Hickey and Agarwal/Book review


This is the slightly revised third edition of an excellent publication that I recommend to anyone thinking about writing an article and getting it published. The style is commendably clear and the author is encouraging, which is unusual for books about writing. As the author says, look at why you want to write what you need to write, sit down and do it. It doesn’t take long, but it is work.

A book is laid out, as in the previous editions, following the 10-stage process that goes from the first idea to after publication.

Throughout the author points out that writing is not a difficult process, but should be regarded as producing a good product and marketing it well. If only more authors followed Tim Albert’s advice about setting their brief out clearly before starting writing, the brief he recommends contains five steps: the message, the market, the length, the deadline and the co-authors. All too often, reviewing articles reveals that the authors have not stated the message they wish to convey. If they don’t know, how will their readers? Many articles arrive at a journal clearly originally intended for another or without having consulted the authors’ instructions. Albert outlines. Clarity of thought and writing is helped by looking at the following suggested questions: Why did we start? What did we do? What did we find? What does it all mean? It is difficult to pick out points to illustrate

the worth of the book – to do so would involve an unnecessary reproduction of the contents of each chapter. For example, another of the things that irritates reviewers is when authors quote the findings of papers incorrectly. Tim Albert recommends that authors should actually read the references that they quote! To nitpick, I found the summary of achievements that appear at the end of each chapter slightly incongruous in a book; they are more applicable to course material (to convince the funders that you know what you are doing!).

If you want to write articles, this is an extremely useful primer. If you already write successfully, read it to improve your technique.

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