CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	We all have a story to tell: why Librarians should write about and Share what they do
Authors	O'Connor, Martin
Publication date	2025-12-01
Original Citation	O'Connor, M 2025, 'We all have a story to tell: why Librarians should write about and Share what they do', Health Sciences Libraries Journal, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 3-6.
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.33178/hslj.1.2.2
Rights	© 2025, Martin O'Connor. - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Download date	2026-11-16 11:46:52
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/18690



UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Practice-Based Article

We All Have a Story to Tell: Why Librarians Should Write About and Share What They Do

Martin O'Connor

University College Cork Library

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5278-3399

ABSTRACT

This article encourages librarians across all sectors to embrace writing as a means of professional development, community engagement, and career progression. Drawing from a webinar delivered to Irish library professionals, the author illustrates how informal formats like blog posts can serve as foundations for more formal journal articles. The piece outlines practical strategies for initiating writing, transitioning from blog to journal, and overcoming common barriers such as self-doubt and time constraints. Through sector-specific examples and actionable advice, the article demystifies the writing process and advocates for librarians to share their unique experiences and insights. Ultimately, it positions writing not as an academic burden but as a vital tool for reflection, collaboration, and contribution to the profession.

KEYWORDS

writing for publication, writing, blogging

BACKGROUND

In May 2025, I was invited to give a webinar on blogging / writing for librarians as part of a joint event organised by the Library Association of Ireland Career Development Group (CDG) and the Academic and Special Libraries (A&SL) Group. Following that session, I was asked to write this article for the Health Sciences Libraries Journal. I mention this because it demonstrates something important: how a presentation or blog post can be converted into a piece of writing for a journal. That act of translation—from talk to blog, talk to article or blog to article—is a powerful reminder that writing does not have to start from scratch. Often, we already have the raw material; the task is to shape it for a new audience and platform.

The goal of this article is simple: to encourage librarians, in all areas of our profession, to write and share ideas. Writing may feel daunting, but it is an achievable, valuable practice that strengthens our profession and our individual voices. In what follows, I will share ways to approach writing, examples from different sectors of librarianship, and practical strategies to get words onto the page.

WHY WRITE?

Librarianship is a profession grounded in communication, knowledge-sharing, and community. Yet, many librarians hesitate to write—whether for a blog, a newsletter, or a peer-reviewed journal. Common reasons include lack of time, self-doubt, or uncertainty about what to write about. But writing has many benefits:

- Professional development: Writing clarifies your own thinking and demonstrates reflective practice.
- Visibility: Sharing your work, whether through a short blog post or a peer-reviewed article, helps others see what librarians contribute.
- Community building: Your ideas may spark conversations, collaborations, or improvements in another library.
- Career progression: Publications, especially in journals, can strengthen a CV, support promotion, or open doors to conference speaking.
- Most importantly, the profession of librarianship benefits when practitioners share practical experiences, innovative projects, and critical reflections. No two libraries are the same; what you're doing in yours may be exactly what someone else is looking for inspiration on.

STARTING SMALL: WRITING FOR BLOGS

In my talk, I encouraged participants to start with blogging. Blogs are a low-barrier, informal way to share ideas. They can be as short as 400–600 words and the tone can be conversational. Importantly, blogs are forgiving—unlike journal articles, they do not require exhaustive literature reviews or polished academic prose.

What to Blog About?

- Everyday practice: A new shelving system, a trial run of a digital tool, or your library's approach to orientation.
- Reflections: Lessons learned from a project that went well—or one that didn't.
- Resources: A "top five" list of useful guides, apps, or databases.
- Events: A conference or training session you attended, with your reflections.

Examples from across Librarianship:

- A school librarian blogging about how they use graphic novels to encourage reluctant readers.
- A public librarian sharing the behind-the-scenes process of running a community history project.
- An academic librarian writing a short guide to the reference management workshops they trialled with undergraduates.
- A health sciences librarian explaining how they introduced systematic review support services and what challenges emerged.

These pieces do not need to be perfect; their value lies in their immediacy and accessibility. Of course, I wouldn't be doing my duty if I didn't point out that Libfocus—which I co-edit—is always open to contributions from librarians who'd like to publish a post but don't have their own blog.

Moving from Blog to Journal

- The transition from a blog to a journal article often intimidates librarians. But in truth, it is often a matter of expansion and formalisation. A blog post can be the seed of an article. Here's how:
- Expand the context: A blog post might simply describe what you did. For a journal, place your work in a wider context. Why does it matter? How does it compare with other examples?
- Bring in evidence: Journal articles benefit from citing relevant literature or statistics. This doesn't mean you need a PhD-level review; two or three references can frame your work.
- Structure it: Blogs can be casual and narrative. Articles usually benefit from clear headings such as introduction, methods, discussion, and conclusion—or, for a reflective piece, background, case example, lessons learned, and implications.

- Polish the style: Journal writing tends to be more formal, but friendly and accessible writing is still valued. Avoid unnecessary jargon.
- Length: Blogs might be 600–800 words. Articles are often 1,500–3,000 words. If you already have a blog post, expanding it with context, literature, and detail can get you there.

Examples of the Transition

To make this concrete, here are some examples of how different types of librarians could convert a blog into a journal article:

- A school librarian blogs about a new reading programme. For a journal, they could expand this into an article comparing their initiative with literacy research, including student feedback, and offering a framework for others to adapt.
- A public librarian writes a blog about running a makerspace event. Expanded for a journal, this could explore how makerspaces align with digital inclusion policies, include participant survey data, and discuss implications for community engagement.
- An academic librarian writes a blog reflection on teaching information literacy during COVID-19. Expanded, this could become a case study article linking their experience to literature on online pedagogy and student engagement.
- A health sciences librarian blogs about supporting systematic reviews. Turned into an article, this could examine demand for systematic reviews, outline workflows developed, compare practices with published guidelines, and propose a model for other libraries.

In all these cases, the blog is the spark. The journal article adds depth, context, and analysis.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR GETTING STARTED

Even with good intentions, sitting down to write can be difficult. Here are some practical tips I share with colleagues:

- Capture ideas immediately: Keep a notebook or digital file where you jot down potential topics. Often, the best writing starts with “That might make a good post.”
- Start with an outline: Break the piece into sections (Introduction, Context, What We Did, What We Learned). Filling in sections one by one is less intimidating than facing a blank page.
- Write first, edit later: Don’t worry about perfect sentences on the first draft. Get the ideas down; polish them afterwards.
- Use your existing work: Presentations, training notes, or project reports can all be reshaped into publishable writing.
- Buddy up: Share drafts with a colleague. Writing in pairs or groups can ease the burden and enrich the perspective.
- Set small goals: Commit to writing 300 words in a sitting. Momentum builds from small steps.

Don’t be afraid to submit: Journals expect revisions. Peer review is not a judgment of your worth, but a collaboration to improve the work.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

From speaking to people, I see that common barriers come up again and again.

“I don’t have anything new to say.”

You do. Your context, your users, and your approach are unique. Even if someone has written about, say, orientation programmes before, they have not written about your orientation programme, in your library, with your reflections.

“I’m not a good enough writer.”

Writing improves with practice. Start small with a blog post. With each piece, your confidence and clarity

will grow. Journals are not expecting literary genius; they are looking for relevance, clarity, and value to readers.

“I don’t have time.”
Time is a real challenge, but writing doesn’t have to mean setting aside whole days. Break it down: 20–30 minutes of focused writing, once or twice a week, builds momentum. Repurpose material you already have—training notes, presentations, or reports. Think of writing as part of professional reflection, not an extra burden.

“I wouldn’t know where to publish.”
The publishing landscape can seem confusing, but there are plenty of entry points. Blogs (personal or institutional), library newsletters, and professional association bulletins are great starting places. From there, consider sector-specific journals such as this one or practitioner journals like An Leabharlann. If you’re uncertain, reach out to editors—they are often happy to advise.

“I’m worried about criticism.”
Sharing your work publicly can feel daunting. But remember, peer review is intended to improve your piece, not to tear it down. Feedback from editors or colleagues strengthens your writing. Start with smaller, lower-stakes platforms (like blogs or newsletters) to build confidence. Over time, you’ll see that constructive feedback is part of the writing journey.

A FINAL REFLECTION
As I mentioned at the start, this very article began as a webinar on blogging. The transition from spoken presentation to written article demonstrates the same process I am encouraging you to try: repurpose what you already have, expand it, and adapt it for a new audience.

Writing is not an abstract academic exercise; it is simply another way of sharing what we do and what we know. Whether you work in a health sciences library, a school library, a public library, or an academic library, your experiences matter. By writing them down, you contribute to the ongoing conversation that strengthens and grows our profession.

So, my encouragement is this: start small. Write that blog post. Share that reflection via your own blog or as a guest post on Libfocus. And when you are ready, take the next step and turn it into a journal article. Your voice is valuable, and the profession benefits from hearing it. Do try it, I’m very sure you will enjoy it.
Good Luck.