



SUBMITTING PROPOSALS



"Yes, I realize this is your standard contract. But I've got a few questions concerning the section titled, 'The Author's Soul.'"

This cartoon by Matthew Henry Hall first appeared in the "Teachable Moments" column of Inside Higher Ed / <http://www.insidehighered.com>, and is reproduced by permission. The cartoonist's Web site is: www.matthewhenryhall.com

A clear, well thought out proposal is the key to getting a project considered by a publisher. We recommend taking time over your proposal, to think through the guidelines and questions that follow, and to give yourself the opportunity for reflection and second thoughts. The process of refining your focus and ideas will also eventually help with the writing process.

Bear in mind that the market for books and information is highly competitive, and that as authors and publishers we need to focus on filling real needs, such as providing new ideas, information, solutions or concepts that have value for our audiences in their scholarly and professional capacities.

The Proposal

The proposal should cover all the following issues, many of which overlap, in the sequence that's most logical for your project.

1. Title

A good title sends a clear signal to your intended audience about your goals. It is also a vital element in marketing and differentiating your book from others. A good final title may only emerge during the writing process, so we're happy to begin with a "working" title. Spending some time thinking about a working title, even one that's over-wordy but that expresses your intentions, can help you in refining your objectives.

2. Description, scope, content and purpose

Explain your subject matter and provide a rationale for why your project is timely and why it will appeal to your intended audience. Describe its scope, and the topics that you plan to cover. What are you contributing to the subject? What new insights or research findings have you developed? Are you presenting or synthesizing known material in a new way, or for a new audience?

If you are proposing an edited book, whom do you plan to approach as chapter authors? Have any contributors committed themselves to the project? With edited books, achieving cohesion and getting everyone to contribute to your overall objectives, requires particular planning and attention. Are you familiar with the contributors' writings, and are you confident they will follow your guidelines as editor?

3. Audience

Be as specific as possible in terms of academic discipline or job title, type of institution/company. Distinguish between primary and secondary audiences, and consider specific geographical appeal if relevant (e.g. likely interest in specific national markets). If you're proposing a textbook, specify level and courses, and give your best estimate of market size.

4. Need

Define the need your book will meet or create. Why will people buy it? What does it do, or do in a new way, that meets the need of your intended audience? Will it significantly add to a body of knowledge, or significantly improve practices?

5. Competition

List competing and related works (giving author, title, and publisher; or a hot link to the Amazon entry) and explain specifically how your book differs from or improves upon the competition. Bear in mind that competition may include materials available in journal form or online. State whether price, timing, or format issues are critical.

6. Qualifications & related activities

Although this may duplicate information in your resumé / *curriculum vitae*, highlight the work you've done which is relevant to this project. Also let us know if you lecture outside your institution, give presentations at meetings, are otherwise involved with information media related to the subject of your book (are you on the board of a journal; an owner of a

listserv?), or active in a relevant organization or association. Do you have influential contacts in your field you might be willing to give a pre-publication endorsement?

In an environment where so much information competes for our limited time, an author's participation in publicizing his or her book can make a major difference to sales. In connection with this, if you have access to online version of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, we recommend you take a look at an article by William Germano that appeared in the Careers Section on January 18th, 2008: "How to be an author: Once you've finished writing a book, part of your job is to promote it." (<http://chronicle.com/subscribe/login?url=http%3A%2F%2Fchronicle.com%2Fweekly%2Fv54%2Fi19%2F19c00101.htm>)

7. Table of contents

Provide a line or two of description with each chapter title.

8. Format, length, special features

Let us know if you have specific ideas about format: Traditional book? Binder product? Electronic component? Large format? Additional Web site material? Provide an estimate of length in terms of thousands of words (a typical double-spaced, word-processed page in 12 point type can run from 300 – 350 words, depending on margins). Does the book need illustrations? Are there any unusual features?

9. E-books

Stylus issues e-book editions (in both networkable library editions and single-user consumer editions that allow portability across devices) simultaneously with the print edition.

Our e-books incorporate internal navigation so that, for instance, each element of a table of contents will link to its corresponding chapter, and readers will be able to navigate back and forth between a footnote numeral and the footnote text, as well as index terms. All URLs will be hotlinks to enable immediate accessing of corresponding Web sites from within the book.

10. Timetable

Give an estimate for completion of manuscript. Are there any factors, which should influence publication date, such as a conference or anniversary of a related event? Be realistic about your existing commitments, travel, etc., and how much time you will be able to devote to writing.

11. A note about dissertations

If your project is based on your doctoral dissertation, it is almost certain that you will need to undertake major rewriting and restructuring to turn it into a marketable book. The purpose of a dissertation is to display your skills as a researcher and scholar; and the audience consists of your committee. To convert your dissertation into a book for a broader audience, we recommend you read Germano, W. (2005). *From Dissertation to Book*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/151409.crl>

12. A note about writing

Even your academic peers appreciate straightforward, clear prose. In general, more accessibly written books gain wider readership. We recommend you read Gail Hornstein's

article “Prune That Prose” that appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of September 9th, 2009: http://chronicle.com/article/Prune-That-Prose/48273/?sid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

13. Accompanying Material

We ideally like to see proposals accompanied by:

a. A writing sample

A draft chapter or introduction is desirable but not vital.

b. Resumé / *curriculum vitae*

14. Submission

We look forward to hearing from you.

Stylus Publishing

Send your proposal as an e-mail attachment to either:

John von Knorring (jvk@styluspub.com)

Or

David Brightman (david.brightman@styluspub.com)

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