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Learning & teaching about the scholarly communication process: Findings from graduate students and supervisors

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Learning & teaching about the scholarly communication process

Findings from
graduate
students and
supervisors

Christie Hurrell, Susan Beatty, Dana Cramer, Jenna Kardal,
Jennifer Lee, Caitlin McClurg, James Murphy

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How we got here



Our study team:

- Scholarly communications librarian
- Liaison librarians from a variety of disciplines
- Two graduate student co-inquirers

Our research questions



- How do graduate students learn about scholarly publishing?
- How do academic mentors provide formal/informal instruction on this topic?
- What is difficult to learn about?
- What is difficult to teach about?
- What teaching & learning gaps still exist?



What we already know



- Graduate students are increasingly expected to produce peer reviewed scholarly works during the course of their studies
(Jackson, 2013)
- The shift from being a consumer to being a producer of scholarly works is significant and complex
(Buehler and Zald, 2013; Townsend, Brunetti, and Hofer, 2011)



What have others found?

- Faculty mentor role is very important
 - Mentor-protegé model
 - Workshop/course model

(O'Hara, Lower-Hoppe, and Mulvihill 2019)
 - Faculty mentorship is uneven
 - Mostly delivered outside of the curriculum
 - Mismatch between perceived and actual student needs
 - Faculty are not rewarded for this type of mentorship

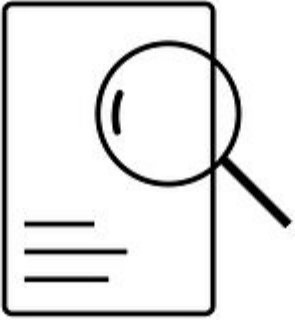
(Austin 2002; Fong et al. 2016)
-

What have others found?

- Academic librarians have increasingly developed educational opportunities on this topic
 - Mostly stand-alone, optional workshops
 - Collaboratively developed/delivered
- (McClellan et al. 2017; Schultz et al. 2021; Fong 2019)



What we don't know



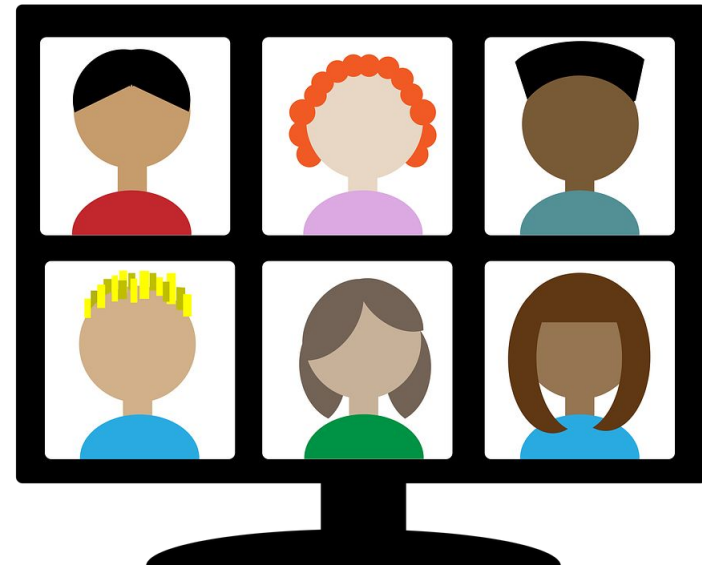
- What do graduate students *really* want to learn about?
 - Most previous initiatives not based on robust assessment of learning needs
- How do they wish to learn this content?
 - Strong or slight preference for online delivery

(White and King 2020; Owens and Manolovitz 2021; Fong 2019)



How did we learn it?

- Through focus groups (separate for grad students and faculty supervisors)
- Data were collected during the Covid-19 pandemic - virtual focus groups on the Zoom platform
- We held six focus groups
 - 17 students
 - 16 faculty mentors



Our research process

Study protocol

Open ended questions for both students and faculty

Recruitment

All grad students (any discipline, any stage) and faculty mentors with supervisory responsibilities.

Focus groups

Held on Zoom platform. Three members of research team/focus group.

Data analysis

Transcription. Thematic coding using NVivo.

How do students learn? How do mentors teach?

- Experiential learning (“going through it myself”)
 - Ideally with a mentor or via a scaffolded approach
 - Can be a “sink or swim” situation
- Mentorship from supervisor
- Structural components of grad programs (pro seminar, scaffolded assignments)
- Social media, journal clubs, optional academic workshops



“I was speaking with one of my committee members, and really just asked her like, I have this idea for kind of a review article, how do I go about doing this? Do I pick a journal first? Do I write it and then try to find a journal? She was actually really helpful in kind of saying, okay, well when I am writing a paper, this is kind of the process I use. This is how I set up trying to find a journal and these are the things you might want to look for when you're considering that.”

Graduate student participant

“And I noticed that right now with my current master's supervisor, she's never spoken to me once about publishing. I've brought it up a few times. But in general, we just don't talk about it. So I think in one way, it's really helpful to have mentors who can support graduate students through the publication process. And on the other hand, that does leave it kind of up to chance as to whether a mentor is actually going to be there, and whether they're actually going to be supportive and willing and able to actually have the capacity to tell a grad student how it works.”

Graduate student participant

What is difficult to learn/teach about?

- Knowing when you're "ready"
- Publishing etiquette
- Managing the "pipeline" of publications
- Tacit knowledge is hard to share and often painful to acquire



“...students are sometimes surprisingly ignorant of the norms in the field [...]. So, norms like how or who to publish with, what position to be put in, what it means to be in a various position, that sort of stuff for sciences, and for the arts, and humanities, I'm guessing. Things like journal rank and prestige journal topic areas, etiquette of critique.”

Faculty mentor participant

“I think people assume that I have certain knowledge that I don't have and I don't even know what questions I should ask. I don't even know where to start. So I just pay attention in this one class where she talks about it, and then I will just cross that bridge when I get to it and pray.”

Graduate student participant

What teaching & learning gaps still exist?

- Faculty are concerned about developing writing skills; students less so
- Students are full of questions & emotions about this topic and want a safe space to talk them through.
- Mental health topics need to be integrated
- Students want a co-pilot to help them navigate the publishing process; success in this depends heavily on academic mentors

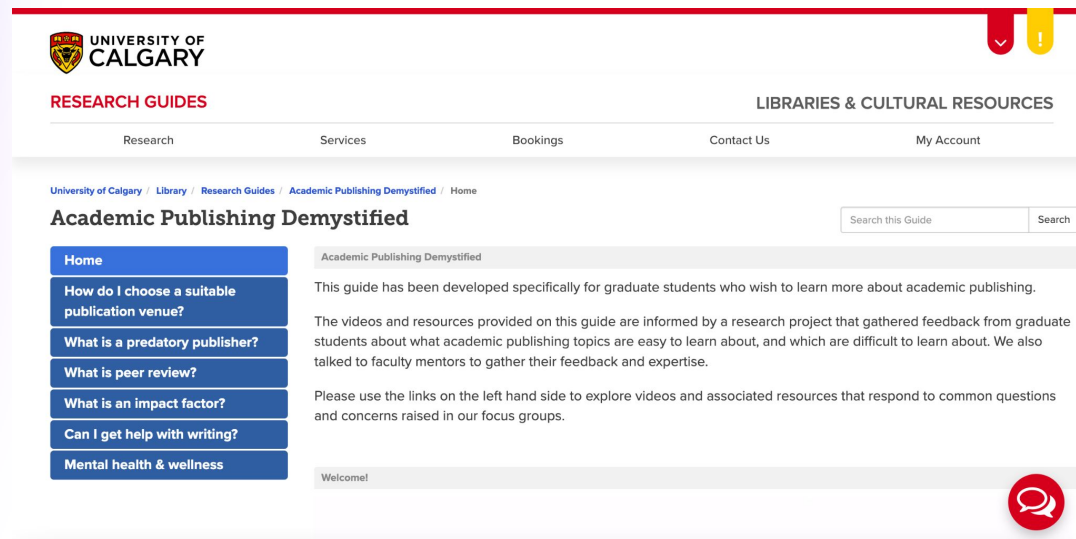
“I think the biggest difficulty for me that I've realized that the publication process is surrounded by so much gate-keeping, which is frustrating because it's academic currency. That's what everyone says. You need a publication in order to get anywhere, which puts so much pressure on it, but then it seems like there's this huge, inaccessible threshold in order to actually get there.”

Graduate student participant

How are we responding?

Now: Custom-built library guide featuring videos and Q&A on popular/particularly important topics

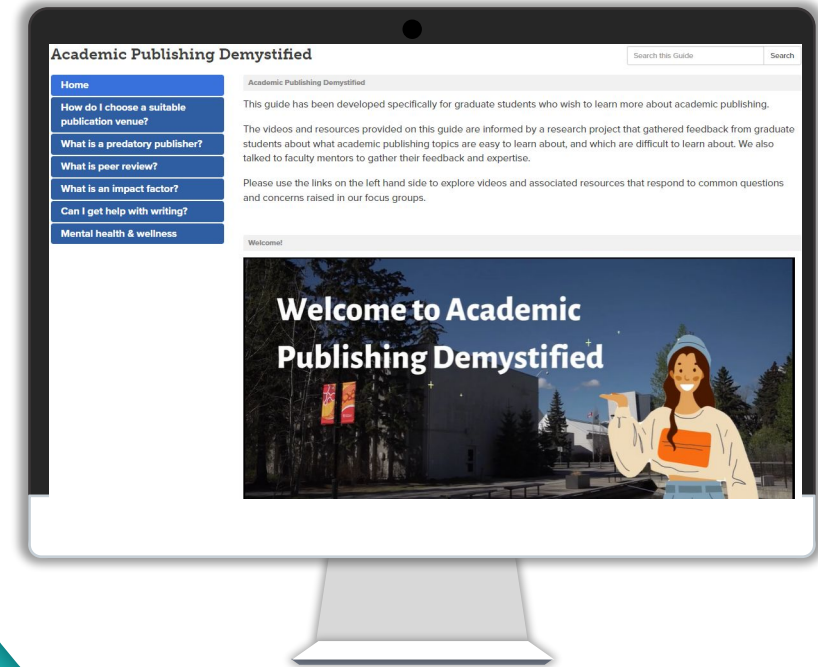
Future: Collaboration with writing centre graduate writing community

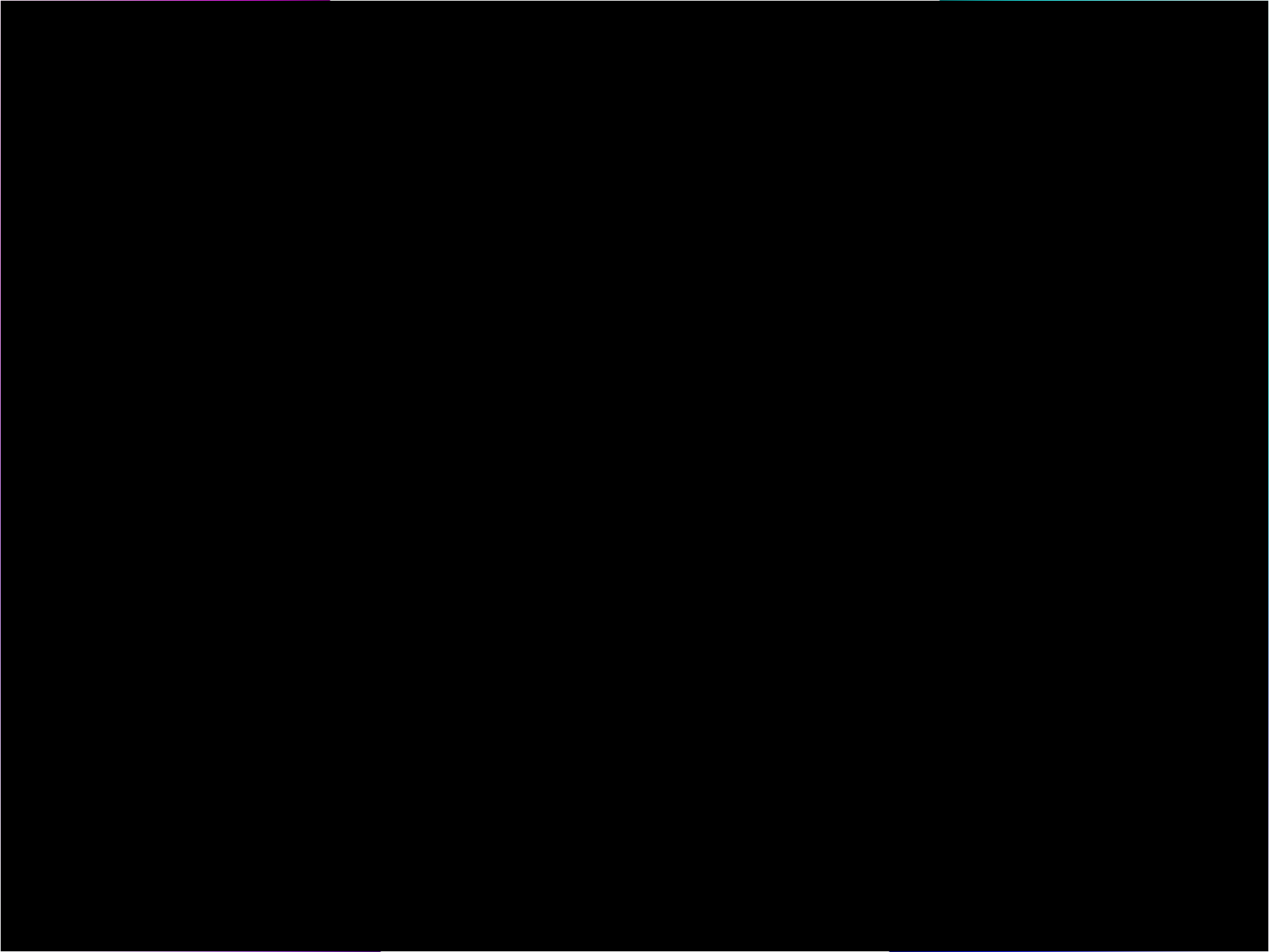


- Addressing practical publishing questions
- Providing a supportive environment to navigate the emotional/relational aspects of publishing

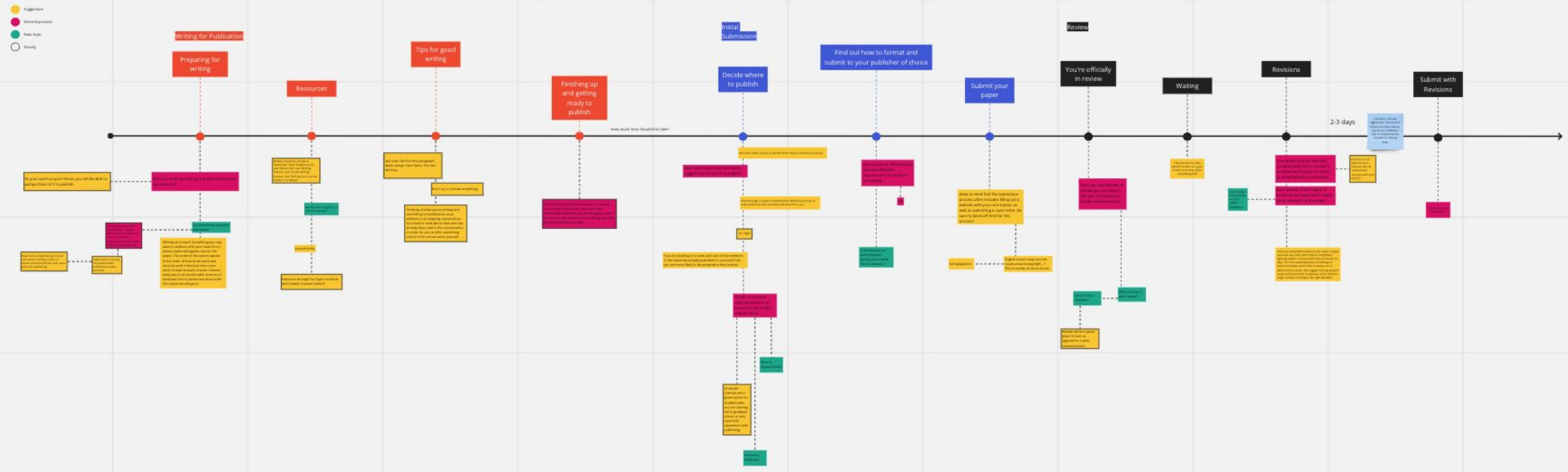
Academic publishing demystified

- Videos developed by grad student co-inquirer
- Resources and questions drawn directly from focus group transcripts





The process, as a whole, takes around a year and a half to two years.



Student feedback on guide

- Students who took part in the focus groups were invited to provide feedback on the guide, 6 participated (35%)
- Most students were satisfied or very satisfied with videos and resources
- Students provided a wealth of qualitative feedback that was used to improve the videos
- Next steps: asking for feedback from a wider pool of graduate students

Thank you!

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<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/publishing>

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