Comments on Preparing a Paper: Session in Honor of Shanti S. Gupta

Raymond J. Carroll
Texas A&M University

http://stat.tamu.edu/~carroll

carroll@stat.tamu.edu
Preparing a Paper: Some Comments

- Use Common Sense!
- Pick a semi-appropriate journal at least
  - The Annals is not going to publish a JASA Applications paper, and vice-versa
- Use the basic style of the journal
  - For most journals, proofs go into an Appendix
- Format the paper into the journal style
  - Increases the comfort level of reviewers and editors
- Use a good spell-checker!
Preparing a Paper: Some Comments

• Introduction is crucial
• Tell them right away
  • what you are working on
  • why it is important
  • why are your results new
  • why are your results better than the work of others
• Readers have short attention spans: if the punch line is on page 7, your paper will be rejected

• **Tell them a story!!**
Preparing a Paper: Length

• If you cannot say it in 30 pages of text, including references (12pt font, 25 lines per page), you have not thought hard enough

• At 30+ pages, you are almost guaranteeing an extremely long review time, and a sloppy review based around exhaustion

• Remember: statisticians pick out the weakest part of a paper, and make recommendations on that basis
  • Do not throw in stuff unless it is really vital
Preparing a Paper: Technical Details

• Numbering equations: keep them to a minimum.
  • Only number what needs to be numbered
  • If your paper has 53 numbered equations, you have not thought hard enough

• Separate out figures and tables and do not put page numbers on them
  • Referees and editors 1st thought is “How long is this paper”

• Keep tables and figures to a reasonable number
  • If you need 11 figures and 9 tables, you have not thought hard enough about your paper
Preparing a Paper: Some Comments

• “Let’s send it out and see what they will think”
  • In other words, let’s not think, but hope the reviewers will do our thinking for us

• “In future work we will solve something really interesting”
  • Great way to guarantee that you will be asked to do the future work in the revision

• “I am a new Ph.D."
  • Make sure this is obvious to the most casual observer (my definition of a referee)

• “Latest reference is to 1987”
  • How dead is this area?
Preparing a Paper: Some Comments

- References
  - Editors usually select associate editors partially on the basis of your list of references
  - Associate editors almost without fail select referees from the reference list
  - So, ..... If you know someone is favorably disposed to you or your work, reference them!!
Preparing a Paper: Some Comments

• Discussion Section: Repeat the highlights of your introduction
  • What was it about
  • Why is it important
  • Why is it new
  • Why is it better?
Short Notes?

• Journals differ

• JASA’s cover page discourages short notes

• Biometrika, Biometrics and JRSS-B have a long history of publishing short notes
Responding to reviews?

- State the comment explicitly, then answer it.

- Do not just number the comments and hope the referee remembers what she/he wrote: do you keep perfect files?

- Everyone is human: humor the reviewer, because he/she is anonymous.
My paper just got rejected by journal A. The reports were crazy. What should I do?

- Assume you will get the same referee
- Revise as if it were the same journal
What happened to my paper: will I ever hear?

- Get to know the distribution of times to first review
  - Easier said then done of course, see next

- Be polite. Most editors care about this, at least a little bit.
What Data are Available on review times so that I know when to ask about my paper?

- I will give a summary for 8 major journals, running from very theoretical to reasonably applied.

- My apologies to journals not listed. I ran out of space.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annals of Statistics</td>
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<td>Biometrics</td>
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<td>Biometrika</td>
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<tr>
<td>JASA Applications</td>
<td>Yes, ask editor for yearly report</td>
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<td>Technometrics</td>
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A Few Final Thoughts

- **Every paper has a home**, you just have to find it

- As in real estate, your chances of finding a good home improve if you follow the simple guidelines I have outlined

- Do not get discouraged: my 4th paper (the 1st 3 were rejected, as were the next 3) was sent to the Annals of Statistics, and the editor wrote:

  "**you do not have a career in academic statistics"**