**An Analysis of the Preprint Policies of the Communication Disorders Journals**

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**Abstract**

*Publicly disseminating scholarly papers as preprints has gained momentum in every subject field. The recent pandemic demonstrated the importance of the preprint as a channel of scientific communication. The preprints are getting recognized as the formal component of the publication process. Hence, the publishers must announce a clear policy regarding the preprints to the authors. Communication disorders is a combined discipline of audiology and speech-language pathology that deals with speech, hearing, and language sciences and disabilities. There are several journals on communication disorders publishing research from across the world. The publishers in the field include non-profit organizations, learned societies, and commercial publishing companies. Understanding the preprint policies of communication disorders journals will help the professionals in the area quickly disseminate their research results. The present study aims to analyze the preprint policies of the major communication disorders journals. The journals indexed in the Web of Science database under the subject category 'Audiology & Speech-Langauge Pathology' have been selected as the dataset for the study. A descriptive analysis of the preprint policies of these journals are performed by collecting relevant information from their official websites.*

Keywords: Preprint Policy;Communication Disorders Journals

**Introduction**

Preprints, the non-peer-reviewed scholarly research papers, are fast becoming a formal component of the scientific publication system. The National Institute of Health, USA initiated the first known preprint program in 1961, and distributed the pre-published biology papers among the members of the 'Information Exchange Group'. The program was discontinued in 1967 due to stiff opposition from the publishers (Till, 2001). The modern version of preprints geared up in 1991 when physics researchers launched a network server called 'arXiv' (<https://arxiv.org/>) to share their research papers before publication (Ginsparg, 2021). Following the success of arXiv', several preprint servers have emerged. In 2013, bioRxiv  (<https://www.biorxiv.org/>) was started in biology and life sciences, and medRxiv (<https://www.medrxiv.org/>) in health sciences. During the first year of its establishment, the medRxiv received more than 11,000 submissions (Krumholz, et. al., 2020). The need for rapid dissemination of research findings on the corona virus during the 2021 pandemic accelerated the growth of preprints, diminishing the scope of the peer-review process to a reasonable extent (Fraser et. al., 2020; Malički et. al., 2021)

**Meaning and Definition**

From the stage of draft submission to a journal, through peer-review, revision, to the final article publication, a scientific manuscript can have several versions. Of these, the initial version is known as preprint. The preprint is also known as Author's Original Manuscript.

The National Information Standards Organization (NISO) defined the Author's Original Manuscript as *"*Any version of a journal article that is considered by the author to be of sufficient quality to be submitted for formal peer review". The Committee on Publication Ethics(COPE) defined the preprint as a "scholarly manuscript posted by the author(s) in an openly accessible platform, usually before or in parallel with the peer review process." Moshontzet al. (2021) broadly defined the preprints as scientific documents made available outside of the traditional publisher-managed framework and often disseminated online via trusted repositories. Bourne et al. ( 2017) defined the it as "complete written description of a body of scientific work that has yet to be published in a journal"

**The present study**

Communication disorders is a combined discipline of audiology and speech-language pathology that deals with speech, hearing, and language sciences and disabilities. There are hundreds of journals on communication disorders publishing research from across the world. The publishers in the field include non-profit organizations, learned societies, and commercial publishing companies. Understanding the preprint policies of communication disorders journals will help the professionals in the area quickly disseminate their research results. The present study aims to analyze the preprint policies of the major communication disorders journals.

**Related Studies**

Researchers have investigated the preprint policies of the scholarly journals in various fields. Teixeira da Silva & Dobranszki, J. (2019) reviewed the preprint policies of 14 reputed scientific publishers based on the Sherpa/RoMEO database. The study reported change in publishers' policy, and over a period of one-year, the number of publishers permitting the self-archiving of the preprints increased considerably. Massey et al. (2020) studied the preprint policies of 100 top-ranked clinical journals across all fields. The journals were selected based on their impact factor for the year 2018. Eighty-six journals allowed preprints, and one journal prohibited it. The remaining 13 journals permitted preprints on a case-by-case basis. Choi et al. (2021) studied the status of preprint acceptance policies of 383 Asian academic society journals in 2020. The data set for the study was taken from the Science Citation Index Expanded. Only 28 journals reviewed in the study accepted preprints and eight journals allowed reference entries for preprints and thirty had preprint policies. Fleming and Cook (2022) reviewed the preprint, postprint, and open access policies of 51 special education journals and their publishers. They reported that 13 journals provided information regarding the preprint policy on their websites, but only two had accepted preprints for publication.

**Methodology**

The journals indexed in the 'Web of Science (WoS) database under the category 'Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology' were selected for the study. This category of Web of Science listed 30 publications. Of these, three titles were excluded from the study due to the following reasons: The *Hearing Loss: Mechanisms, Prevention and Cure* was not a journal, the *Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology* did not belong to the domain of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, and the *Journal of Medical Speech-Language Pathology* was a discontinued journal. The remaining 27 journals were taken for further analysis. The official websites of each of these 27 journals were checked for the following parameters related to the preprints in August 2022.

1. Availability of a written policy statement on preprints
2. Availability of an exclusive preprint policy statement for the journal
3. Acceptance of preprints for publication
4. Conditions for accepting preprints for publication
5. Permissible locations for sharing the preprints

**Results**

The publisher-wise details of the 27 journals selected for the study are given in Table 1. They were published by eleven publishers. The publishers include both commercial and non-profit organizations.

The status preprint policies of the selected journals are tabulated alphabetically by the name of the journals and provided in Tables 2 to 4.

**Table 1**

*Selected Journals and their Publishers*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.N.** | **Journal** | **Publisher** | **S.N.** | **Journal** | **Publisher** |
| 1 | American Journal of Audiology | ASHA | 15 | Journal of the Acoustical Society of America | AIP |
| 2 | American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology | ASHA | 16 | Journal of the American Academy of Audiology | Thieme |
| 3 | Aphasiology | T & F | 17 | Journal of Fluency Disorders  | Elsevier |
| 4 | Audiology and Neuro Otology | Karger | 18 | Journal of Speech-Language and Hearing Research | ASHA |
| 5 | Augmentative and Alternative Communication | T & F | 19 | Journal of Voice | Elsevier |
| 6 | Brain and Language | Elsevier | 20 | Language and Speech | Sage |
| 7 | Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics | T & F | 21 | Language Cognition and Neuroscience | T & F |
| 8 | Ear and Hearing |  WK | 22 | Language Speech and Hearing Services in Schools | ASHA |
| 9 | Folia Phoniatrica et Logopaedica | Karger | 23 | Logopedics Phoniatrics Vocology | T & F |
| 10 | Hearing Research | Elsevier | 24 | Noise and Health | MK |
| 11 | International Journal of Audiology | T & F | 25 | Phonetica | DG |
| 12 | International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders | Wiley | 26 | Seminars in Speech and Language | Thieme |
| 13 | International Journal of Speech-Language Patholog  | T & F | 27 | Trends in Hearing | Sage |
| 14 | Journal of Communication Disorders  | Elsevier |

*AIP: American Institute of Physics; ASHA: American Speech–Language and Hearing Association; DG:De Gruyter; MK:MedKnow;T& F: Taylor & Francis; WK:  Wolters Kluwer*

**Table 2**

*Status of Preprint Policies of the Journals (AJOA-FPEL)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Parameters** | **Journals (AJA-FPEL)** |
| AJOA | AJSP | APHS | AANO | AAAC | BRAL | CLAP | EAHE | FPEL |
| Written policy on preprints? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Policy is specific to the journal? | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | Yes |
| Acceptance of preprints? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mandatory conditionsfor acceptance?  | Yes | Yes | No | I.N.A. | No | No | No | Yes | I.N.A. |
| Optional conditions for acceptance? | No | No | Yes | I.N.A. | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | I.N.A. |
| Specified locations to share preprints?  | Yes | Yes | Anywhere with e.g. | Anywhere | Anywhere with e.g. | Anywhere | Anywhere with e.g. | Anywhere | Anywhere  |

*AJOA: American Journal of Audiology; AJSP: American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology; APHS: Aphasiology; AANO: Audiology and Neuro Otology; AAAC: Augmentative and Alternative Communication; BRAL: Brain and Language; CLAP: Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics; EAHE: Ear and Hearing; FPEL: Folia Phoniatrica et Logopaedica*

*I.N.A.: Information Not Available*

**Table 3**

*Status of Preprint Policies of the Journals (HERS-JAAA)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Parameters** | **Journals (HE-JA)** |
| HERS | IJAU | IJLC | IJSP | JCDI | JFDI | JLSH | JASA | JAAA |
| Written policy on preprints? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| Policy is specific to the journal? | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Acceptance of preprints? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mandatory conditionsfor acceptance?  | No | No | I.N.A. | No | I.N.A. | Yes | I.N.A. |
| Optional conditions for acceptance? | Yes | Yes | I.N.A. | Yes | I.N.A. | No | I.N.A. |
| Specified locations to share preprints?  | Anywhere | Anywhere with e.g. | I.N.A. | Anywhere with e.g. | Yes  | Yes | Yes |

 *HERS: Hearing Research; IJAU: International Journal of Audiology; IJLC: International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders; IJSP: International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology; JCDI: Journal of Communication Disorders; JFDI: Journal of Fluency Disorders; JLSH: Journal of Speech-Language and Hearing Research; JASA:* *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America;JAAA: Journal of the American Academy of Audiology*

 *I.N.A.: Information Not Available*

**Table 4**

*Status of Preprint Policies of the Journals (JOVO-TRHE)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Parameters** | **Journals (JO-TR)** |
| JOVO | LASP | LCAN | LSHS | LPVO | NOHE | PHON | SISL | TRHE |
| Written policy on preprints? |  No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| Policy is specific to the journal? | Yes | No | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| Acceptance of preprints? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mandatory conditionsfor acceptance?  | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| Optional conditions for acceptance? | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | No  |
| Specified locations to share preprints?  | Yes | Anywhere with e.g. | Yes | Anywhere with e.g | Yes. | Yes |

*JOVO: Journal of Voice; LASP: Language and Speech; LCAN: Language Cognition and Neuroscience; LSHS: Language Speech and Hearing Services in Schools; LPVO: Logopedics Phoniatrics Vocology; NOHE: Noise and Health; PHON: Phonetica; SISL: Seminars In Speech and Language; TRHE: Trends in Hearing*

*I.N.A.: Information Not Available*

**Written Preprint Policy:** Of the 27 journals reviewed, 22 (81%) journals had a written preprint policy on their official website. The journals that did not mention a preprint policy on the official websites were the *Journal of Fluency Disorders*, *Journal of American Academy of Audiology*, *Journal of Voice*, *Noise and Health* and *Phonetica*. Of these, M/s Elsevier publishes the *Journal of Fluency Disorders* and *Journal of Voice* on behalf of the International Fluency Association, and the Voice Foundation the International Association of Phono surgery, respectively. The *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology* is the scholarly peer-reviewed journal of the American Academy of Audiology, published in collaboration with M/s Thieme. The *Noise and Health* Journal is published by M/s MedKnow and *Phonitica* by De Gruyter*.*

**Own Policy for the Journals:** Of the 22 journals with a declared preprint policy, 14 (64%) followed their parent publisher's policy by linking to the policy statement on the Publisher's official website. The remaining eight journals (36%) had their own preprint policies. However, five of the eight journals that claimed to have their own preprint policies mentioned them in a one-line statement on the official websites without providing any detailed description. The journals *Langauge and Speech* and *Seminars in Speech and Langauge*hada reasonably detailedpolicy statement on their officialwebsites, while *Trends in Hearing* instructed the authors on preprint submission in a two-line statement.

**Acceptance of Preprints for Publication**: All 22 journals with a declared preprint policy statement considered preprints for publication.

**Conditions for considering preprints:** Seventeen out of 22 journals put forth some conditions for considering preprints for publication. The conditions are summarized and given in table 5. They were either mandatory or optional. Five journals did not explicitly state any prerequisites for considering preprints for publishing. Acknowledging the previous posting of the manuscript as preprint, if any, was mandatory for eight journals and optional for two. The three American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) journals (*American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, Language, Speech and Hearing Services in Schools,* and *American Journal of Audiology)* did not consider the preprints shared on MEDLINE/PubMed databases for publication. The authors of the *Seminars in Speech and Language* had to provide the details of changes made to a manuscript between its deposition in a preprint server and submission to the journal. Seven journals made it mandatory to provide a link from the posted preprint to the final article on the publsher’s website, if the manuscript was published whereas this condition was not mandatory for nine journals. The Elsevier published *Hearing Research, Brain and Language*, and *Language and Speech* prevented the later modification of the preprints to appear like the published articles. The *Language and Speech* and *Seminars in Speech and Language* instructedtheirauthors not to post an updated version of the paper on the preprint server while it was being peer-reviewed for possible publication in the journal.

Table 5

*Conditions for considering the preprints for publication*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **S.N.** | **Conditions** | **Journals** |
| 1 | If the preprint is already shared, it should be acknowledged during the manuscript submission  | American Journal of Audiology, American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, Ear and Hearing, Journal of Speech-Language and Hearing Research, Language and Speech, Language Speech and Hearing Services in Schools, Seminars In Speech and Language, Trends in Hearing (*Mandatory*)Aphasiology, Language Cognition, and Neuroscience (*Not mandatory*) |
| 2 | Will not accept, if indexed in MEDLINE or PubMed | American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, Language, Speech and Hearing Services in Schools, American Journal of Audiology (*Mandatory*) |
| 3 | Should state what adjustments and/or updates the draft has undergone between deposition in a preprint server and submission to the journal.  | Seminars in Speech and Language (*Mandatory*) |
| 4 | If accepted for publication, the preprint should be linked to the published article on the Publisher's site | American Journal of Audiology, American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, Ear and Hearing, Journal of Speech-Language and Hearing Research, Language and Speech, Language Speech and Hearing Services in Schools, Seminars In Speech and Language (*Mandatory*)Aphasiology, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Brain and Language, Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics, Hearing Research, International Journal of Audiology, International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, Language Cognition and Neuroscience, Logopedics Phoniatrics Vocology (*Not mandatory*) |
| 5 | Should not be added to or enhanced in any way to appear more like, or to substitute for, the final versions of articles | Hearing Research, Brain and Language, Language and Speech (*Mandatory*) |
| 6 | Should not post an updated version of the paper on the preprint server while it is being peer-reviewed for possible publication in the journal | Language and Speech, Seminars in Speech and Language (*Mandatory*) |

**Locations/ Platforms for sharing preprints:** Of the 22 journals which accepted preprints,ninestated specific locations or platforms for sharing preprints and twelve journals said that the preprint might be shared anywhere. One journal, the *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders,* did notcommend on the location for sharing preprints. Seven out of twelve journals which indicated that the preprints could be shared anywhere, provided examples of places for posting preprints. The preprint servers, followed by authors’ personal websites, were the most suggested places by the journals to deposit preprints and the social media was the least favouvored platform.

The ’Guide for Authors’ section of the *Journal of Communication Disorders, an Elsevier* published journal offers the authors to post the manuscripts as preprints on SSRN, the publisher owned preprint server. The *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* permitted to post preprints on "*any website, providing the site does not have the semblance of an archival online journal*." A summary of various locations suggested by the journals to post preprints is given in table 6.

Table 6

*Locations for sharing preprints for publication*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sl.No. | Locations/Platforms | No. of Journals recommended |
| 1 | Preprint servers | 14 |
| 2 | Personal websites | 11 |
| 3 | scholarly collaboration network | 7 |
| 4 | Institutional repositories | 5 |
| 5 | Social media | 1 |

**Discussion**

The prevailing policies of most journals on communication disorders under study are encouraging and supportive of sharing research in the form of preprints. Only five out of 27 journals did not reveal the preprint policies on their official websites. This is in contrast with the recent study of Fleming and Cook (2022) who reported that only two out of 51 special education journals had provided information on preprints and considered preprints for publication. Three of the five journals in the present study that did not mention any preprint policies on their websites, were society publications. M/s Elsevier who published two of these society-owned journals, has a standard preprinting policy for all the journals they publish. However, official journals of societies and non-profit organizations are exempted from that policy. The Publisher's website says, "*Some society-owned titles and journals that operate double-blind peer review have different preprint policies*." The journal, *phonetica* another journal which did not support preprints was recently acquired by M/s De Gruyter.

Providing the details of the preprints, if any, including the URLs and locations, is mandatory for many journals during the manuscript submission stage. This can be observed as a realistic and necessary requirement. While submitting a manuscript to a journal, the authors should think of voluntarily sharing the details of the preprint publication associated with it.

NIH Preprint Pilot is a recent initiative of the National Institute of Health, USA (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/about/nihpreprints/) to make the NIH-funded research publicly available in the form of preprints through the PubMed Central and PubMed. The decision of the two ASHA journals in the present study, to not consider the MEDLINE or PubMed indexed preprints may adversely affect the dissemination of NIH-funded research on communication disorders through these journals. It is mandatory to post all the preprints of NIH-funded research in NIH Preprint Pilot.

The preprint policy of the *Journal of Communication Disorders* is incomplete. It is not clear whether the journal allows posting of preprints in servers other than SSRN. Similarly, the policy of the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* to accept preprints shared on websites that did not resemble with an archival online journal is highly obscure.

Preprint servers are found to be the most popular platform for sharing preprints. Encouraging authors to share preprints on non-profit preprint servers like arXiv, bioRxiv , and medRxiv is a welcome move from the journals. However, directing the authors to publish the preprints on specific preprint servers may be avoided. Unlike those reported by Massey (2020), none of the journals in the present study decided on publishing preprints as journal articles on a case-to-case basis.

**Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the preprints are here to stay. Transparent and unambiguous policies from the part of the journal publishers and strict adherence to the submission guidelines from the authors will surely foster the preprint scientific literature. The present study was an attempt to analyse the preprint policies of the communication disorders journal. Except a few cases, the communication disorders journals reviewed in the study are in favour of preprint publication of research. However, a few journals lack of explicitness in policy statement was observed in a few journals. The study investigated only a few aspects of preprints based on the information collected from the official websites of the journals. Also, it was limited to the journals in the field indexed in the web of science database. Despite its limitations, the present study is the first known attempt to understand the status of preprint publications in communication disorders.

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