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## Getting a math paper published

Kenta Hayano

Few people are familiar with the process of how a research project in mathematics begins and or how it ends up published as a paper in an academic journal. Naturally, not all research follows one uniform path, so while I cannot speak for everyone's experience, I would like to describe the publication process for one of my papers.

This particular study was inspired by a question a colleague posed to me during a break at an academic conference in November, 2017. While I couldn't answer the question offhand, its simplicity led me to assume that I could find the answer after a quick review of existing research on the topic. That wasn't the case. After looking into a few things, it quickly became apparent that I did not know the answer and that I had completely underestimated how difficult the proposed problem actually was. My interest was piqued. After considerable time and effort, I was able to prove a theorem that addressed the problem in May 2018. I completed a paper summarizing my findings in September of the same year. Then came the challenge of getting my work published in an

academic journal.

In general, to get your research published you need the journal's editors, and a panel of anonymous reviewers (called "peer reviewers") selected by the editors, to certify the quality of your work and formally accept your paper. With this particular paper, there was no real reason to rush publication, so I first tried my luck with a major journal. Given its standing though, I wasn't exactly shocked when my paper was rejected in December 2018. For my next step, I submitted my work to a slightly less prestigious journal. This was ultimately an incredible waste of time.

First off, I didn't hear back from them for an entire year. So in February 2020, I contacted them only to be told to "just keep waiting" because they "have asked the reviewers to check the paper but have yet to receive a response." Things weren't looking good at this point. It might have been better to withdraw my submission, but against better judgement, I decided to wait. The radio silence continued, so I followed up with the editors again in June 2020. This time they told me that they were looking for new peer reviewers. I was dumbfounded and irritated that they had the gall to start a search this late in the process. However, given how much time I had sunk into this submission, I decided to stick it out. I tried contacting them again in December 2020, but still didn't get a decent response.

Finally, in March 2021, they informed me of their decision with a curt "We cannot accept your paper due to a backlog of papers awaiting publication." In other words, I was kept waiting for over two years for them to dismiss my paper on a whim. I vowed to never submit a paper to this journal ever again.

Still reeling from this rejection, I did some research before deciding my third target, and ended up submitting to *Mathematica Scandinavica*. I had a pretty good impression of this journal. They were transparent about their backlog, even offering the median number of days it would take to peer review papers accepted in the previous year. If any of my colleagues are reading this article, I strongly recommend you consider submitting your next paper to this journal.

At any rate, my discretion in selecting a journal paid off. In September 2021, I received revisions from the peer reviewers, promptly made the necessary edits, my paper was accepted the following month, and, at long last, my work was published in June 2022. All in all, it took four and a half years from when I started my research, and just over 4 years from when I completed my paper, to get my work published. Math papers are notorious for taking a long time to peer review, but 4 years is extremely rare. Experience really is the best teacher.

## 理 工 学 Information

### The 23rd Annual Science and Technology Exhibition, KEIO TECHNO-MALL 2022

#### A Place for "Human Companionship" to Create New Collaborations - Chance and Challenge in an Era of Change

KEIO TECHNO-MALL is an event aimed at sharing research outcomes of Keio University's Undergraduate Faculty and Graduate School of Science and Technology with a large audience, as well as serving as a platform to facilitate fruitful encounters between government, industry, and academia. It is one of the largest science and engineering exhibitions organized by a Japanese university.

This year marked the return of the event taking place in person after a three-year hiatus. Both the 2020 and 2021 iterations were held online to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Researchers will be given space at exhibition booths to present their work. The event is structured to contribute to implementing their research in the real world, and urge innovation based on their creative findings. We hope to see you there!

Date and time: 10:00–18:00, Friday, December 2, 2022

Venue: Hall E2, Tokyo International Forum

Programming: Research exhibits of developed products and practical demonstrations, short presentations by researchers, sessions with special guests, and more.

For more details: [www.kll.keio.ac.jp/ktm/](http://www.kll.keio.ac.jp/ktm/)



#### Editor's postscript

This issue featured a professor from the Department of Mathematics for the first time in six years. Associate Professor Hayano is quite the conversationalist and maintains a very active lifestyle! He completely blew away my (admittedly misguided) preconception that mathematicians are perpetually bound to their desks, quietly scribbling formulas all the time. For example, despite having no real experience in cue games, he hit things off with a billiard-loving patron at a bar, eventually forming a team and practicing their skills. I wasn't even surprised when he said they went on to compete in a tournament together.

We have another issue set to release this year. This time, we made a rare departure from Yagami Campus to do a photoshoot on Hiyoshi Campus. We hope you'll join us again for the next issue!

(Yurina Tomohisa)

Cover of current issue: A Kirby diagram representing a 4-manifold

## 新版 窮理図解



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