Hello and welcome to this first module of the libraries’ research skills program. My name is Bea Gini, I’m the training coordinator at the Office of Scholarly Communication. For this video, I’ve collated my own experience of publishing and doing research, I have also spoken to lots of librarian colleagues and other researchers have published their work and I’ve come up with a list of areas that you should be thinking about when choosing a journal for your research.

It is important for you to think about this for yourself at this point. Make a list of things that you think will be important. As soon as you’ve done that resume the video and we’ll see how your list compares to mine.

How do I choose a journal?
OK. How to choose a journal. How do make sure that your research gets published in the best possible outlet? This video is short and practical.

Have clear aims
The first thing to do is considering your aims. So are you writing because you want to build humanity’s knowledge on the subject? Do you want practitioners to apply your findings in the real world? Or are you thinking about your own career? Like securing a contract or a postdoc position? Are you thinking about working in the industry? Don’t forget that pushing itself can help you in your search because others will help you better the value of your arguments. You’ll have comments from viewers and readers and also you might find new collaborators. There’s also an element of pride. It’s lovely to see our work out there. We can share it with colleagues, friends, family. And finally, there might be links to commercial applications that rely on the work being published. So you might have one or more of these aims for your publication. Keep these front and center because it will guide what we think about through these five areas: scope, prestige, timescale, cost and possibly language.

Scope
Scope is really the most important point. Does the journal published sort of research that you’re doing? You’ll find this out easily either by googling the journal’s name and ‘author guidelines’. You usually have quite a detailed page that specifies what sort of articles they’re looking for. Also have a look at previous issues. Are the articles that are similar to yours in terms of concepts or methodology? This about what you and your supervisor read. What do you cite in the article that you’re writing? That will give you a really good guideline of what sort of journal might have the right scope.

Prestige
Next, let’s take in consideration a bit of a thorny issue, prestige. We know that some journals are considered very prestigious and others have more niche audiences and perhaps smaller audiences. This might be important for you in your career. On the other hand, it doesn't have to be all.

Journal Impact Factor
One way that people assess prestige is the Journal Impact Factor. It's a single number, a bit of a quick and dirty way of assessing the journal's success. It's calculated by taking the number of citations for articles in that journal's in a given time period and divide it by the number of articles that journal has published. In essence that gives us an average number of citations for article in that journal. But it doesn't take into account, for example, the fact that in biomedical sciences there are a lot more researchers publishing, so more citations, so the Journal Impact Factors tend to be higher. In addition, journals have on (rare) occasions tried to game these metrics to boost their impact factor without necessarily improving the quality of the research. And think about articles that are not particularly good and get cited a lot by people who criticize them. Well, does would help the impact factor of the journal, but surely not their prestige. You should also be thinking about the soundness of the research in that journal. In your own professional opinion, is it a good journal? Would you be proud to be featured in it? Also what does your audience read? Sometimes practitioners read journals that do not have a high impact factor but are very relevant to their work. So in that case, if you want to reach them in particular, you might be better off choosing a more niche journal.

**H-index: quantity AND quality**

Another metric that I want to make you aware of because it might be relevant, particularly for academic careers, is the H-index. It's one number that refers to an individual researcher and it tries to measure how many papers they published and also what was the impact of those papers. In essence, the H-index is calculated by taking the number of papers that have been cited H number of times. So if and if my H-index is three, at least three of my papers have been cited three times or more.

Now, let's see how that applies in practice. You take the first research from the left here. You can see that on the horizontal axis, they've got an okay number of papers, but not huge. On the vertical axis you can see that at least some of the papers have received a huge number of citations. The Yellow Square represents the H index, where the number of papers is equal number of citations. It's good. It's not amazing.

The second researcher here in the middle published a huge number of papers, but even his most cited ones do not have a huge number of citations. So again, H-index is OK.

The third research on the right here is maximizing both the number of papers and the number of citations, so their H-index is considerably bigger.

Now, I know that's a holy grail and it can be hard to do, but here's something to consider. Don't put all your eggs in one basket with one very high profile paper, but equally don't start salami slicing your research into a huge number of low-impact papers. Try to find healthy balance.

Again, the H-index is not perfect. More senior researchers and have higher H indexes, even if their research is not necessarily better quality than a junior researcher. There are disciplinary differences, and so on. So be aware of the limitations. There is a whole module on metrics coming up at the end of term, so come along to that if you're interested to find out more.
Enough is enough
There is also the question of when is it enough? When you stop collecting data and start writing the paper and getting that published? Well, it will depend on your research and your specialty. I can only give broad indications here. Try to think about whether you have a not strong argument can stand alone, whether there are any obvious gaps or assumptions that haven't been tested, which a little bit of extra research, or extra experiments might help if you to address. Also, where do you want to publish? If you are aiming for one of those really high impact journals, then it might take a little more time to build a wider and stronger argument. On the other hand, if the time is coming to the end of the contract and you're looking for the next postdoc position, then you might want to think about getting the article published straight away rather than accumulating more and more information. Ultimately, this is an area where your supervisor is going to be really helpful in giving you advice, as will colleagues, so try to discuss this with people who know.

One little caveat here: I don't want to give the impression that I'm saying keep collecting data on the same experiment until you get a value that strongly significant. That is absolutely not what we should be doing. Your sample size should be decided at the start of the government, probably with a power analysis. And if you keep collecting data until you get the right you got it, then that's actually malpractice.

Timescale
Now the third consideration to make is timescale. Journals can differ in how long they take to review and publish articles and disciplines differ. I mean, in some sciences, it might take days or weeks to get published. In some humanities, it might take years. Be aware of that. But even within a field, try to find out more. Some journals say in their websites how long they take on average, sometimes you can email the editor and they'll be able to advise.

There’s another element that’s to do with the chance of being rejected. I’d suggests that it's usually a good idea to aim high. Go for a journal where you think you might be a long shot to get accepted, but if they accept your article it'd be great. This means that there is a good chance you will be rejected. And that's fine. You'll still get lots of useful feedback. However, it will add to the timeline because -don't forget- you can only submit to one general at the time. So if you're in a rush, you might be better to go for a safer option where you think you’ve got a really good chance of being accepted.

Reviewing the review process
One way to find out how long the peer review will take to use the website SciRev. It's like TripAdvisor for peer review. Other researchers who've gone through the peer review process enter information about the process, for instance, time for initial rejection, time for peer review and final publication. They also add comments on their general impressions and how they found a whole process. Lots of useful information. And you might also want to add your own comments to help other researchers.

Cost
Number four is the cost. We’ll talk some more about open access later on in the module further down the page. For now, let me just say that open access is a growing movement, so more authors are choosing to
make their article free for readers to read. That often means they have to pay a submission charge before peer review or an article processing charge once the article is accepted. These are not cheap, they can range from the hundreds to thousands of pounds, but it shouldn't come out of your pocket. Speak to your supervisor and see whether there's grant that you can apply for or whether they're already budgeted for for.

You would also need to consider colour and page charges. Some journals will, for instance, charge extra for graphs in colour. Can you can make a graph work in black and white? Perhaps writing more concisely will help you style, as well as your pocket.

And one other thing to consider is that if you funder requires that you publish with open access, it might be possible to receive funding from them through the Office of Scholarly Communication. We'll let you know about that once you upload your article to openaccess.cam.ac.uk, which you should be doing as soon as they're accepted anyway.

**Quality Open Access Market**
And if you are required to pay an article processing charge, you want to know that you're getting value for money. The quality open-access market is another Web site where authors can input their feedback on journals, on up on five different areas, such as editor responses and timeline. So again, that's somewhere where you can find information about what open access journals are offering in exchange for the charge.

**Language**
The final consideration is language. I know this might not apply to all disciplines, sometimes English is only way to go, but in some cases you might want to think about writing in other languages. For instance, if your target audience is more comfortable in different languages or if your research is very geographically-specific and you want the people in that area to be able to read it. Consider whether something you can do, whether you need help from a native speaker to polish your language, whether the journals are available in the target language. Something to think about.

**Keep your aims in sight**
Ultimately, I want you to really keep your arms in sight when you're thinking about all this. We thought about these at the very beginning of the video and they should guide your choice of journal. You shouldn't be doing something just because everyone else is doing it, or because it's fashionable, or because one academic has their favourite journal. Think carefully about what you're trying to achieve. What is the best way of achieving that?

**Camera**
I hope you find it helpful to think about what you need to consider when choosing a journal. I will see you again later on when we talk about peer review. And I hope you like the rest of this module that you'll join us again each week for other modules.