FROM DISSERTATION TO BOOK

ASA Professional Workshop
August 22, 2015
4:30 – 6:10 pm
Presenters

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Overview

• Differences between dissertation & book
• Stages in the transformation
• Common barriers
• Tips & resources
• Q&A / Hands-on work

Goals: At the end of the workshop you will know:
▪ How a book manuscript differs from a dissertation;
▪ The stages of developing a dissertation-based manuscript;
▪ How to identify common stumbling blocks;
▪ Where to look for help.
Should You Write A Book?

• Does your dissertation research demand book form?
• Will writing a book support your career goals or help your job search?
• Are you in a ‘book department’ or an ‘article department’?
• Do you have the resources you need?

TIP: This might seem like a question you’ve already answered. But books don’t fit every scholar’s career. And, that’s okay. – Tristan Bridges
### Dissertation Vs. Book

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<th>Dissertation</th>
<th>Book</th>
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| **Purpose**    | • Scholarly, research-focused  
• Reach narrow audience  
• Earn PhD | • Wider audience  
(laypeople, students)  
• Inform, teach, inspire |
| **Structure**  | • Pre-determined chapters, content  
• Methods/others’ research: strong emphasis | • “Story-like;” one theme connects parts  
• Creative structure  
• Methods/others’ research: less emphasis |
| **Writing Style** | • Field specific  
• Jargon/terminology  
• Objective/clinical voice | • More accessible  
• Less jargon – define terminology  
• Clear authorial voice |
Assessing Goals/Resources

Assess Goals
– What are your professional obligations (e.g., teaching, research, service, collaborations, career track)?

Identify Challenges
– Time, money, skills, abilities, logistical resources
– Personal demands (children, aging parents, partner)
– Personal challenges (work style, health concerns/needs, energy/motivation)

List Resources / Needs
- Release time, internal/external funds
- Technical assistance (e.g., copyediting, indexing)
- Personal assistance (e.g., child care, housecleaning)
- Self care (e.g., yoga)
Assessing Goals/Resources

**TIP:** This is a CONTINUOUS PROCESS! To stay motivated, I taught about my research. Students’ excitement helped me stay excited!

– Dawn Norris
Stages of the Transformation

Assessment  Prospectus  Work Plan  Writing  Platform  Contract
Assessment

What will I need to do?

– How much overhaul does my dissertation need?
– What’s new about my topic?
– Do I need more data or information?
– Is there enough content for 1 or 2 articles in advance of the book?
**TIP:** A first stab at revising scholarly writing may be to search for concepts like “social constructionism” and replace them with simpler language. – Wendy Cadge, “Heartwood”
Craft A Prospectus

In about 5-8 pages:
1. What is your manuscript is about? Why is it important?
2. What is the proposed table of contents?
3. Who is the likely audience?
4. What are the competing/similar books?
5. What is the status of the work? (length, % complete, proposed revisions, sample chapters, permissions?)
6. What are your marketing plans (e.g., website, blog, twitter, Facebook, connections w/ journalists, etc.)
7. Who might review your book (3-4 suggestions)? Get permission!
Craft A Prospectus

**TIP:** Some presses ask for specific information to be included in a prospectus. ALWAYS CHECK their websites first to find out. – Chris Bobel, “New Blood”
Create A Reasonable Work Plan

1. List goals
2. Identify projects involved
3. List steps needed for each project
4. Map each step onto your weekly calendar

**TIP:** It’s your book. Your process. In the end, you need to develop it, guide it, and love it for yourself.
– Adina Nack, “Damaged Goods”
Write

• Read good writing in your field
• Read nonacademic books
• Develop a daily writing practice
• Write first
• Time yourself
• Join a writing group (or several)
• Find your “writing groove”
TIP: What do you need to support writing time? Make your wish-list. Then spend some time looking for resources. – Astrid Eich-Krohm, “German Professionals in the United States”
Create & Use Your Platform

Traditional
• Find acquisition editors at professional conferences
• Contact editors to set up a meeting
• Visit book exhibit for a conversation
• Email publishers with cover letter & prospectus
• Only send to 2-3 publishers at once. Tell them you’re shopping the book.

Non-Traditional
• Diverse outlets (blogs, op-eds, newsletters)
• Collaborations with stakeholders (webinars, conferences, workshops, meetings with members)
Create & Use Your Platform

TIP: I never set out to be a public scholar. But I couldn’t put out a call to action and then not be part of the action! My blog took on a life of its own. So did the book.

– Gayle Sulik, “Pink Ribbon Blues”
Secure The Contract

• Legal contract, without much variation
  • Standard terms and conditions
  • Manuscript/delivery specs
  • Payments/royalties
• Negotiating room for contract details
• Marketing plans = separate documents (non-contractual)
• Release from contract, if necessary
Secure The Contract

**TIP:** Talk to senior mentors with significant book publishing experience to better understand contract terms and possible negotiations.

– Meika Loe, “Aging our Way”
Some Lessons We Learned

• Stick to a timeline; adjust as needed.
• Translate for your audience; control the message.
• Consider publicity coach or developmental editor.
• Find your support system – writing partners, accountability groups, mentors.
• Outsource what you can – copyeditor, indexer, layouts for image plates or other materials, etc.
• Contract timing and negotiations vary.
• “Kill your darlings.”
Some Lessons We Learned

**TIP**: Life is not orderly. No matter how we try to make life so, right in the middle of it we die, lose a leg, fall in love, drop a jar of applesauce. - Natalie Goldberg, “Wild Mind”
Do you have any clarifying questions we should answer before moving on to brainstorming and hands-on work?

-- 5 minutes --
Why should I (or, shouldn’t I) write a book?

-- 5 minutes --
Handouts

-- 5 minutes --
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- What is my book about?
- What is the purpose of my book?
- Who is my audience?
- What are my professional obligations?
- What resources do I have/need?
- Is my dissertation finished? How much of an overhaul will it need? Have I read it?
- Am I ready to start working on a prospectus? Shopping one around?
- Do I have a platform? Who am I as an author, scholar, writer?
THANK YOU!

Slides and handouts available for download at www.gaylesulik.com