

Notes on Getting a Book Published!

STEP 1: BOOK PROPOSAL

Basic Elements:

Book Title

Abstract

Some editors will not read much further, so I would recommend putting forth a great deal of effort in making an abstract that draws the reader in, that sells the heck out of your book.

Additional Components:

Here is what I included. This varies and many publishers (on their websites) will provide instructions or a template as to what they look for in a proposal. The general idea though is that the editor should have a sense of what your book is all about, its contribution, and what makes it unique, and how you set out to achieve what you have described.

- I. **Overview of Book** - Book description, central idea(s), theories, and topics introduced in the book, data used, analytic approach, main conclusions and takeaways.
- II. **Related Works and Contribution** - What books/ works is the book in conversation with, what are similar books and how is your book distinct from books that are already out.
- III. **Outline of Chapters** - Description of each chapter
- IV. **Primary Market/ Audience** - who is the targeted audience for the book, who will it be marketed to or used by, tell them how they can sell your book?
- V. **Manuscript Specifications and Status** - how long (estimated), current status (draft, nearly complete, polished and nearly finalized, etc.)
- VI. **Suggested Reviewers**

My book proposal was 8 pages. Though I may have sent a curtailed version (1-2pgs) first to editors that I contacted.

STEP 2: SELECTING A PUBLISHER

Shopping Your Book Idea to Publishers

You can actually shop an idea without having the proposal yet complete. That is to say, these steps can be completed simultaneously. Many prospective authors met with editors at ASA or other conferences. You can email them to introduce yourself, to express interest in publishing with their press, and to set up a time to meet in late spring or early summer in preparation for ASA.

Selecting a Publisher

I once was given the advice to go to your bookshelf and take note of what press has published your favorite books. This will give you a very basic sense of who publishes what. Press have specialty areas, and some are generalists, while others are known for publishing certain types of work. For example, University of Chicago Press is known for publishing urban ethnographies. A press may also have series that addresses specific topics, so that is worth checking out if it'd be a great fit for your work.

You should also speak to more senior scholars and also your contemporaries to get a sense of how they selected a press, their experience with the press they have published with, and what they might recommend for you given your work.

Things to Consider:

- Rank/Prestige of the Press (Academic Press vs. Trade Press is another factor)
- Commitment of the editor to your project and promoting it
- Other books of similar topic or subject area (complementary books and those that might be competition) also published by the press => is the press well respected for publishing in your area of specialty
- Your timeframe and needs and how well they align with the press's timeline
 - Press have designated seasons and times when new books are released and you should have an idea of when the book will or could be published.

Draft Chapters and External Reviews

Prepare at least two draft chapters that can be sent along or upon request and can be reviewed by external reviewers. It is unlikely that the editor will send the entire manuscript out for review unless you are under contract. I know of instances that only the book proposal was reviewed and a contract was extended, so you also don't have

to have chapters reviewed to have a contract. But likely the editor will want see something before committing.

Once reviews come in the editor will determine if they would like to move forward (you will have to respond to the reviews and address what you will change, also usually there is a board that has to approve of the project, beyond the editor). If a press is committed to your project they will work with you to get it where it needs to be. They may even pay for a developmental editor. You could also determine if you'd rather go with one press or another at this point.

STEP 3: NEGOTIATIONS AND BOOK CONTRACT

Even as a first-time author you can negotiate. There is no harm in asking.

Things that can be negotiated:

- An Advance
- Indexing Costs
- Number of Complimentary Book Copies
- Price of Book (lower price means more attractive to potential readers)
- % of Book sales that you will receive in terms of royalties
- Retaining copyright
- Control over/ final approval of cover image
- Marketing Plan
- Retaining Digital rights