

Getting Your Paper Published: A Workshop for Authors

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Editor-in-Chief, MNRAS

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Oxford University Press

National Astronomy Meeting, Lancaster University, 3rd July 2019



Overview

- Choosing the right journal
- How to write a good paper
- Submitting to MNRAS
- How the review process works
- Responding to referee reports
- How to be a referee
- Post-acceptance – copy-editing, proofing
- Online publication, Dissemination, Promotion



Choosing the right journal

- Scope and audience
- Quality of peer review, publication speed, reputation/Impact Factor, charges
- MNRAS scope: “publishes the results of original research in astronomy and astrophysics, including work which is observational, theoretical or concerned with astronomical instrumentation”

(See [Instructions to Authors](#) and [Code of Practice](#) for more details)



MNRAS

- First published in 1827
- Published 3 times a month, but no longer publishes the notices of the Society...
- Welcomes submissions from any astronomers anywhere:
 - >80% of submissions from outside UK
 - 60% from outside Europe
- 2018 Impact Factor – 5.231

Citations in 2018 to Articles published in 2016 and 2017

Total Number of Articles published in 2016 and 2017



MNRAS

- ***Main Journal*** – print and online, no page limit
- ***Letters*** – online only, 5-page limit (papers with immediate impact)
- No charges to authors (except for excess pages and colour printing - optional)
- >4500 submissions a year; >80% accepted for publication
- Green and Gold open access options
- >3000 subscribing institutions worldwide



Before writing a paper

- Novelty – is this new science? How does it build upon previous work?
- What are your key results? What you want to include in the paper (data etc.)? What conclusions do you draw?
- Which journal? Format (Letter, paper), page charges
- Who contributed/author list
- Develop outline



General outline

- Title and author list
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Observations/models/methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Appendices



Structure -Title and Abstract

Important as they are what people search for and look at first

Title:

- Short!
- Indicate the main result
- Be intelligible to a wide readership

Abstract:

- “Shop window” - Allows readers to quickly see what your paper is about and whether to read the full paper
- Length: 200 words Letter; 250 words Main Journal
- Single paragraph, no references
- Understandable to all astronomers
- Summarizes goals, methods and new results



Introduction

- State the main aims and reason for your work
- Indicate the problem or question to be addressed
- Provide background/context and acknowledge relevant previous work
- Clarify how this work differs from previous work
- Don't pad – this is not a review article (MNRAS does not publish reviews)
- Define abbreviations



Observations/Methods

- Describe how the work was done
- Include details of observations or methods such as which telescope/instrument/software programs were used
- Explain how you analysed the data
- Include enough detail so that an expert could reproduce your work if required
- Use subsections when necessary, these should be numbered (this applies to other sections too)



Results & Discussion

Results:

- Decide what data to present and how to present it (including additional material online)
- Present results clearly and concisely, then follow with discussion section

Discussion:

- Include interpretation, implications and applications of results
- Compare with other published work
- Discuss significance and limitations
- Pose questions and make suggestions for future work

Tables and figures - provide numbers and captions and cite in text in order



Conclusion

- Summarize the content and key results of paper
- Highlight major points
- Answer any questions posed in introduction
- Do not introduce anything not previously discussed in the paper...
- ...but don't just restate the results



Acknowledgements & References

Acknowledgements:

- Include funding, people not in author list who have contributed, facilities and equipment (there may be specific text), referee (if they've been helpful; even though anonymous)
- Do not include non-research contributions - parents, friends, pets

References:

- Follow Harvard reference style, e.g. Smith & Jones (2014)
- List all citations in the text alphabetically at end of paper
- Cite papers that have been influential in the work



How to write a good paper

- Be concise
- Limit unnecessary jargon
- Avoid fragmentation of papers - ‘salami slicing’
- Figures should be clear, with good captions, axis labels etc.
- Write in good scientific English
- Be objective – report results, not an opinion piece
- Language is important. Don’t make it difficult for the reader!

"I am a great sinner but I don't think I have deserved the cruel and unusual punishment I have been subjected to through reading this paper"



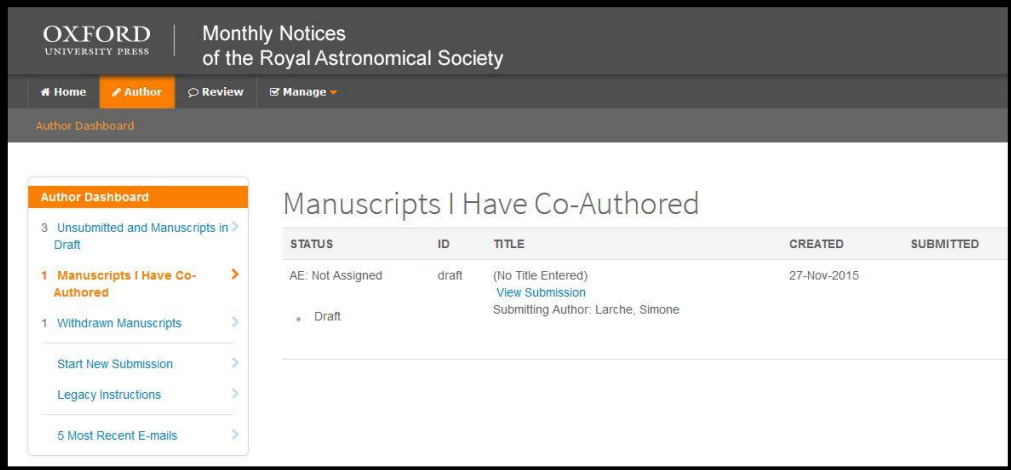
Submitting to MNRAS

- LaTeX is best but MS Word also accepted
 - MNRAS LaTeX style available
- [Overleaf](#) – Online collaborative authoring in LaTeX; Direct submissions link
- British English
- Requirements in the journal [instructions to authors](#) (ITAs)
- Approval from all co-authors
- Submit your manuscript to one journal only
- Online submission and tracking system
 - No paper submissions



Submitting to MNRAS

- ScholarOne Manuscripts – online manuscript submission and peer-review system
- mc.manuscriptcentral.com/mnras
- Log in or create an account
- You will have an Author Centre and a Reviewer Centre by default



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Home Author Review Manage

Author Dashboard

Author Dashboard

- 3 Unsubmitted and Manuscripts in Draft
- 1 Manuscripts I Have Co-Authored
- 1 Withdrawn Manuscripts
- Start New Submission
- Legacy Instructions
- 5 Most Recent E-mails

Manuscripts I Have Co-Authored

STATUS	ID	TITLE	CREATED	SUBMITTED
AE: Not Assigned	draft	(No Title Entered) View Submission Submitting Author: Larche, Simone	27-Nov-2015	
		• Draft		



Submitting to MNRAS

The screenshot shows the 'Author Dashboard / Submission' page. On the left is a navigation menu with steps: Step 1: Type, Title, & Abstract (selected), Step 2: Attributes, Step 3: Authors & Institutions, Step 4: Reviewers & Editors, Step 5: Details & Comments, Step 6: File Upload, and Step 7: Review & Submit. The main content area is titled 'Step 1: Type, Title, & Abstract'. It contains instructions for original submissions, a note about plagiarism screening, and a section for 'Letter submissions' with a word limit of 200 words and a page limit of 5. Below this is a 'Read More ...' link and a legend for required fields. At the bottom, there is a 'Type:' dropdown menu with radio buttons for 'Main Journal', 'Letter', 'Errata - MJ', and 'Errata - Letter'. The 'Main Journal' option is selected.

Author Dashboard / Submission

Submission

✓ Step 1: Type, Title, & Abstract >

Step 2: Attributes >

Step 3: Authors & Institutions >

✓ Step 4: Reviewers & Editors >

Step 5: Details & Comments >

Step 6: File Upload >

Step 7: Review & Submit >

Step 1: Type, Title, & Abstract

This site should be used for original submissions to MNRAS and MNRAS Letters, and their subsequent revisions. Please see our [instructions to authors](#) for full instructions.

Please note that all submissions are screened for originality using the iThenticate plagiarism detection system.

Letter submissions

In the interests of rapid processing, **Letters have an abstract word limit of 200 words, and must be 5 pages or fewer in length.** New Letter submissions longer than 5 pages may be rejected, with the suggestion you shorten the paper, or resubmit to MNRAS Main Journal. Letters should be self-contained and describe the results of an original study whose rapid publication might be expected to have a significant influence on the subsequent development of research in the associated subject area. Authors are required to state their reasons for seeking publication in the form of a Letter when submitting their manuscript.

[Read More ...](#)

* = Required Fields

* Type: Edit

CHOICE	TYPE
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Main Journal
<input type="radio"/>	Letter
<input type="radio"/>	Errata - MJ
<input type="radio"/>	Errata - Letter

- Fill out online form, instructions on each page
- Manuscript types: Main Journal, Letter, Erratum
- Letter – need to state reasons for seeking this format
- Submission steps can be done in any sequence



Submitting to MNRAS

Author Dashboard / Submission

Submission

- Step 1: Type, Title, & Abstract
- Step 2: Attributes
- Step 3: Authors & Institutions
- Step 4: Reviewers & Editors
- Step 5: Details & Comments**
- Step 6: File Upload
- Step 7: Review & Submit

Step 5: Details & Comments

Enter your cover letter, if necessary. Note that this can only be seen by the editor, so do not include your response to the reviewer here. Only attach a file if absolutely necessary - if you need to upload an extra file for the reviewer do it on the File Upload page.

Read More ...

* = Required Fields

Cover Letter Edit

Write Cover Letter

OUT OF 32768 CHARACTERS

Upload Cover Letter

Funding Edit

- Highlight special requests, reasons for non-preferred referees, additional information such as companion papers

- Cover letter seen by editor, not referee
- Options for colour printing, online-only material, press releases

Submission

- Step 1: Type, Title, & Abstract
- Step 2: Attributes
- Step 3: Authors & Institutions
- Step 4: Reviewers & Editors
- Step 5: Details & Comments**
- Step 6: File Upload
- Step 7: Review & Submit

Manuscript Details

Content Information

* Number of manuscript pages:

* Number of tables (use 0 for none):

Illustration Information

* Number of colour figures (use 0 for none):

* Total number of figures (use 0 for none):

* Are there any animated figures to appear within the manuscript?

Yes No

If yes, please state details:

* Main Journal Only - Any colour figures will be published in colour in the online version of the paper without charge. If they are also to appear in colour in the PRINT VERSION of the paper then authors will be charged a flat fee of £200 (+VAT). Please indicate here if you want colour in the printed version and agree to pay this fee.

Yes No



Questions so far?



How the review process works

- Peer review by the Royal Astronomical Society
- MNRAS Editorial board: 26 Scientific Editors
 - Senior researchers in different subject areas
 - Located worldwide, appointed by the RAS
- RAS editorial office in London: 6 Assistant Editors
- Office checks papers before assigning to a Scientific Editor, usually within 24 hours

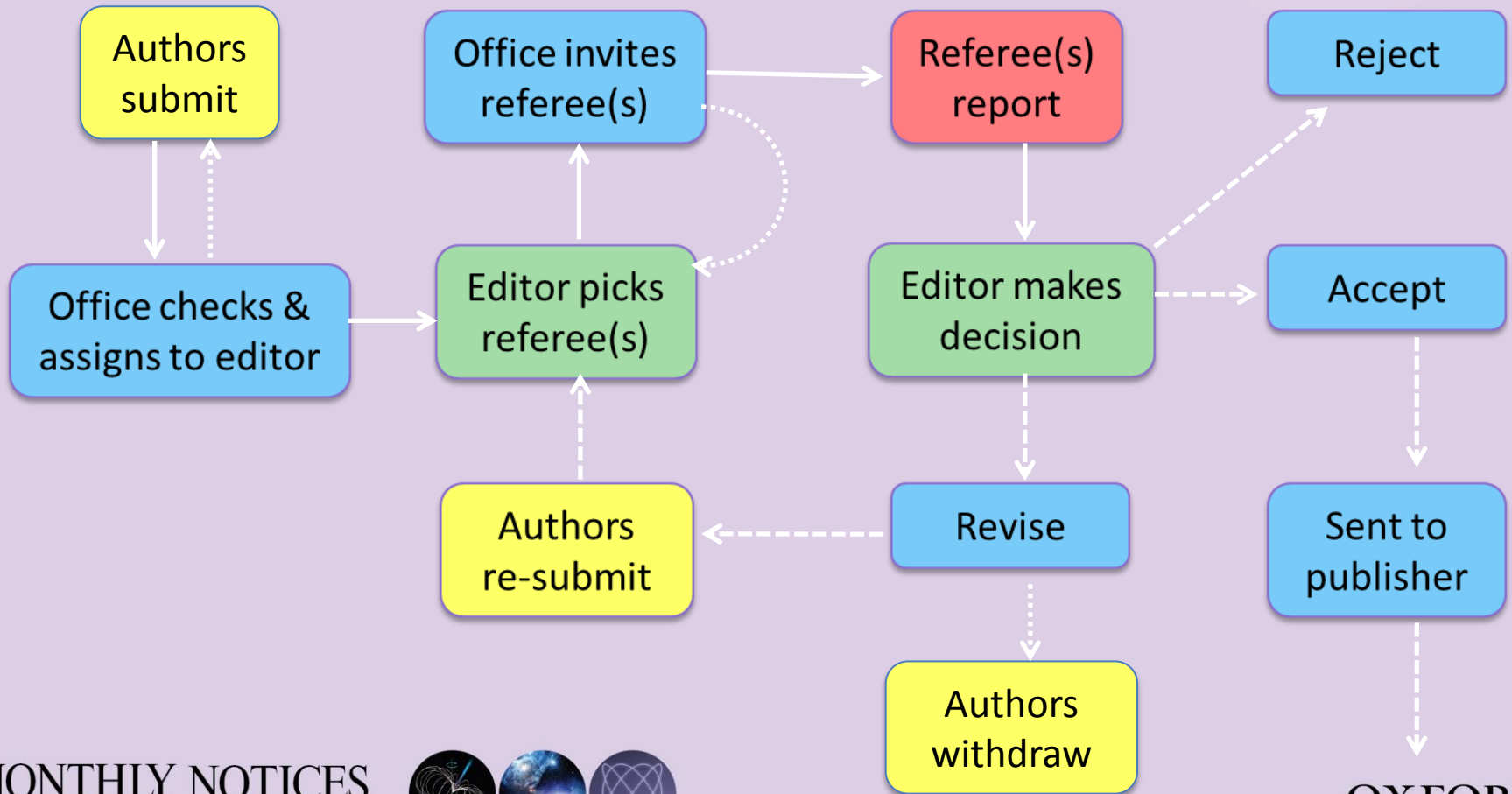


How the review process works

- Editorial office handles all correspondence
- Check for plagiarism
- Paper may be rejected immediately:
 - Out of scope
 - Clearly unsuitable
 - Obvious errors
 - Duplicate submissions etc.



How the review process works



How the review process works

- Editor chooses a referee (usually one)
- Referees are independent experts in the field who:
 - assess the paper
 - point out errors, suggest improvements
 - recommend whether to publish or not
- Referees give up their time *for free* as a service to the community
- Editor uses the report(s) and own judgement to make a decision to accept, reject, or ask authors to revise
- Single blind review – referee anonymous to authors



How the review process works

Make a Decision

- Accept**
- Accept after revision**
- Minor Revision**
- Moderate Revision**
- Major Revision**
- Withdraw**
- Reject**

- Reviewer recommends, Editor decides
- **Accept** – passed straight to publisher
- **Accept after revision** – very minor corrections, usually then accepted without further review
- **Major/moderate/minor revision** – you will have to address some shortcomings in the paper, may need more research
- **Withdraw** – referee is opposed to publication, but the editor is allowing you to respond or revise
- **Reject** – two editors agree that the paper is unsuitable and will not be considered any further



How the review process works

- Expect to have to make revisions before acceptance
- Median time from submission to first decision:
 - 33 days for Main Journal
 - 24 days for Letters
- Median time from receipt to acceptance (mostly revision time taken by authors):
 - 15 weeks for Main Journal
 - 8 weeks for Letters
- Any delays are usually caused by late referees. We have limited options for dealing with this...



Responding to referee reports

- The vast majority (99%) of papers undergo at least one round of revision – nobody's perfect!
- Respond explicitly to each comment in the report, explaining what you changed and why
- Highlight changes in bold/colour
- Be polite! Peer review is not an argument. You don't want an angry referee...
- Any confidential comments to the editor should be in your cover letter



Responding to referee reports

- If the referee didn't understand something, the onus is on you to make it clearer
- If you think the report is unfair, you can request a second referee but:
 - Not always granted
 - May or may not see report of first referee
 - Should be your last resort option
 - New referees may be *more critical*, not less – can be a gamble!
- Time allowed for revisions:
 - 2 months for Letters
 - 6 months for Main Journal for R1; 3 months for further revisions



Rejection

- Reasons for rejection:
 - Out of scope
 - Major errors
 - “Salami-slicing”
 - Plagiarism
 - Not novel
 - Unwilling to revise
- Not always because it is bad research – don’t take rejection as a personal attack or insult!
- Reassess approach, consider other options e.g. different journal, extend the research, change method etc.



Accepted papers

- If accepted, production and publication handled by Oxford University Press
- Discussed in the last section of the workshop



How to be a referee

- You will be invited to act as a referee: respond to all correspondence promptly
- Are you an expert on this field? Do you have time to review the paper (and subsequent revisions)?
- Suggest alternatives if unable to review
- Follow ethical guidelines:
 - Keep all information confidential
 - Declare any possible conflict of interest e.g. competing research, personal or professional connection with one of the authors, same institution etc.
 - Be objective: assess the paper, not the authors



How to be a referee

Manuscript type: Main Journal
Date Submitted: 09-Jun-2016 (Last Updated: 09-Jun-2016)
Total Time in Review: 1 day, 1 hour

PDF Supplementary Files Abstract External Searches

Is the subject appropriate for the journal?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
Is the content sufficiently significant to warrant publication in MNRAS? Please comment on the significance and originality of the paper in the comments box below.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
Are the methods and results set out clearly?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
Are all the necessary and appropriate references given?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
Is the abstract sufficiently informative?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
Can the paper be shortened without loss of clarity?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
Are all the figures and tables necessary and adequate?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
Is the paper in reasonable English?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
If the paper contains long tables, finding charts etc., can these be published in electronic form only?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure
^{REQ} Do you want your name revealed to the authors?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Unsure

R2 ^{REQ} Recommendation

<input type="radio"/> Accept
<input type="radio"/> Minor Revision
<input type="radio"/> Moderate Revision
<input type="radio"/> Major Revision
<input type="radio"/> Reject

- Comment on:
 - Context/referencing
 - Methods and assumptions
 - Any errors or mistakes
 - Interpretation
 - Clarity of language, figures, length etc.
- Make suggestions for improvement
- Report on time



Questions so far?

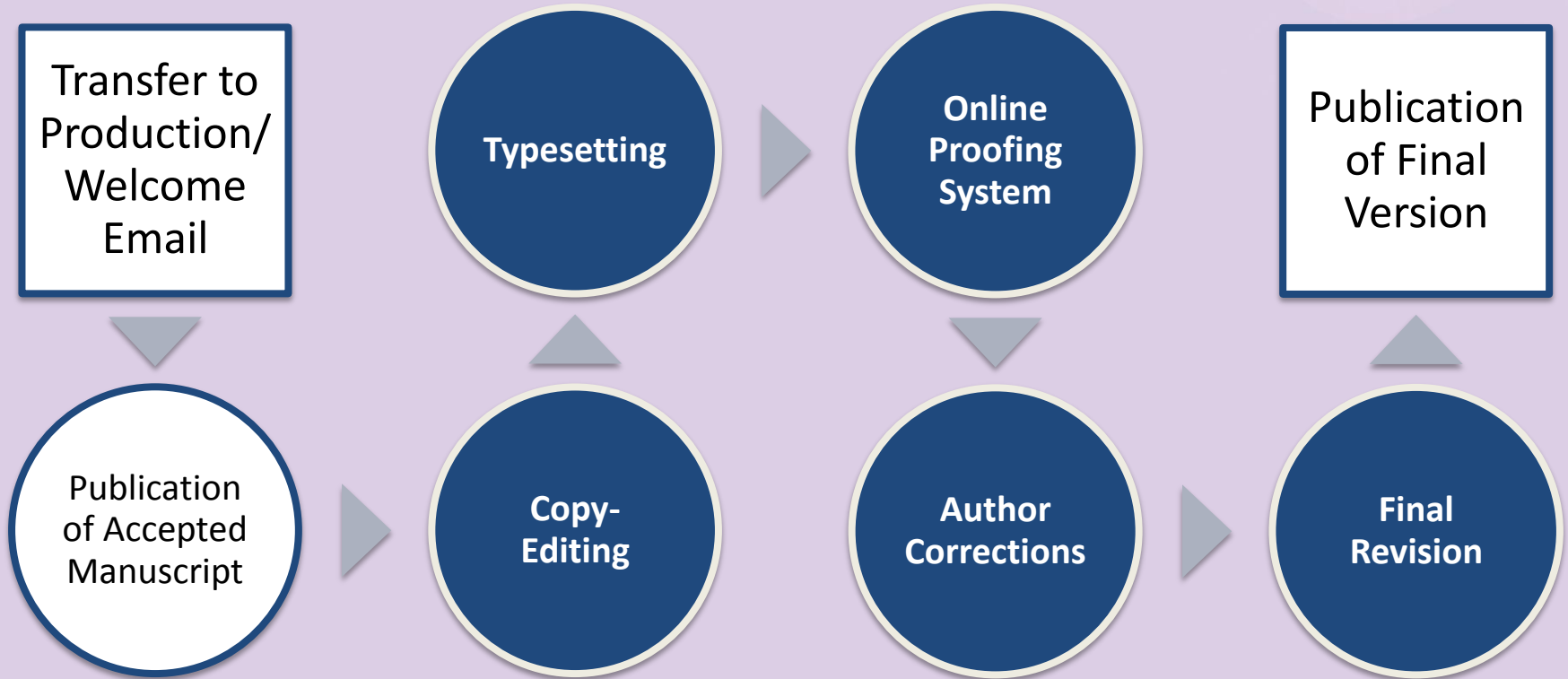


Overview

- The Production Process
- Copy-Editing and Proofing
- Online Publication
- Promotion – OUPblog, social media



Production



Copy-Editing and Proofing



- Minor changes only – nothing that affects the science
- Layout and formatting; Figures and Tables
- Spelling in UK English – MNRAS style
- Be available - check emails regularly
- 3 days for corrections
- Author Queries – Respond to all
- Last chance to make corrections



Online Publication

- 'Accepted Manuscript' online within 24 hours with DOI
- 'Version of Record': 3–6 weeks
- Final Citation details
- Author Toll-Free links
- Indexing (NASA ADS, Web of Science)
- Search-Engine-Optimised
- Mobile-Optimised
- Usage, Citations and Altmetric
- Dissemination to libraries; Access for developing nations

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ARTICLES

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Abstract View article

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Marta Reina-Campos; J. ...
Abstract View article

The fading of Ca II H&K lines in the absolute spectra of stars
A. S. Trotter; D. E. Reichert; J. ...

Volume 469, Issue 2
August 2017
ISSN 0035-8711
EISSN 1365-2966

Articles
< Previous



Online Publication / Authors Services

- LaTeX template in [Overleaf](#);
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3D-interactive figures
- Video presentations
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your ORCID profile
- Updating of records on arXiv
- OUP [Author Resource Centre](#)
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support for press releases

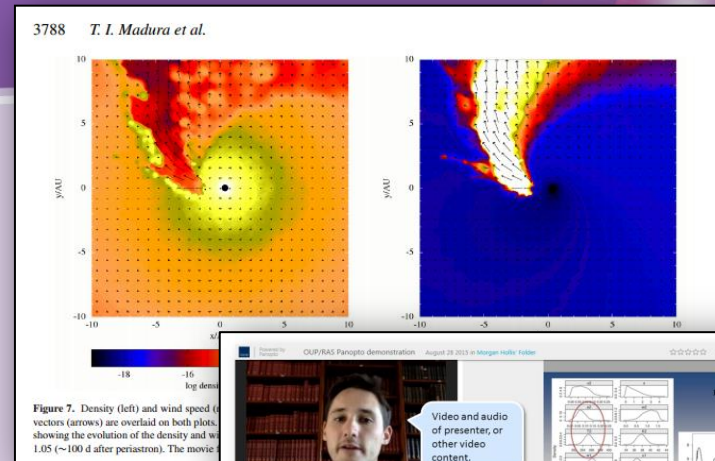


Figure 7. Density (left) and wind speed (right) plots. The left plot shows density (log density) and the right plot shows wind speed (vectors) overlaid on density. The plots show the evolution of the density and wind speed over time, with a color scale for density ranging from -18 to -16.

Video and audio of presenter, or other video content.

Search, including automatic speech-to-text transcription.

PowerPoint presentation slides, embedded video, web content (e.g. HTML, PDF)

Video presentation created and recorded by an author with no training in a couple of hours.

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Spatially resolved Fe K spectroscopy of

A. Marinucci ✉, S. Bianchi, G. Fabbiano, G. Matt, G. Risaliti, E. Nardini

1. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/mnras/stz211>

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environment of the source, picturing the innermost 200 par...



OUPblog – 200K Visitors /
400K Views each month
Twitter – 35K Followers
Tumblr – 126K Followers
Facebook – 1.1M Likes
YouTube – 55K Subscribers

Did dark matter kill the dinosaurs?

BY MICHAEL R. RAMPINO

In 1980, Walter Alvarez and his group at the University of California, Berkeley, discovered a thin layer of clay in the geologic record, which contained an anomalous amount of the element iridium. They proposed that the iridium-rich layer was evidence of a massive comet impact on Earth 66 million years ago, at the time of the extinction of the dinosaurs. The Alvarez group suggested that a global iridium-rich layer formed as fallout from an intense dust cloud raised by the impact. The dust of dust covered the Earth, producing darkness and cold, and lead to the extinction of 75% of life on the

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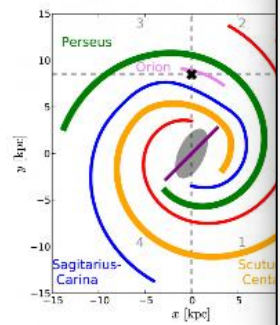


Messier 101. Photo by NASA, ESA, G. Bicketh (STScI), and The Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)

Yes, rather unfortunately, while we have many remarkable images of our distant neighbors from across the universe, we have surprisingly little knowledge of the age and structure of our own galaxy (the Milky Way). We do not know with certainty how many spiral arms there are. Does it have two, four, or no clear structure? Is it bar (a long thin concentration of stars and gas), and if so does it rotate with the rest of the galaxy? Unfortunately we cannot simply take a picture from outside the galaxy with those arms, even if we could travel at the speed of light it would take tens of billions of years to get far away enough to get a good picture!

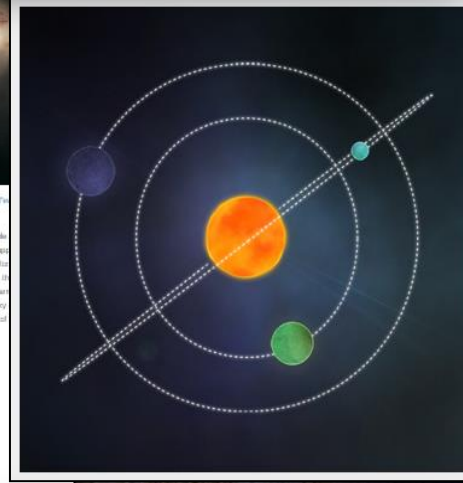


The current standard artistic impression of the Milky Way. (Chunzhen et al., 2008; PASP, 120, 223)



A diagram of the supposed arm and bar features.

The main difficulty comes from the fact that we are located inside the disc of our galaxy. We cannot know what the structure of a looking looks like if we are stuck inside. The best we can do is make a good picture of what our own galaxy looks like from the Earth's position. This is done by measuring the speeds of stars and gas, which we then use to infer the structure. However the uncertainty in these distances is



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Other questions about publishing
with OUP: adam.leary@oup.com

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