

What does it take to get my paper published?

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Over the years, more than a few authors have asked me what it takes to get a paper published in *TAPPI JOURNAL*. I am sure many more expressed the same thoughts... and probably some others, too. Historically, only about 10% of the papers submitted to *TAPPI JOURNAL* or presented at TAPPI-sponsored technical conferences and symposia make it all the way through the review process and into the journal. Competition for space is intense. The new TAPPI JOURNAL and electronic publication at www.tappi.org may increase this percentage over time. This article will help you understand how to make your manuscripts more competitive.

You can find the basic guidelines for a *TAPPI JOURNAL* submission published on the page following this article and on the TJ/journal page of TAPPI website at www.tappi.org. If you do not have Internet access, call Lisa Hightower at +1 770 209-7313, lhightower@tappi.org. She is the editorial assistant for *TAPPI JOURNAL* and the person that guides papers through the editorial path from submission, through review, and hopefully, to publication. She can answer or get an answer to questions you have about the publication process.

Following the guidelines to the letter will not guarantee publication. The need for practical information is at the top of the list in every recent TAPPI member survey. No matter how fundamental your work is, you must establish a clear connection to mill operations or product performance. Even if the subject is extremely complex, such as molecular chemistry and advanced numerical analysis, consider how you would explain why your work is important to a mill operator, the person who might ultimately have use for your developments.

You should not expect editors, reviewers, or readers to spend a lot of time trying to understand what you are trying to communicate. It is your responsibility to use good English writing skills. Authors who speak English as a second language are still able to send me very well written papers that require little or no editing for English grammar and style. To achieve that level of quality, some of them have their colleagues proofread their manuscripts before submission. I also get as many papers from North American authors that are so badly written it takes several readings to understand them, much less decide if they merit publication.

The background section of an article sets the stage for your new information. If you do not keep the reader's attention, you have lost the opportunity to tell your complete story. The backbone of this introduction is your analysis of the work of others. Discovery of something completely new and different does not happen in our industry very often. It is more common that good research and conclusions build on the foundation of the work of others. The reference section is the first thing I turn to after

reading the title and the abstract. I am looking for citations of significant works by "star" performers in related technology areas. Any literature search should have turned up these experts. If an author refers almost entirely to his or her own work, it reflects enormous technical conceit. There must be someone's experience upon which the author relied. In this information era, it is not difficult to do a literature search.

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Remember, however, that some of the foundational work may not be in the computer yet. The vintage issues of *The Abstract Bulletin of the Institute of Paper Chemistry* are a place to find a wealth of fundamental information. Graduate students, do not hesitate to contact a well-known author with a question or just to discuss your research ideas.

TAPPI was founded as a technical association and technical information remains an essential interest and need of its members. Reviewers and readers expect authors to use sound experimental design and correct engineering principles. In spite of the availability of "Total Quality" procedures and personal computing spreadsheet programs with built-in statistical analysis, a growing number of authors are not using statistics at all. When a paper contains no statistics, I can not help wonder if the author is hiding a poor experimental design. A paper that contains a conclusion that "the pulp yield of chip source A is one percentage point higher than chip source B" based on single kraft cooks or without reporting standard deviations and confidence limits is not credible. I will often return such a paper for revision after only a quick reading. A statistician at our research facility often cannot help someone that comes to them with a wheel-barrow load of data and asks for help in reaching the conclusion they had hoped to produce. In most cases, a statistical design developed before the experiments are done will not only produce better data, but will allow you to do more with increasingly limited budgets.

The variability of wood and fiber properties requires a thorough characterization of the raw material you used. "Spruce chips from logs obtained from a local pulpwood dealer" is not an adequate characterization. It says nothing about such key variables as wood species, forest source and stand age, wood specific gravity and moisture content, log size and defects, ring count, chipping and screening equipment used, chip size distribution, bulk density, and contaminants. Characterization data allows others to repeat the experiments and it helps a mill decide if the work would apply at their location and with their chip sources.

The journal allocates pages at about 4 to 5 pages per paper. That works out to about 3800 words, including the equivalent space used for tables and figures. You must write concisely to stay within this budget. This is not easy. Not everything you did,

AUTHOR TIPS *How we review papers*

nor all the data you generated, can or should be published in your journal article. While they cost words, figures are your best tool to present essential data clearly. Figures can take the place of several tables. You can combine several figures into one using spreadsheet programs that make it easy to develop complex figures. Do not hesitate to get some coaching on how to use a computer program to take a data sketch to a finished figure that clearly emphasizes what you discovered.

We accept very few papers for publication in *TAPPI JOURNAL* without a request for revision. Editorial Board members carefully select reviewers to be sure their comments and suggestions are helpful and accurate. If you disagree with a reviewer, ask the Editorial Board member working with your paper to explain further. Most reviewers will be open to discussion with an author, too. Even after acceptance, your paper is subject to changes made by the journal staff editors. You have the opportunity to approve these changes when the staff sends "galley proofs" to you. At this stage, the paper looks just like it will in the finished publication. Again, you can ask questions about the changes made in your paper. Most of the changes at this point are minor corrections for style, tense, and grammar.

Editorial Board members evaluate all TAPPI conference papers for potential publication in *TAPPI JOURNAL*, and decide which to send out for review. However, presentation at a con-

ference is not a requirement for publication. Authors may submit papers by email to Lisa Hightower (lhightower@tappi.org) or Don Meadows (dmeadows@tappi.org) for consideration. The guidelines for a writing paper for the journal are similar to those for presentation at a conference, including the anti-trust requirements for everything TAPPI does. It is permissible to compare relative operating costs between processes or treatments. Papers may mention specific copyrighted names of equipment, raw materials, or chemicals sparingly and only to clarify the distinction between several items. Other commercialism issues include inappropriate comparisons and exclusion of competing options.

If you would like to ask any questions about the review process, do not hesitate to call me or any of the Editorial Board members. You will find them listed on page 3 of this issue. We would rather help you write an excellent paper than tell you why we rejected it or how you need to revise it.

Fuller is scientific advisor at Weyerhaeuser Company in Federal Way, Washington, USA, and a member of TAPPI's Editorial Board. He is the 1995 Herman L. Joachim Distinguished Service Awardee and has served as a technical editor for TAPPI's journals since 1985. Contact him by email at bill.fuller@weyerhaeuser.com.



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