



# How to Write an Academic Book

## Session 3: How to publish a book

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# The book proposal

- ▶ Generally, there are two ways of submitting a book project to an academic publisher: (1) send a completed manuscript, or (2) send a proposal outlining your proposed book => a book proposal will often be required in either instance
- ▶ The quality of your book project will be assessed by peer reviewers (= fellow academics, often with knowledge of the field in which the topic of the book is located) => peer reviewers will either assess your proposal, full manuscript or both (depending on your publisher)
- ▶ Writing a book proposal earlier can give you a first indication about whether your desired publisher might be interested in your book project/topic (however, it could also mean that you have to go through peer review twice)
- ▶ Most publishers will have editors specialising in different fields (see Rachel) => you will usually email your book proposal to your relevant subject-matter editor

# Drafting a book proposal

- ▶ There are many ways and formats for a book proposal => some publishers will suggest a specific format that they want to see (check websites)
- ▶ However, most book proposals contain similar core components => answering some key questions about your book:

**What is your book about?** => *clearly* describe the main argument of your book (reviewers must easily understand what your book is about)

- ▶ How did you conduct the research for this book?
- ▶ What are the most interesting stories from your research/book? => what is the main take-away point/lesson of your book?
- ▶ A good start is to draft an abstract that articulates your argument in a clear and concise manner => show it to your colleagues and seek feedback

# Drafting a book proposal

## **Why is your book important, significant or relevant?**

- ▶ Explain why your topic matters
- ▶ You may think that it is important, but you also need to convince others
- ▶ Your book may be relevant for your specific subject or field, but ideally also has some broader significance (e.g. a methodological or theoretical innovation; or practical relevance)

# Drafting a book proposal

## What is new about your book that others haven't written about yet?

- ▶ Explain what your book will do that is different from other books on the same subject (i.e. you need to know the literature in the field) => Collect a list of comparative books or titles
- ▶ If editors or reviewers think that you are doing what has already been done or said, they will likely reject your proposal
- ▶ If there are other books on the same or similar topic (especially well-known ones), explain how your book will be different or complements this literature (e.g. are you challenging established views in this literature, or do you address a gap?)
- ▶ Also note how and why the book would be a **good fit** for the specific publisher you are proposing the book to

# Drafting a book proposal

## **Who will read this book?** => *market and audience*

- ▶ Articulate who you think would be interested in your book: will the book just be for university libraries, or do you think different disciplines or student/practitioner audiences might also want to get your book
- ▶ How will your audiences benefit from the book?
- ▶ If possible, include received positive feedback you received from some possible audiences (including conferences or well-known scholars who have an interest in your work, or certain practitioner audiences)
- ▶ Note: most academic publishers usually don't produce many copies of the book, waiting first to see how your book sells (unless you have a strong publication track record)

# Drafting a book proposal

## **Why are you the right person to write this book?**

- ▶ Summarise your qualifications and experience relevant to the book project
- ▶ Often publishers want to see a brief author CV or an author bio
- ▶ Draft these specially with the book project in mind
- ▶ Include a list of prior publications, especially those relevant to the book project
- ▶ The publisher wants to gain confidence that you can write this book

# Drafting a book proposal

- ▶ **Outline of the book:** many publishers want to see an outline briefly summarising each of the book chapters (including a working title for your book and each of the chapters)
- ▶ **Sample chapters:** if you do not submit the full manuscript, most but not all publishers will want to read some sample chapters (usually this is the introduction and another 1-2 other chapters from your manuscript (pick the best ones))
- ▶ **Other elements:** (1) status of your book and timeline (how much more work do you need to do to complete the book? When do you think you have a full manuscript available?); (2) estimated length of the final manuscript; and (3) any other information that a publisher might want to know about your book (e.g. do you intend to translate or publish it in different languages)

# Responding to reviewer reports

- ▶ If a publisher decided to that a proposal is interesting enough to be considered, they will send it to external reviewers or readers
- ▶ You will then receive comments in a short report
- ▶ Address step-by-step the main comments you received from the reviewers
- ▶ Politely but confidently note how you will address critical comments (e.g. in the final manuscript or through revisions) and rebut any unwarranted criticism

# Examples of publishers and their formats

## University-affiliated press:

- ▶ NUS Press (Singapore): <https://nuspress.nus.edu.sg/pages/prospective-authors>
- ▶ NIAS Press (Copenhagen): <https://www.niaspress.dk/practical-guides-for-authors/>
- ▶ ISEAS Publishing (Singapore): <https://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg/for-authors>
- ▶ ANU Press (Canberra, open access): <https://press.anu.edu.au/authors>
- ▶ Hawaii University Press (Honolulu): <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/authors/>
- ▶ Oxford University Press: <https://global.oup.com/academic/authors/proposals/?cc=us&lang=en&>

## Commercial academic publishers:

- ▶ Routledge: <https://www.routledge.com/our-customers/authors/submit-your-book-proposal>
- ▶ Edward Elgar: <https://www.e-elgar.com/publish-with-us/submit-a-proposal/>
- ▶ See also “Academic publishing in Southeast Asia”: [https://www.ias.asia/sites/default/files/2020-11/ICAS4\\_2005\\_08.pdf](https://www.ias.asia/sites/default/files/2020-11/ICAS4_2005_08.pdf)