

Description

In the world of book publishing, it is difficult enough for known authors to get their books published, but even harder for researchers. After all, a dissertation comprises research, methods, results, and conclusions presented to a group of academicians who ultimately decide the fate of a Ph.D. candidate.

No Easy Task

Researchers would like to believe that their research is fascinating and would surely contribute to the betterment of society. They spend years conducting their research, so why would anyone else want to read their dissertation? The answer to this question is how to persuade publishers to work with you.

Dissertations vs Books

Let's be honest. A dissertation is in no way a "book." It is written using original research to convey how much one knows about his or her discipline. Turning that information into an interesting book is very difficult and here's why:

> *The formats differ. They are written for different audiences with different objectives.*

Sharmila Sen, executive editor at Harvard University Press, tells us that dissertations involve close consultations with review committee members. After a long process of research, writing, checking data, and analyzing results, the author presents the dissertation to the review committee. The committee does not actively participate in the presentation, but only observes and comments. In contrast, a good book involves the reader; therefore, the writer must recognize and develop his or her connection with this new audience.

> *Writing styles differ. Dissertations are full of details and analyses. Books must be presented in an entirely different way.*

Your new audience won't necessarily care about data; they care about context and your message. Use a different "voice" and writing style in your writing to help involve the reader. Karen Darling (University of Chicago Press) recommends reading as much as possible and paying attention to the styles of good

Copyright: Enago Academy under the CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 license

stories. How did the author persuade the reader? How does he keep the reader's interest? Write as much as possible for different media. The more you write, the better you become. An informal style can sometimes be more effective and persuasive than a formal style.

Blogging is a valuable way to continue writing and presenting information. People are more inclined to read a blog than a lengthy magazine article, so make it count. It might surprise you how your writing style and presentation changes over time.

Helpful Hints

Before you can write a good proposal, you must have a good book for material. Caleb A. Scharf, in his article in Scientific American, provides some insights from his publishing experience on what to do before writing your book.

- Consult with those who have published: Colleagues can offer helpful advice.
- Write with clarity: Don't let the "scientist" in you cloud your ability to clearly present your information.
- Hire a reputable literary agent: Agents are knowledgeable about publishing and there to help.
- Find a good editor: Editors can be invaluable to you. They are impartial and can provide helpful information on how the developing book reads, its strengths, and its weaknesses.
- Meet deadlines: Know what you need to do and when you need to do it.

So, you've written some parts of the book and now must write a proposal to get a publisher's attention. Here are some insights from top publishers.

Pre-Writing Strategies

Your proposal will discuss your subject qualifications and why they exceed others in the same field, so before you begin writing it, ask yourself the following:

- How enthusiastic am I? Will I continue with this project or move on to something more exciting?
- How does having a book published fit into my career?
- Do I have the resources and experience needed to complete my project?
- How does my book compare with those of my colleagues?
- Would I expand my writing skills (e.g., writing classes) to help ensure that my book is published?

What Publishers Want

Copyright: Enago Academy under the CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 license

Proposals are critical to getting your book published—probably the most important part of the entire process because it provides the first impression that a publisher has of you. Don't take it lightly. Listen to your agent, editor, and colleagues about how to prepare a winning proposal. Peter Potter, editor-in-chief of Cornell University Press, states that many authors tend to present a proposal that is too long and detailed. His colleague, Dominic Boyer, agrees and reiterates that the biggest mistake is when a proposal merely mimics the dissertation. This is where the above points about blogging, reading, and writing can be very helpful.

Academic presses are much more in tune with academic researchers and their works, and it might be easier to get on board with them instead of pursuing a large publisher. Keep in mind that even academic publishers expect you to adhere to several basic elements of a book proposal (guidelines) as follows:

- Book description: One page; four paragraphs (an interesting anecdote, your argument, your contribution, a short outline).
- A descriptive table of contents: Title and a short summary of chapters.
- Characteristics of the final manuscript: Length, number of illustrations/tables.
- Audience: Who will read it? How will it be used?
- Competition: Other books in your field; how yours is different.
- Incomplete manuscript: Estimated date of completion and any resources needed (should be within six months).
- Reviewers: Name and contact information.
- Biographical statement: Your credentials and expertise; previously published works.

These tips are somewhat "generic" but noteworthy. Always check the proposal guidelines for your target publishers. University publishers, such as Harvard University Press and University of California Press, are great resources. Be sure to check out as many of these as possible before you begin to draft your proposal.

Category

1. Manuscripts & Grants
2. Reporting Research

Date Created
2017/10/16
Author
daveishan

Copyright: Enago Academy under the CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 license