

## **PUBLICATION**

- Drafting a Book Proposal

### **Drafting a Book Proposal**

For academics in the humanities and many of the social sciences, a book is your union card: A prerequisite for tenure. Here are some practical tips about drafting a book proposal.

**1. *A proposal is not simply an abstract of your book: It must sell your project.***

You need to persuade the editor and reviewers that your project makes a significant contribution to scholarship in your field and has a sufficiently broad audience to merit publication.

**2. *A dissertation is not a book.***

Very few dissertations are publishable without significant revision. Typically, authors must delete lengthy literature reviews and methodological and theoretical digressions, give the manuscript greater focus and a more pointed argument, and make the writing more accessible to an educated readership.

**3. *A proposal must be succinct.***

Typically, it is no more than ten pages long.

**4. *Your cover letter must whet the editor's interest and curiosity.***

It should be brief and should contain a grabber: the book's title and a one or two sentence summary of your argument and why your book is compelling. The cover letter should also mention your educational background, your mentor, and your prior publications (if any).

**5. *Your proposal must address a series of key questions:***

- a. What is your book about?
- b. What's important and special about your book?
- c. Why are you an appropriate person to write this book?
- d. Who is the potential audience?
- e. How long will the book be and when will it be completed?

**6. *A book proposal typically divides into six sections:***

- a. The title

Titles are important; your book's title should make the subject matter and your overarching theme self-evident.

- b. A one paragraph description that will hook the publisher.

- c. A two-to-three page narrative offering a detailed overview of the book.
- d. An annotated table-of-contents which includes a narrative description of each chapter.
- e. A marketing analysis, identifying the potential audience as well as competing books.
- f. An author profile