The Publishing Landscape for Humanities and Social Sciences: Navigation tips for early career researchers

Chris Harrison
Publishing Development Director
*Humanities and Social Sciences*
Cambridge University Press

An integral part of the University of Cambridge

World’s oldest publisher, founded in 1534

Our first book was published in 1584
The academic publishing landscape

• Over 20,000 journals
• More than 2 million articles per year
• More than 200,000 new books each year
• STM: $14 billion, H&SS: $2.4 billion (annually)
• Many publishers (in all shapes and sizes)
Your challenge!
University Presses

• “Not for profit” – what does this mean?
  Oxford & Cambridge UPs – self sufficient and net contributor to University revenues; most N American UPs are subsidised by parent university

• Publishing decisions – academic quality & market
Commercial publishers

- **Higher Education/College** – Pearson, Cengage – focus on learning materials for big courses
- **Professional** – Publishing for practitioners in markets such as law, medicine, parts of engineering
- **Commercial academic** – Taylor & Francis, Palgrave, Elgar

All have high standards but they have to look at the world in a different way to UPs – they must make a profit
The landscape is changing fast!

- **Technology.** Journals business has long been based on digital publication. Digital is more and more important for books.
- **Open access** journals and starting to experiment with OA books.
- **New formats** - See today’s agenda!
- CUP launching hybrid books/journal Cambridge Elements.
- **Scholarly Collaboration Networks**
- **Lots of free stuff**! (Both legal and not so legal!)
PUBLISHING WITH CAMBRIDGE
What are we interested in?

- World class research that makes an “original and significant contribution to the literature”
- Surveys and reviews of major topics suitable for advanced undergraduate and graduate students
- Graduate Textbooks
- Reference
- Practitioner Guides
I WOULD LIKE TO WRITE A RESEARCH MONOGRAPGH
Submitting book proposal to a publisher

• Try and **find the name of the relevant editors** – most publishers’ websites list editorial contacts

• **Personal contact** always best!

• Write a **personal email** to editor to give basic details of the book project you would like to discuss. Do not assume they are experts!

• Attach a **book prospectus**, **Do not send full manuscript**
Tips for writing a good prospectus

• Use a **clear, descriptive title** – don’t try to make a “clever” title

• A **short** summary of the aims and scope of the book and why you think it makes an **original** and **distinctive** contribution

• A detailed **table of contents** with 200-500 word **summaries** of each chapter and a list of the literature you intend to cite
• Brief description of your target readership – hint: much better to be focused and precise than to say that everybody will want to read it!

• Brief analysis of some of the most closely related books to yours. How will your book add to the literature?

• Short author biography

• Sample chapters (if available)
TURNING A DISSERTATION INTO A BOOK
Dissertations

✓ Thorough review of previous scholarship

✓ Mastery of a specific topic

✗ Typically too narrow for book-length treatment

➢ Ask Yourself. Have I enough to tell a bigger story? Would I be better to split into journal articles?
Turning a dissertation into a book

- Are those review chapters all necessary? Is additional explanation necessary?
- Does the framework need to be changed to give a strong narrative argument?
- Add topics that you might have considered beyond the scope of a thesis,
- Consider these points before approaching a publisher
THE REVIEW PROCESS
REVIEW STAGES

• DESK REVIEW – in house editor will assess whether suitable for list. If yes, then will proceed to peer review. Acceptance rate at this stage varies a lot according to discipline

• PEER REVIEW Depending on policy of publisher editor may ask to see full manuscript to send for peer review or may be happy to send prospectus
PEER REVIEW

• Single blind, typically 2-3 reviews per project
• Outcome: decline, revise & resubmit, recommend contract
• Hard work – CUP book editors commission c4000 reports pa.
• Hard work – we often ask referees to read full manuscripts or comment on interdisciplinary work.
• Typically paid with book allowance, but also cash
• Tricky decisions – referees seldom agree with each other
Main differences between book & journal peer review & editorial decision

• Mentor vs Gatekeeper role?
• Typically narrower terms of reference for journal review – books bigger, more complex, often interdisciplinary … and market matters
• CUP books take peer review stage very seriously and ask a lot from our referees
• Not an exact science in either case
Recommended reading to make you feel better

Economics Nobel laureate Kenneth Arrow: "the publication selection procedure [...] has become methodologically more conservative, more given to preferring small wrinkles in existing analysis to genuinely new ideas "
How should I respond to comments of reviewers?

- Be respectful and acknowledge the time and care referees have taken
- Engage positively and constructively with criticisms. Do not be defensive or aggressive
- Respond either by common themes in referee reports or take each report in turn
- Indicate what you agree with, what you disagree with and what changes if any you would propose to make
THE DECISION PROCESS AT CAMBRIDGE
Publishing Proposal Meeting – Internal editorial, sales & marketing review

- Discussion of new projects
  - Editors
  - Marketing
  - Sales

- Ensuring that project is of sufficient quality (proposal, referee reports etc.)
- Financial model is viable (pricing, print run etc.)
- Marketing strategy (clarifying audience, refining the title etc.)
The Press Syndicate

• Governing body of Cambridge University Press
• 18 members - ‘Syndics’
• All new publications (books and journals) must be approved by the Press Syndicate
• Applies to all authors – Nobel prizewinners and postdocs!
WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM A PUBLISHING CONTRACT?
The Book Contract

• Confirms details of title, word (or page) count and delivery schedule and proposed publishing format
• If contract offered on basis of a prospectus may have a clause requiring a “clearance reading” before final acceptance
• Confirms who owns copyright
• Confirms the obligations of the publisher
• Confirms financial terms
What does the publisher do?

Commissioning & Pre-Contract
Peer Review

Global Marketing

Commissioning & Pre-Contract
Peer Review

Development
- Advice on style, structure
- Class-testing, reviews
- Figures

Design
- Internal layout
- Cover design

Distribution
- Print (or PoD)
- Online
- Archiving

Copy-editing
Proof-reading

Rights & Royalties
- Licensing
- Co-publication
- Translations

Intellectual Property Protection

Commerce
- Library supply
- Retail & internet
- Wholesalers
- Direct

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Selecting a journal – do plenty of homework!

• **Identifying the right journal is first big step!** Ask:
  o What is the hierarchy of journals in your field?
  o How significant are your findings or your argument? (The more significant, the higher you can aim. How much risk are you willing to take?)
  o Is your paper within the scope of the journal?
  o Are there any warning signs that journal is having problems? e.g. late with publishing new issues
  o What is journal’s policy on Open Access?
  o Is the journal indexed? What is its impact factor?
Maximise your chances of clearing first hurdle

• Write a clear, informative abstract
• Obey the rules in *Instructions to Contributors*
• Make sure your paper
  o Is written in **good English**
  o Has got a **conclusion**
  o Has a **clear message** to show that the paper is important to the target audience
• One journal at a time
Advice from Journal editors

• “Read the journal you want to publish in, or at least the abstracts; attention to what the journal is actively interested in (topics, but also methods and theoretical approaches) will help you understand if your paper is appropriate or not.”

• "Read the Instructions for Contributors" (IFC) for the journal you want to publish in."
Assessment workflow
Post-acceptance

A good publisher adds value to the accepted manuscript with:

- Copy-editing
- Production at the highest industry standards
- State-of-the-art online delivery
- Usage statistics available at journal and paper level
- Discoverability; COUNTER compliance (usage data for digital product); CrossRef; bibliographic databases; citation and indexing services (eg ISI, Scopus); allowing Google to index;
- Open access options meeting all funding bodies’ requirements
Very useful resources

- Day and Gastel
- Luey
Questions?

CHRIS HARRISON,
CHARRISON@CAMBRIDGE.ORG