



# Journal Publishing in Asian Studies

by **Anand A. Yang**,  
University of Washington, Seattle  
aay@u.washington.edu

So many journals exist in the field of Asian Studies that keeping up with them is virtually impossible, or perhaps only possible 'virtually' if at all. Nor is it a simple matter to figure out what your best prospects are if you are an author, say, of a manuscript of 5,000 to 10,000 words or so (roughly the length of most articles) that you have fine-tuned into a model of clarity, rigor, and originality. And with most publications prohibiting multiple submissions, and with the review process typically taking anywhere from a few weeks to several months to complete, finding the right outlet is critical, as is making sure that your journal of choice is reputable.

This essay will first discuss recent developments in digital publishing that are transforming the world of journals and then profile some of the principal English-language journals in Asian Studies. It will conclude with a brief discussion of the manuscript review process.

## An expanding field

Scholarly journals are proliferating, including in Asian Studies. They have increased in number and, equally significantly, in variety because their audiences have grown and because the disciplines most closely associated with the field have greatly expanded their intellectual parameters, including by branching out into new theoretical and methodological directions. Consider, for instance, the many journals that now cover specific regions, countries, and approaches and methodologies.

Commercial publishers have played a major role as well in this growth spurt. They have made their mark by taking over the production and distribution of many publications that were formerly managed by committed scholars and scholarly organizations. While such takeovers have rarely, if ever, impinged on the intellectual integrity of the journals – their editors have invariably remained in charge of their content matter – they have generally led to other changes, most notably a hike in prices. Many journals, nevertheless, have sought commercial backing. For some it has been the difference between going under and staying alive; for others it has provided the start-up for a new launch, an especially difficult undertaking without a built-in membership base.

For commercial publishers there is strength in numbers. (For instance, the Taylor and Francis Group, consisting of Routledge, Carfax, and Frank Cass, has a roster of 950-plus titles, including several Asia-related ones.) Extensive holdings enable them to produce, distribute, and price their wares advantageously. In the

medical and natural science fields, where great premium is placed on the prompt and widespread circulation of research findings because of their potential use value for industry or government, for-profit publishers often capitalize on their significant titles and substantial lists by setting outrageously high institutional subscription rates. They also bundle their products strategically by offering package deals that mix and match high- and low-demand publications.

## Digital journals publishing

Commercial publishers have also strengthened their hand by embracing digital technology more rapidly and fully than have scholarly organizations and university presses. As yet, few of our key publications have become full-fledged electronic (or e-) journals, although an increasing number is now available in digital format.

Thus, in theory at least, most journals are only an Internet connection away, a development that was supposed to usher in a new era of easy and worldwide access to scholarly communications. The reality, however, is very different, not only because of the prohibitively high subscription rates but also because of the licensing arrangements that restrict access to authorized users. No wonder many in the academy advocate "open access", by which they mean "making digitally-formatted research and scholarship available to readers on the Internet without charge. Open access is the emerging counterpoint to the current digital publishing system, in which increasingly consolidated journal publishers retain long-term control (90 years) over both price and access conditions for the research and scholarship they publish" (Anne Wolpert "Open Access and Research Publishing", *BiblioTech*, 16: 2, 2004; <http://libraries.mit.edu/about/scholarly/oa-wolpert.html>).

Access issues notwithstanding, the availability of journals in digital format has opened up new possibilities. Think of the astonishing array of user-friendly features that digital delivery systems offer for searching and browsing. "[T]he content you want, the convenience you need" is the way Sage Journals Online pitches its online delivery platform that allows you to search specific issues, entire journals, or all SAGE titles, or "by keyword, author, or citation in the title, abstract, or full text of the article". In addition, it alerts you when a new issue is available or when a new author is cited or published or when there is another reference to subject matter you have previously researched.

One way academic publishers have sought to keep pace is by banding together to provide comparable services, such as by participating in Project

MUSE (<http://www.muse.jhu.edu/journals>) or JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>). The former now has almost 250 titles from 40 presses to its credit but few of these are Asia-related. The latter has many more but all of its holdings are back titles only, predating a 'moving wall' by at least three years.

## Outstanding journals

Perhaps the premier journal in the field – and a JSTOR title – is the U.S.-based *Journal of Asian Studies* (JAS; formerly *The Far Eastern Quarterly*). It owes its prominence to its consistently high standards of scholarship, its wide readership (almost 10,000 individual and institutional subscribers), and its distinguished pedigree as the flagship publication of the Association for Asian Studies, the largest Asia-related scholarly organization in the world.

Another outstanding Asia-wide journal is *Modern Asian Studies*, published by Cambridge University Press. Like the JAS, this quarterly envisions its mission broadly to encompass "the history, geography, politics, sociology, literature, economics and social anthropology of South Asia, South-East Asia, China and Japan". [Note the absence of Korea in this list.] In circulation since the 1960s, its articles tend to focus more on history than other disciplines, and more on South Asia than other regions.

Two other general Asia journals that are on my reading list are *Asian Survey* and

*South Asia* (Victoria, Australia, South Asian Studies Association of Australia, Carfax); *South Asia Research* (London, SOAS, Sage); and *Studies in History* (Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Sage). Note the international mix of these journals, their varied affiliations with presses and/or academic organizations, and their different research emphases.

Specialized journals would extend this list greatly. To name three more, there is the *Asia Theatre Journal*, whose interests are suggested by its title; *Asian Perspectives*, "the journal of archaeology for Asia and the Pacific"; and *Education About Asia*, a "highly practical teaching resource" published by the Association for Asian Studies.

So would newly established serials that have sprung up to address specific issues and concerns. Two Routledge journals exemplify this trend: *Asian Security*, a brand new "outlet for cutting-edge research on security challenges in Asia"; and *Asian Ethnicity*, "a cross-disciplinary... publication... about ethnic groups and ethnic relations in the half of the world where questions of ethnicity now loom largest". Or consider *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, produced by Oxford University Press for the Japan Association of International Relations and the Institute of Oriental Culture at the University of Tokyo, whose interests are encapsulated in its

for China there are so many publications that just the modern period alone has several, each with its own distinct emphasis. For instance, *The China Quarterly* (SOAS, Cambridge University Press) concentrates on contemporary China; *Modern China*, (University of California, Los Angeles, SAGE) sees itself as an international quarterly of history and social science; and *China Information* (Leiden University, Netherlands, Sage) concentrates on "major developments in contemporary China and overseas Chinese communities". Likewise, for other areas, there are many notable journals, of which three of the better known ones are: *The Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (National University of Singapore, Cambridge); *The Journal of Japanese Studies* (Society for Japanese Studies, University of Washington, self-published); and *Korean Studies* (University of Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press).

## The review process

Clearly, as this brief profile of journals indicates, readers and authors alike have plenty of options to engage in scholarly communication and research publishing.

As the former editor of JAS and a twice-failed JAS author, I can say with some authority that all our top-notch journals are peer-reviewed and strive to uphold excellence by only publishing enduring scholarship that addresses larger disciplinary and regional concerns. The JAS review process begins with an in-house evaluation by the editor and appropriate area associate editor that determines whether a manuscript is rejected right away or sent on for a double-blind review. Many submissions falter in the first round either because they are not good enough or because they are not right for that journal, although they may be of publishable quality. Fortunately, publishing options abound today.

Prospective authors would do well to scout out their target journal. What is its stated aim and scope? Will members of its editorial board be responsive to and interested in your manuscript? After all, one or more of them might be involved in assessing your piece. To what extent does your article engage its recent and past concerns? And don't forget to submit your manuscript in the specified format. Good luck. ■

*Most journals are only an Internet connection away, a development that was supposed to usher in a new era of easy and worldwide access to scholarly communications.*

*The reality, however, is very different*

*Pacific Affairs*. A bimonthly produced by the University of California Press, *Asian Survey* is concerned with "contemporary political, social, economic, and strategic developments". The latter, a quarterly published by the University of British Columbia, has a similar contemporary focus on "social, economic, and political affairs" but extends its purview to the Pacific.

These four by no means exhaust the roster of general Asia serials of some longevity. The journal *Asian Affairs* (formerly the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*), which dates back to 1914, combines historical with contemporary coverage, includes the Middle East and Central Asia in its ambit, and routinely publishes articles written by nonacademics. Far ranging as well is the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, which is more history- and humanities-oriented and extends its reach to Africa and to arts and archae-

title; and *The International Journal of Asian Studies*, a Cambridge University Press publication published in association with the above-named Institute, which aims to disseminate the "work of Asian scholars, in order to encourage multi-directional scholarly communication in Asian studies".

Much the same profile of rising numbers and diversity characterize the region- and country-specific journals. Understandably, there are many more journals for the larger areas (e.g., China and India) than there are for smaller countries (e.g. Bangladesh and Thailand).

As a South Asianist, my must-see list of regional journals includes: *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai, self-published); *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (Delhi, Delhi School of Economics, Sage); *The India Review* (Bloomington, Indiana, Frank Cass);