



## **Aquatic Consulting & Education Resource Services**

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### **Expand Your Professional Horizons: Pick Up Your Pen!**

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Providing care is every professional's primary responsibility and is the activity that takes the most time out any day. Keeping up with the latest techniques, doing records and reports, and the tasks of daily living take up considerable additional time and energy. Frequently there is little of anything left to spare to additional activities, let alone leisure. However, it is in the best interest of a true professional in therapeutic aquatics to find the time and effort to pick up a pen – or boot up their computer – to write. Professional writing, whether for publication or for obtaining funding, can be satisfying, productive and well worth the time and effort.

#### **Writing for Publication**

Professional writing for publication falls, typically, into two categories, general content writing and research writing. A published document confirms the author as competent in the field. While writing a book is probably beyond the scope of a new writer, writing an article for a periodical is well within anyone's grasp. To be published in a professional periodical the author's manuscript must go through blind review. This means selected individuals in the same field review the manuscript without knowing the identity of the author. They validate the worth of the content and recommend it for publication. That publication might be in print or on-line.

Yes, there are publishing opportunities everywhere. Anyone can put any content on the internet. Just having an article appear on a website, as this article does, does not make that article professionally worthy. What validates any article is the double blind review process by knowledgeable peers in the field selected by a periodical of national or international stature.

A general content article, typically contains –

- An abstract.
- A statement of the purpose of the article.
- Background on how this content fits into the literature in the field.
- Elaboration on the purpose of the article – the content.
- Recommendations and/or conclusions.
- Reference bibliography.

General topical content might be treatment techniques, population descriptions, equipment uses, facility design, pool operations, success stories, problem discussions, and/or opinion/editorial pieces.

While difficult to achieve, professional publishing is a valuable addition to a vitae for employment or for a resume for job advancement. When two applicants have equal qualifications, the published applicant can have a hiring advantage. On a local level, a published article validates the opinions it contains. This can carry weight in local decision making when all parties do not agree. Content writing may ask a question, make a statement, provide an explanation, contain promotional material, and/or be an expose'.

We continually hear the call for research. But, how do we get research? Research must not only be done, but also must be published to be recognized as valid. Publishing research is a much more difficult process than publishing general content. During the review process, research is evaluated not only for the ideas and/or content, but also for the statistical analysis of the information presented. Without the statistical analysis, what may be called "research" is merely someone's opinion and in the same category as content writing that has not undergone blind peer review.

A typical research article contains –

- An abstract.
- A review of literature about the research question under study.
- A statement of the question under research.
- A description of the research design.
- A description of the population
- A description of how the research was implemented.
- Data on the results.
- Statistical analysis of the data including both reliability and validity statistics.
- Conclusions.
- Recommendations.
- Bibliography.

This is much more extensive than a typical content article. Research questions might include effects of a treatment technique, results of use of equipment, opinions of professionals in the field, availability of services, or any question that can be reviewed, studied, evaluated, and reported. Research answers a question.

### **Writing for Funding**

Writing to obtain funding is also referred to as *grant writing*. Writing a grant application confirms the author as someone willing to go above and beyond the call of the job to enhance program offerings by obtaining additional funding. While we all wish money would magically come to worthy programs, professional funding must be carefully sought. Grant money, even in difficult economic times, is available. The keys are knowing where to look and how to prepare a grant application.

While grant writing may seem as daunting as periodical publishing, grants can be useful for obtaining funding for –

- Equipment.
- Staff training.

- Conference attendance.
- Establishing partnerships.
- In-house publishing.
- Expanding a client base.
- Promoting a program.

Need generates incentive! While a grant might appear to be a large writing project, if a grant is viewed section by section, the task becomes more manageable. Many granting organizations and companies provide application guidelines to assist the writer in preparing a successful proposal.

### **Help for Aspiring Writers**

For many people, writing comes naturally. For others, writing is something to be avoided at all costs. This is particularly true of professionals in activity careers, as opposed to desk jobs. But, anyone can become comfortable with the writing process. The most difficult thing to do is to take that first step – decide to write.

Once writing is begun, a writer learns to write better by writing – and writing, and writing, and writing. It will help to seek advice from others with writing experience. One such opportunity will be during the ATRI Symposium. Their publishing workshop will include –

- Generating writing ideas.
- General content vs. research.
- Developing ideas into cohesive articles.
- Selecting publication targets.
- Obtaining writing guidelines from the publisher.
- Writing formats.
- Polishing the document.
- Submitting for publication.
- Publishing timelines.
- The review process.
- Acceptance vs. rewrite.
- On-line publishing vs. print media.
- Copyrights

In addition to the publishing workshop, a grant writing workshop will also be offered. Topics during the grant writing workshop will include –

- Why to write a grant.
- Government vs. private grants.
- Letters of inquiry.
- How to determine needs.
- Selecting a target funding source.
- Partnerships.
- Matching funds.
- Obtaining the grant application guidelines.

- Writing grant sections.
- Polishing the document.
- Deadlines and timelines.
- Submission.
- The review process.
- Acceptance v. rejection.
- Record keeping and audits.
- Grant renewal.

Whether working on your own professional career or striving to expand the program offerings of your institution, writing can be the key. Make that decision to write and start by adding a writing workshop to your course selections for the Symposium. Expand your professional horizons with your writing!