

Recommendations for Submitting Journal Articles (to *VII* or elsewhere)

A *VII* advisor once said:

We recommend:

1

"This is a worthwhile article, raising some illuminating expansions on points that had only been touched on by previous critics."

Write about a subject that is under-represented. Write in an unsaturated field of interest. Seek out untapped original materials.

2

"I see the same flaw in so many submissions sent to me by you, and by the editors of two other journals for whom I evaluate. Writers simply read something by Lewis and start putting down their own analysis and ideas, not realizing how much of it has already been said, usually better, by some earlier commentator."

Know the field you're writing in: be familiar with and use all primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. This awareness improves your ability to make an original contribution to knowledge in that field and to avoid redundancy in developing your argument.

3

"At present, this paper simply draws parallels; it does not interpret their significance to readers by either illuminating a new concept about Sayers's work, or clarifying previously published concepts."

Analyze. Simply making observations about primary materials is not enough to interest or inform readers. They can make observations themselves. An article is only worth their time if the author's unique arguments and inferences give them a new understanding of the literature. If you observe something interesting, ask yourself "Why is this significant?" before you try to expand it into an essay.

4

"By the time the next volume of *VII* is published, interest in this topic will have waned significantly."

Determine ahead of time who your audience is and find out what will reach them. Write and submit accordingly. (i.e. *VII*, *Mythlore*, and *Christianity Today* have three different, though occasionally overlapping, audiences.)

5

"I think the article has all of the content it needs to be persuasive. More attention to shaping, line of argument, and transitions will make this into a good article."

Write well. Use clear, simple, non-colloquial English. Make sure the article structure conveys your thesis clearly and that superfluous material is edited out. Request submission guidelines from the publisher and follow them meticulously from the outset. Let good writers read your writing and get their feedback. Have one or two detail-oriented grammar nuts proofread it.

6

"I have re-read the original submission, my original notes on it, and finally the new version. I have to admit that (much to my surprise!) this author has produced a huge improvement. I therefore recommend publication."

Don't take it personally if your article is declined. It undergoes a double-blind peer review for that very reason. Editors don't enjoy turning down a paper, and they do recognize that publication is important to the livelihood of many authors. Remember too that practical considerations come into play, as well as human fallibility.

If you receive details of why your article was turned down, evaluate ways to incorporate this convenient source of feedback in your next submission (or re-submission). Write some more, submit some more, revise and resubmit, and develop and use regularly a network of trusted resources: skilled, tactful, and frank critics whose feedback and criticism you can take seriously without defensiveness. Your critics aren't *always* right—but they *often* are!