

THE SCHOLARLY PAPER

A respectable scholarly paper follows tradition. The standard parts in standard order are not mere conventions, but rather ensure the paper achieves its purpose: to contribute new knowledge. The parts correspond to the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (JPER) review criteria. The parts also guide the reader to better understand and critically assess the new contribution. The following explains each part of the scholarly paper in the traditional order.

Prerequisites

First you need to design and conduct research on an important question about planning theory or practice. Then you need to write your research report for your client or granting agency, clearly setting forth your analysis and findings. Now you know what you have learned and thus your new contribution. Now you are ready to write your scholarly paper.

Abstract

JPER abstracts should generally be no longer than 125 words and have one sentence to answer each of the following questions:

1. What is the issue addressed and why is it important for planning theory or practice?
2. What gaps or misunderstandings in the literature does the research fill or correct?
3. How was the research conducted?
4. What are the research findings?
5. What are the conclusions for planning theory or practice and the implications for further research?

Introduction: The Important Question Addressed

In your first paragraph you must clearly explain why your question is important for planning theory or practice, what your new contribution is and why it is significant. The rest of your paper needs to convince the critical reader that your claims are valid. So you must provide a logical argument and evidence.

At the end of the introduction give the reader a simple outline or map of the material to follow. Your subheadings throughout your paper should reinforce this outline. Subheadings should indicate the substance. For example, an introduction could be labeled "The Need for a Land-Use Impact Assessment Model" rather than "Introduction."

Literature Review

You need to set out the problem and the literature, showing what's known and not known, and where the gaps are that your research will fill. Focus on your contribution, placing it within the larger literature succinctly. "A useful literature review is a purposeful story that explains how the studies build on each other, what the questions are, how the answers contribute to the main quest of [your] paper, and what limitations and gaps [your] new study will avoid and fill, respectively. What does the previous literature

mean? What are the unanswered questions, why do we need further research, why should we care, why is your paper important?" Andrew Isserman, Review for JPER New Scholars' Workshop, 2005

Tying the research to the relevant literature helps to construct and show your conceptual framework. "This is not just a matter of recognizing one's intellectual debts. More importantly, this literature can provide a wealth of intellectual and practical guidance in conducting the research. [Your] research deals with a host of important, complex and difficult topics and needs to draw on as much of the relevant literature as possible to insure that the research is as rigorous and intellectually sound as it can be." (Richard Klosterman, JPER New scholars' workshop review, 2006).

Methodology

Explain what evidence and research methods are appropriate for your research question and why. Then explain what data you collected, sources, how you sampled, how you collected it, how you coded it, and how you analyzed it. Demonstrate that your methods are "explicit, sound and appropriate." If you believe you need to explain highly technical methods, present them briefly in the text and provide more information and references to further detailed explanations in an appendix. Discuss any limitations, drawbacks or possible biases in your methodology and what you did to correct or compensate for the problem.

Analysis and Findings

Present your analysis and findings clearly and directly. Graphs and charts often help to complement or illustrate your text. Consult Edward R. Tufte for *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (2001). Present only the evidence you need to support your new contribution. The scholarly paper should examine one idea in depth; one article, one idea.

Conclusions

Return to your original important question and recap your answer. Then examine the implications for policy and further research. You can add recommendations if you like.

Voice

"Avoid the use of the first person. Social and policy science papers are not about the author. Readers do not care about your impressions or feelings." (Anonymous reviewer for JPER New Scholars' Workshop, 2006.)

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