

Delivering The Ideas

Comments for New Legal Scholars
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INTRODUCTION

In the talk preceding this one, Frank Wu covers the motivations for writing, selection of topic, selection of audience, and types of scholarship. His emphasis is on getting ideas and choosing among them. My task is to focus more on the nuts and bolts of *delivering* the ideas: getting them out of your brain, into a publication and out into the world.

1. Managing the calendar.

- Yes, there are deadlines (or if you prefer, target dates). Aim for either the Spring or the late Summer “Sweeps Weeks” at law reviews.
- As you arrive on the job and establish your habits, build in some discipline about writing time. There are different models for distributing the hours, but you must log lots of hours for writing.

2. Shifting from reader to writer (and back again).

- You can't read everything first and only then start to write; that's paralysis. Read on the general topic until you start to see repetition.
- After you've begun writing, the research should happen without stopping your momentum.

3. Keeping your idea trim, and what to do with the out-takes.

- Articles early in the career tend to be too long.
- What's trimmed out is rarely lost; it will be published elsewhere later.
- When it comes to High Theory, hint in Round 1 and elaborate in Rounds 2-10.

4. Working with research assistants.

- Research assistants help you more when they get involved later in the writing process.
- Research assistants might handle the record keeping that will make it easier later to deal with law review editors.
- Hire research assistants as much for their sake as for yours.

5. Knowing when the piece is done; asking for help.

- Even if it stinks, it's done (for some purposes).
- The piece is ready to submit for friendly advice before it is ready to submit to journals.
- Advice from unknown and less friendly sources comes next.
- The piece is ready to submit to journals before it is ready to publish.
- Electronic posting of your draft shortens the publication cycle by many months.

6. Targeting journals for initial submissions.

- Placement quality counts, but it is not the only (or best) measure of quality.
- For every article, develop a ranking of journals to serve your purposes.
- Plan for multiple submissions, possibly in waves.
- The article's title and a punchy cover letter should help an editor convince her peers.

7. Negotiating with journals; the final choice.

- Use your waiting period to good advantage.
- Collect all the vital statistics about the terms of the offer.
- Use an initial offer to spur other journals into action.

8. Working with student and peer editors.

- As author, you are still teaching the editors.
- Make sure you can track the changes.
- Page-proof shock is normal.

9. Spreading copies, electronic and reprints.

- Consider the journal as one among many outlets for your work.
- Post electronic copies, both on the school's web page and on research services like SSRN.
- Scatter reprints generously, both internally and externally.
- Electronic distribution is not the future; it is the present.
- Listen while you spread the good news.

10. Reflecting on your work.

- Look for chances to rework your ideas.
- Look for ways to build a coherent body of ideas.
- Welcome to the Growing Writer's Guild!

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