



How to Write an Academic Book

Session 1: How to conceive a book

DR RACHEL KILLEAN & DR CHRISTOPH SPERFELDT

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Preliminary remarks

- ▶ Academic vs. non-academic book
- ▶ **Academic book:** usually (1) intended to make an original contribution to scholarly knowledge; (2) aimed at least in large part at an academic audience; and (3) often published by an academic publisher (a university press or a commercial academic publisher)
- ▶ **Disciplinary differences:** our experience is mainly in law and social sciences
- ▶ **North-South:** difficulties for scholars from the Global South to enter an academic publishing industry that is dominated by institutions and conventions from the Global North

Types of academic publishing

- ▶ Books (more later)
- ▶ Journal articles
- ▶ Book chapters
- ▶ Book reviews
- ▶ Conference proceedings
- ▶ Scientific or academic reports
- ▶ Case reports in law
- ▶ Blogs and other forms of online writing

Types of academic book publications

- (1) Monograph** (single or co-authored): Work of writing on a specific scholarly subject, usually by one author (sometimes more)
- ▶ Most monographs are between 70,000 and 120,000 words (although some publishers are also offering shorter formats of 30,000 to 50,000 words, often in an online format)
 - ▶ Specific case: turning a PhD or doctoral thesis into a book, which will often require additional work
 - ▶ Much of our advice in this workshop will focus on this type of book publication
 - ▶ *Example:* Rachel Killean “Victims, Atrocity and International Criminal Justice”

<https://www.routledge.com/Victims-Atrocity-and-International-Criminal-Justice-Lessons-from-Cambodia/Killean/p/book/9780367895471>

Types of academic book publications

(2) Edited book or edited volume: Often led by one or more “editors”, who manage or oversee the process => several authors each contribute a chapter on their topic

- ▶ Together the chapters form a book in a particular subject
- ▶ Numbers of contributors can vary
- ▶ Being an editor means (1) finding/inviting the contributing authors; (2) managing the process (timelines, contents etc.); (3) reading and providing feedback on all chapters; (3) ensuring that all chapters together form a coherent book; (4) finding a publisher; and (5) marketing the book
- ▶ *Example:* KAS “Introduction to Cambodian Law”:
https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=06c676e4-ba12-d4c5-0a9e-5de4070272e9&groupId=252038

Types of academic book publications

(3) Textbook: Overview-like introduction of a subject matter or a field of knowledge, often explained in an accessible manner and with case studies or exercises

- ▶ Mostly targeted at university students or educators/lecturers to support education
- ▶ *Example:* Rhona Smith “Textbook on International Human Rights”:
<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/international-human-rights-law-9780198843672?cc=us&lang=en#>

Types of academic book publications

(4) Compilations (relevant in law), for instance of constitutions, laws, regulations, case law or other materials

- ▶ Often accompanied by an introduction, annotations or commentary
- ▶ Example: Raoul Jenner “The Cambodian Constitutions (1953-1993)”: <https://www.whitelotusbooks.com/books/cambodian-constitutions-1953-1993-the>

Why write a book?

- ▶ Professional advancement (importance depends on your discipline)
- ▶ Getting your research or ideas across better (e.g. exploring a bigger issue)
- ▶ Reaching a wider or specific audience
- ▶ Making money? (little income, unless you are a famous writer)
- ▶ Costs vs. benefits: significant time and effort involved in writing a book
- ▶ A book is all about writing: if you don't like it too much, you may prefer shorter publications, such as journal articles

From research to book

Contribution: what does your book add to the existing literature?

- ▶ A review of the existing scholarly literature is essential
- ▶ Explore the literature, searching for gaps and new trends
- ▶ Articulate your contribution to a specific body of literature

Research, data and resources:

- ▶ A book is usually based on substantive research (generating an amount of information and insights sufficient enough for a book)
- ▶ Different approaches: Have you already completed the research, or are you still planning to do the research?
- ▶ Do you have the time and resources to complete the book?

From research to book

Audience: who are you writing for?

- ▶ Identify who exactly you want to write for
- ▶ Be specific about your audience, as this will inform your writing style, language, presentation of information etc.
- ▶ Also, think about where your book will be used
- ▶ You cannot write for everyone