

# Query Letter Samples for Library and Information Science Journals

These query letter samples were created by Jody Condit Fagan and Meris Mandernach Longmeier in October 2020 and are a supporting document to the College & Research Libraries article titled, "Library & Information Science Journal Editors' Views on Query Letters." (forthcoming)

The first example might be sent to multiple editors in order to see which journal is the most promising fit. The second example seeks advice on how to approach the potential for a series of publications. We would only send this to one editor at a time, because it asks for more in-depth engagement. The third example offers language for when you're querying late in the process. The fourth example seeks to clarify final questions prior to submission.

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# Sample Query Letters

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## Example of an Initial Query Early in the Process - Short

Subject: **Query for** JOURNAL regarding “*WORKING ARTICLE TITLE*”

Dear **EDITOR,**

I am writing to gauge JOURNAL’s interest in an article presenting results from a usability survey of BRANDNAME integrated library system. The working title and abstract are below. If the topic is of interest, I am curious to know the journal’s average turnaround time for peer review, and whether the upcoming publication calendar is terribly full.

Thank you for your thoughts,  
AUTHOR SIGNATURE

FULL SIGNATURE

INSERT WORKING TITLE AND ABSTRACT

Put something in the subject line unique to your article/topic – not just the journal name! You want to make it easy on the editor (who probably has multiple roles) to see that this is journal work, but to be able to distinguish your email from all the other journal emails. Keep in mind they may even edit multiple journals.

FIRSTNAME (or Dr. LASTNAME, if they have a PhD)

# Sample Query Letters

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## Example of an Initial Query Early in the Process - Long

Subject: Query regarding potential publication of usability studies for *JOURNAL*

Dear EDITOR,

I am working on a series of usability studies of the *BRANDNAME* integrated library system and am interested in publishing them in a peer-reviewed journal such as *JOURNAL*. While your [Aims and Scope](#) (hyperlink) suggest a good fit, I wanted to check in with you on my ideas to see how they might best harmonize with potential publication. As the Web Usability Librarian at *COLLEGE*, I've conducted a **20-question, campus-wide survey with about 100 of our 20,000 students** about the *BRANDNAME* interface, and analyzed the results thoroughly for an internal report. Later this year, my team is planning to conduct usability lab experiments with approximately 20 students, and the following year, we hope to work with colleagues at a few other institutions in order to do a cross-institutional study using the same protocol.

Providing a few specifics about the scope and methods helps indicate how substantive your article might be. If the editor has qualms about this sample size, they would hopefully raise those now. While this letter should be selling yourself, don't oversell your research – be forthright about its scope and substance. You want the editor to tell you if it doesn't seem substantive or rigorous enough for publication.

What I'm thinking is to submit a manuscript soon based on the campus-wide survey, because it seems to stand on its own (a working title and abstract are below my signature). After the fall lab experiment studies are complete, I'd plan to submit another manuscript about those, and then hopefully next year, the cross-institutional study.

Does this sound like a good way to approach publishing this line of research? Or would *JOURNAL*

# Sample Query Letters

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## Example of an Initial Query Early in the Process - Long (cont.)

recommend one article reporting on both the survey and lab experiments, together? If I were interested to submit all three of these to JOURNAL NAME, would that be too many studies on the same topic within a short amount of time (1-2 years)? Or, would JOURNAL potentially see this as a series? I completely understand that each piece would be separately peer-reviewed.

**As I am approaching a promotion deadline,** I am curious about your current publication queue – that is, if I were able to submit a manuscript today and if all went well with the peer review, how soon do you think it could be published? How long have peer reviews been taking these days?

This type of explanation is not strictly necessary, but if you find yourself hesitant to ask time-related questions, coming up with a reason might help you feel more confident.

I know you are busy, so I appreciate your advice on these matters.

Sincerely,

AUTHOR SIGNATURE

# Sample Query Letters

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## Example of an Initial Query Late in the Process

Subject: Query for *JOURNAL: WORKING TITLE*

Dear EDITOR,

Cc: CO-AUTHORS

My colleague CO-AUTHOR and I are **finishing up work** on a paper we're tentatively titling "FULL TITLE," and wanted to see if you thought it might be suitable for *JOURNAL NAME*. The abstract is below. The paper is shaping up to be over your usual guideline of 15 pages ([hyperlink](#)) – do you have a strict page maximum we should observe? If you are interested, would you mind letting us know what issue you are currently reviewing for, and whether there are deadlines we could keep in mind?

Since you're almost done, there are fewer questions about what direction to take.

Thank you for your thoughts,

AUTHOR SIGNATURE and CO-AUTHOR  
SIGNATURE

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FULL SIGNATURE

INSERT WORKING TITLE AND ABSTRACT HERE

# Sample Query Letters

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## Example Follow-up, Just Before Submission

Subject: Preparing to submit *WORKING TITLE* to *JOURNAL*

Dear EDITOR,

I am ready to complete final preparations on the manuscript we discussed, "*WORKING TITLE*," and submit it to *JOURNAL*. I've read the instructions for authors ([hyperlink](#)) carefully, but have just a few questions:

- My current manuscript is 7,000 words, but the web site suggests articles of 6,000 words are best. I've had a colleague review my manuscript to help me trim it down, and I'm willing to work it down some more, but I wanted to check with you to see if that's strictly necessary pre-peer-review.

- The instructions state that each figure and table should be submitted in separate files to support manuscript production – do you also want them that way as we approach peer review? Or, would it be convenient to have them all in one file together? I could split them up later.

- I noticed the *JOURNAL* web site ([hyperlink](#)) says to use APA 16th edition, but the last journal issue looks like it uses Chicago – which style guide should we use to prepare our final manuscript?

- The Instructions for references aren't clear on whether DOIs should be included in the list – we are thinking to use this format, does that seem acceptable?

- o EXAMPLE CITATION

I know you are busy, so I appreciate your advice on these matters.

Sincerely,

AUTHOR SIGNATURE