focuses on resources needed to guide faculty through the manuscript preparation and publication process. We included modules for writing support, literature review, journal selection, research integrity, reference software, manuscript preparation, and manuscript submission.

We excluded modules about research and grant writing and submission, as our school and university provide support for these topics. Other topics, while initially excluded due to time and effort needed to write and update information, will be added later. For example, we plan to include modules about publication metrics and building an online researcher profile. Research metrics, such as citation counts, publication impact, and collaboration indicators, help faculty demonstrate the visibility, influence, and reach of their scholarly work within the academic community. Journal impact factor scores are commonly used to assess the quality of academic journals and are increasingly used to measure the performance of researchers during the promotion and tenure process.<sup>16</sup> Librarians, in particular, are often well positioned and essential to train, generate, or educate how to amplify researchers' work and profiles.<sup>17</sup> We also plan to include modules about writing and designing posters, presentations, and conference abstracts at a later date.

The Toolkit is composed of and curated from many sources. Foundational information is grounded in scholarly literature, which is cited throughout the modules. Most modules also include additional sources for further reading. Background information from practical experience, such as managing the manuscript submission process and effectively using citation management citations, is shared from the authors' areas of expertise. Additionally, Matthew Vaughn, Indiana University Open Scholarship Librarian, consulted on content related to the publishing process and scholarly communication. Finally, we reviewed and incorporated content from library guides across Indiana University Libraries.

*Toolkit components*

**Writing support**

There are many opportunities for writing development and support on our campus and within our school, such as faculty mentoring and a university-wide writing programme offering semester-long faculty writing groups and consultation. Since faculty can access these resources, the writing support module is limited to a description of available resources and suggested readings.

**Literature review**

This portion of the Toolkit provides an overview of key resources and search practices. For nursing faculty, knowing which biomedical and educational databases (PubMed, Cumulative Index for Nursing & Allied Health (CINAHL), Embase, etc.) are available can help set researchers up for success. Each library has access to different resources, so it is imperative to introduce newer faculty or nurses moving from

clinical practice into academia to these tools. Additionally, the module shares common ways to set up a search, including using PICO (Patient/Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) to derive essential components of a clinical research question. We also include information about how to automate searches by saving queries and creating RSS feeds or setting alerts.

#### Reference management software

Using reference management software when preparing a manuscript for publication saves time organizing and managing references, facilitates collaboration between authors, and helps ensure references are accurate in the final manuscript.<sup>18</sup> However, we have found that faculty are sometimes not confident in their ability to use reference management software or do not have time to create and manage a reference library. To fill this need, we created a module to help faculty learn about the three reference management programmes supported by our university. The module provides links to pricing, storage limits, instructions for accessing and downloading the programmes, and training resources. Most importantly, we provide services for building or managing a reference library for faculty.

#### Journal selection

Choosing the right platform to publish can help maximize research visibility and connect the appropriate audience with the author's work. This module covers everything from how to select a journal to understanding predatory publishing. At our university, librarians have negotiated multiple transformative agreements with publishers to support open access

publishing. These agreements provide savings for authors by reducing or eliminating article processing charges (APC). APCs are fees usually paid by authors to publish an article and are common in open access journals. Peer institutions in the United States have adopted similar models.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, general knowledge about the models of open access publishing helps authors navigate the vast world of gold, hybrid, bronze, and other access types. The purpose of this module is to support open scholarship and amplify the work of nursing faculty.

#### Research integrity

We included a module about research integrity to help writers produce accurate, credible work. The module begins by introducing the concepts and principles of research integrity. This includes defining the three major areas of misconduct: fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. An important way to combat fabrication or falsification is to establish verification. Verification ensures that URLs, dates, names, numbers (especially numbers in tables), and references are accurate and credible. Fact-checking helps ensure the accuracy of already-published work that faculty may cite.<sup>20</sup> We include verification and fact-checking tools, drawn from multiple sources (cited in the module), that are especially useful to academic writers. For example, the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics<sup>21</sup> helps ground the importance of verifying original work and citing existing literature from a disciplinary context. The last area of research misconduct, plagiarism, involves using another's ideas, words, or results without giving proper credit. Plagiarism can be accidental or intentional but always results in a violation of academic research integrity. We

include resources in the Toolkit (iThenticate,<sup>22</sup> as well as resources specific to Indiana University) to help researchers identify and avoid plagiarism.

Research integrity also encompasses topics such as authorship requirements, conflict of interest, and human subjects and institutional review boards. We plan to add information about these topics to the Toolkit in the future.

**Manuscript preparation and manuscript submission**

In the manuscript preparation module, we discuss aims and scope statements of two journals familiar to nursing faculty. We describe the types of articles published in different journals and outline requirements for each. We suggest reviewing recent articles in the chosen journal to better understand article types and topics the journal publishes. Last, we discuss journals’ instructions for authors and emphasize the importance of following them exactly.

The manuscript submission module outlines information needed to submit a manuscript and explains the structure of online submission platforms. We include links to two commonly used submission platforms and provide illustrations to show structure and information required. Additionally, the module provides resources related to writing a cover letter to accompany the manuscript submission.

In practice, we found that the most valuable aspect of these two modules for our faculty is providing manuscript preparation and submission services. Delegating editing, referencing, formatting, and submission of a manuscript to a copyeditor significantly reduces the time and effort required of faculty, allowing them to focus on teaching or research.

*Accessing the toolkit template*

We have created an [openly licensed, adaptable toolkit template in Canvas Commons](#), a repository that educators with access to Canvas can use to share resources.<sup>23</sup> To access the template via this link, users must first log in to Canvas. This template provides general background information to introduce users to academic writing and dissemination in nursing. It is designed to be adapted to the specific needs and resources of the user’s institution.

*Recommendations for adapting or creating a writing and dissemination toolkit*

There are several considerations when building or adapting a toolkit, particularly for educational purposes (Table 1).

The first step is to identify the target audience and goals for the toolkit. Think about who will use the toolkit and determine their needs. Next, it is helpful to leverage existing tools or resources that your audience

**Table 1. Adapting or creating your toolkit**

Step/Goal	Description
Identify your target audience and goals	Determine who will use the toolkit and determine their needs.
Leverage existing tools or resources	Use familiar and accessible tools and to reduce cognitive load.
Consider ways toolkit content can be adapted	Consider how toolkit content can be integrated into existing webpages or course modules.
Ensure flexibility and scalability	Choose a platform that is easy to maintain and update as content evolves or resources are added.
Explore partnerships as you develop your toolkit	Consider partnerships outside your department or area of expertise to expand the toolkit’s usability.

is familiar with. In our case, Canvas was an effective choice because it is free for our university faculty, staff, and students, and it is easy to update. If your institution uses another LMS, leverage that platform's capabilities to your advantage. Using a platform that your target audience is already comfortable with will reduce the cognitive load associated with learning a new system. It can also be helpful to think about ways the toolkit content can be adapted. For example, embedding or linking toolkit content into existing webpages or other LMS course modules may expand use.

The focus or audience may grow or shift over time, requiring flexibility and scalability. Similarly, the platform should be flexible enough to maintain and update as information or resources change. In our case, we plan to include dynamic information, such as videos, activities, and other interactive elements to keep users engaged.

Finally, think outside the box regarding partnerships as you develop your toolkit. In our case, the collaboration between a writer/editor and a librarian allowed us to use our individual expertise to broaden our support for nursing faculty through the development of the Toolkit.

#### *Dissemination and future work*

The initial Toolkit rollout took place in September 2024. Nursing faculty were invited to a presentation where we introduced the scope of the Toolkit, provided access, and answered questions. We also encouraged nursing faculty to share feedback on ways the Toolkit could be improved or additional content that would support their work. Since then, we have also presented this work to academic editors

and medical librarians. As a result, the Toolkit has been adapted in several ways, including some that were not originally anticipated.

For example, an expanding area within our school involves faculty and undergraduate nursing students partnering to conduct, publish, and present original research. Some faculty imported Toolkit modules into their own Canvas course sites to support their students' work. We are currently adapting the Toolkit to meet the needs of another health sciences school at our university, and medical librarians at other universities have expressed interest in adapting the Toolkit for their specific needs.

Future work will continue to be guided by anecdotal feedback from students, faculty, and leadership.

## Conclusion

Publishing a manuscript can be daunting, and faculty benefit from structured support for writing and publication.<sup>1,5,8</sup> The Toolkit provides support for topics that complement academic research and writing: conducting a literature review, choosing a journal, ensuring research integrity, preparing a manuscript for publication, and navigating the submission process. The Toolkit can be adapted for use by other university departments and for other organizational contexts. By using these resources, faculty and other writers can overcome barriers to publication.

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