C/T/A/H/R
College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Publications and Information Office
Faculty Advisory
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Preparing Research-Based Information for Publication by CTAHR

CTAHR no longer publishes its Research Series, which was targeted primarily to an audience of peers in science and academia. Faculty who have conducted research of significance to Hawaii that has not been selected for publication in a journal may still desire to make the results of their research effort available, which is understandable and appropriate. This advisory offers some suggestions on how to render research manuscripts suitable for publication in accommodation with CTAHR-PIO's recent shift in orientation toward producing information products for a wider, more general audience.

Lacking the Research Series, presenting and thus preserving the full data of work conducted may not be possible in a CTAHR publication. For the researcher, the fall-back position can be that readers of a briefer report of the work are invited to request the full research report from the author. Should the author no longer be available, readers could contact the author's department or the acknowledged funding agencies.

Another option is to present the work at a conference and have it published in the conference's proceedings. This option depends on whether a conference opportunity arises. CTAHR will continue to publish conference proceedings, although in most cases funding for such publications must be generated by the conference or contributed by cooperating organizations, and editing and layout of the publication will be done to CTAHR guidelines by the faculty responsible, not by PIO.

In developing reports of research-based information for a more general audience, the basic approach should be to make it more readily understandable to a non-scientist. This means that you can dispense with the scientific journal format (abstract, intro, M&Ms, R&D, etc). In place of that format, use more descriptive section headings. In organizing the presentation, consider that your readers are entitled to a clear description of what was done, why it was done, what it means in theory (if applicable), and what it is good for in practice. While this may represent some challenges in written expression, you are free of many constraints normally associated with writing for scientific journals.

For example, you are not held to the "reproducibility" standard in describing your methods, which makes telling what was done much simpler. You can make statements based on your findings without building into them the full rationale that would be necessary were you addressing peers in science. You can make statements about others' findings without citing their work in each instance throughout your text, and you can thus dispense with an exhaustive list of literature cited. (However, if there are matters in dispute, such as contrary opinions or findings, it may still be appropriate to cite the works when discussing them.)

Data presentation should be simplified by limiting it to the information most meaningful to a general audience of people who might have some interest in the subject. For some data, a graphic presentation may be more useful than tabular data in conveying your findings; you can plot the distribution of the data and label only certain points (the best, the worst, or whatever's meaningful). Tables could be simplified by presenting only highlights of the data, mentioning only a few items or variables and giving the range of the others. Tables should be considered not as means to archive data but as ways to present certain information in a more convenient and readily understood form than narrative text allows. You don't have to express all findings as statements if refering to data in a table or figure will suffice.

Try to make the overall presentation of information as reader-friendly as possible. Avoid jargon, or use it only with a "translation" provided upon first use. Build *explanation* into your explications. Try to think of the process as simplification and clarification, rather than "dumbing-down." Good writing is clear thinking, made visible. Clear thinking should be capable of communicating *something* to almost *anyone*. There should be a "take-home message," or perhaps a couple of levels of message, available to the various readers who might be drawn to the publication by the subject matter declared in its title.

In many cases a scientific-journal type manuscript can be condensed to a four-page report that would convey findings to those in Hawaii likely to make use of the information. A simpler presentation of findings will also serve to broaden the audience of those who could learn something from the work. PIO staff will be pleased to work with you as you write to reach a broader spectrum of CTAHR's publication audience.