Review: Writing in the Digital Age


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Publishing in our modern world can be complex and writers are often challenged with a myriad of barriers and obstacles. Writing in the Digital Age: Savvy Publishing for Healthcare Professionals by Leslie H. Nicoll and Peggy L. Chinn is a useful and valuable resource for those considering publication. The book was published by Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins/Wolters Kluwer Health in August 2015 and is available in e-book format.
Writing in the Digital Age: Savvy Publishing for Healthcare Professionals is a thorough handbook for those with questions about preparing work for publishing in today’s digital world. However, even skilled writers will appreciate the thoughtful reminders about preparing and submitting written work for publication. Drs. Nicoll and Chinn use a scholarly yet easy to read writing style throughout the book. The authors are two well-known and experienced editors of three nursing journals; their expertise comes through clearly on every page.

This book contains ten chapters that can assist any writer to navigate the world of scholarly writing, covering topics including: beginning your digital writing journey, tricks for going paperless, ethical issues in the digital era, discovering journals for publishing, the publishing process, the role of social media in professional writing, supplementary digital content, writing for a broader audience, identity and work protection, and maximizing the discovery of your own work. There are lots of useful links and resources which contribute to a positive reading experience. The authors consistently encourage and provide sensible advice about communicating well for various purposes and for keeping distinct audiences in mind. The content shared within this e-book offers a great deal of insight and guidance regarding writing, collaborating with others, and peer review, all of which are integral parts of the publication process.

Each chapter offers a comprehensive view of a topic in relation to publication.
The book covers the writing process from the beginning with discussion of conception of an idea to dissemination plans. Information about the evolution or history of current practices is also woven throughout the book, such as the authors’ experiences of using some of the first innovative tools of writing. Dr. Nicoll described the consequences of being an early adopter of a particular citation management software program, wherein she was left with an obsolete reference library when the program stopped being produced! Other interesting examples include the histories behind impact factors, publishing, and modern slide technology. These additions to the text helped me to understand and grasp concepts discussed throughout the book.

Each chapter contains tips written in special call out boxes, with titles such as “Read This,” “Talk About It,” and “Try This.” These tips seem to be inspired from Drs. Nicoll and Chinn’s personal experiences; they write them as practical hints they think may be of interest to readers. For example, Dr. Chinn shared her advice about storing files in a cloud based system due to the advantages of access and retrieval. She also shared advice about using Google Docs to collaborate with others on documents edited by a group. The authors continuously expand on the resources they recommend by sharing ways they have used them and their experiences. They explain about how to download the applications or tools and provide screen shots to orient readers to the use of these resources.

One example of a valuable tip is the authors’ encouragement of the use of citation managers. Drs. Nicoll and Chinn acknowledge and understand the complexities involved in learning and using such programs but carefully describe why it is worth an author’s time and effort to learn and use a citation manager for scholarly writing. They offer readers suggestions such as
seeking recommendations from librarians and a link to a Wiki page with a comprehensive comparison of reference management software.

Images and figures are also included in the text, which are helpful to further illustrate a topic and offer more clarity. One illustration shared was that of PubMed’s Single Citation Matcher. This resource can be used to verify reference information by typing in some brief information, such as year of publication, volume, and first page number. This is often enough to retrieve a citation which was new information for me! They included an image of the citation matcher page and a link to the resource. Another helpful image was from the Nursing Journals Directory, maintained at the International Academy of Nursing Editors website. The image illustrated the various pages and organizations found in the journal directory, augmenting the information shared in the text.

Additionally, the book has interactive exercises that help readers to learn by doing. For example, in Chapter 3, readers are asked to re-read a section of the chapter, then to write a summary paragraph including some personal ideas about the topic. In Chapter 4, the authors encourage the reader to develop a worksheet to record evaluations of journals when searching for a target journal. The worksheet is intended to help identify the best journal “fit” for the manuscript. A unique and fun activity suggested by Dr. Chinn was the development of a glossary of emoticons and texting acronyms. Other example activities include researching your organization’s social media policy and becoming more familiar with using image settings and sizes to adjust pictures so that they meet publication requirements. Additionally, this book also contains sage advice on writing and offers direction similar to that found in Dr. Nicoll’s Manuscript Success (2012), another helpful book for writers.
Authors, reviewers, editorial board members, and editors should consider *Writing in the Digital Age: Savvy Publishing for Healthcare Professionals* as a welcome addition to their personal library. This book would also be an excellent addition to any graduate level writing course. The text is full of links to credible and pertinent resources to assist writers at any level. The book contains an abundance of practical information that writers in the nursing and health-related disciplines will find very helpful.

**REFERENCES**


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