## Contents

*Acknowledgments*  ix

### Introduction

1 **Know the Process: Your Readers and the Importance of Fit**  6
   - Step 1: Identify Your Target Presses  14
   - Step 2: Research and Evaluate Your Target Presses  15
   - Step 3: Gather Submission Information for Your Target Presses and Summarize Your Book’s Fit  17

2 **Write for Publication: What Presses Value in Your Scholarly Book Project**  27
   - Step 4: Generate Raw Material for Your Proposal Package  30
   - Step 5: Draft a Letter of Inquiry to Introduce Your Project to Editors  30

3 **Find Your Place: Competing and Comparable Works**  37
   - Step 6: Collect a List of Comp Titles  39

4 **Identify Your Audiences and Market: Who Is Your Book Really For?**  44
   - Step 7: Articulate Your Book’s Audience  46

5 **Showcase Your Core Thesis: Strong Arguments Make Strong Books**  54
   - Step 8: State Your Book’s Thesis  56
   - Step 9: Distill a One-Liner for Your Project  58

6 **Give an Overview: A Template for Project Descriptions**  62
   - Step 10: Draft a Project Description  64

7 **Expose the Structure: Effective Chapter Summaries**  68
   - Step 11: Summarize Your Book’s Chapters  70

8 **Invite Readers In: Book and Chapter Titles**  77
   - Step 12: Come Up with Working Titles for Your Book and Its Chapters  78

9 **Put Yourself on the Page: Style and Voice**  82
   - Step 13: Revise Your Proposal Materials for Style and Voice  85
10 Really Put Yourself On the Page: Your Author Biography and CV
   Step 14: Write an Author Biography 89
   Step 15: Create an Author CV from Your Full CV 90

11 Don’t Forget the Details: Specs, Status, and Other Elements of a Complete Proposal Package
   Step 16: Assemble Your Prospectus 99

12 Make the Connection: When and How to Reach Out to Publishers
   Step 17: Prepare to Connect with Editors 105
   Step 18: Submit Your Proposal 109

13 Keep Your Cool: Navigating Reader Reports, Contracts, and Other Decision Points
   Step 19: Respond to Your Reader Reports 122

14 See It Through: Permissions, Proofs, and Promotion
   Step 20: Get a Head Start on Your Promotion Efforts 135

Conclusion: Maintaining Perspective 148

Steps to Complete 151
Assessing Your Proposal Materials 153
Sample Documents 157
Suggestions for Further Reading 177
Bibliography 181
Time-Tested Tips and Frequently Asked Questions by Chapter 183
Index 191
Introduction

As a group, scholarly authors—even experienced ones—have a lot to learn about the book proposal as a genre and the publishing process more generally. It’s not for lack of interest. In my work as a developmental editor and publishing consultant for academic writers, I’ve spent innumerable hours educating clients about the purposes and norms of the book proposal and found myself giving the same advice again and again. I’ve heard the refrain “Why didn’t anyone teach us this!!?” more times than I can count. This has signaled to me that academic writers need a concise guide to the book publishing context and how to navigate it at the proposal stage. I wanted to give such writers a practical handbook to walk them through the process of crafting their pitches and to demystify the tacit expectations that make the proposal genre different from other, more familiar, types of academic writing. An author who understands the power of a strong proposal in the publishing process is an author with more power over the fate of their book.

The guide you’re now reading is an integrated program that will take you through each step of researching and writing a proposal that will sell your book to an editor at a scholarly press. Even if you’ve published a book before, I think you will find information here that you didn’t know the first time around. Maybe you’re just starting to think about your next book; beginning with the proposal and the steps outlined in this handbook is an excellent way to map out the project before you draft the manuscript. Whatever stage you’re at with your current project and your publishing career, I hope that using this guide will help you gain meaningful insight into your own research and the message you want to share with the world. You’ll not only write a powerful proposal, you’ll write a powerful book.

Who This Book Is For

The reader I address in this book is a scholar with an academic background, probably with a PhD or on their way to getting one, or more generally interested in participating in a broad intellectual conversation. You may be trying to publish your first book or your fourth. You may be affiliated with a university
or you may be an independent scholar. You may be working in the humanities, social sciences, STEM fields, or interdisciplinary areas, aiming to make an original contribution to scholarly knowledge and discourse. This guide is therefore directed at helping you pitch your project to scholarly publishers, rather than mainstream commercial publishing houses. The advice here is also geared toward authors writing books based on their original research. You may find this guide helpful if you are hoping to pitch a textbook, edited anthology, or some other kind of book aimed at a scholarly audience, but I don’t address those scenarios explicitly here. I focus on U.S. publishers in this guide, though you’ll probably find that many of the principles I share will apply in other settings as well.

I’m here to give you some best practices for packaging your research to meet the needs of scholarly book publishers and readers, so that you have the greatest chance of reaching them with your message. Although the book proposal seems like a simple and straightforward document to publishing professionals who read them every day, the proposal is often unfamiliar territory for authors themselves. You probably know from experience that junior scholars learn the norms of publishing informally and haphazardly, and then it often only happens if you can find allies who will recognize and decode the “hidden curriculum” for you. Senior faculty and publishing staff are overcommitted, rarely having as much time as they would like to read drafts and offer advice. I’ve written this guide to fill in the gaps and level the playing field, as much as any one book could do.

Many publishing professionals mean well and intend to consider all book projects on their own merits. Even so, patterns exist in which certain scholars tend to enjoy the presumption of competence in academic contexts, while others may be scrutinized more closely by those in power or assumed not to belong at all, as the many contributors to the volume Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia have pointed out. Structural forces (and some individuals) within academia have worked to marginalize and oppress Black scholars, Indigenous scholars, other scholars of

1. If you want to write a nonfiction trade book, the kind that might command a big advance and garner tens of thousands of readers beyond the academy, there are other resources out there to help you do that. As a place to start, I recommend the materials on Jane Friedman’s website, janefriedman.com, as well as her book, The Business of Being a Writer.

2. Beth Luey’s Handbook for Academic Authors contains chapters addressing textbooks and edited volumes. I recommend that book as a supplement to this one if you want to learn about how such books get published.

3. Jackson, Life In Classrooms.
color, women scholars, queer scholars, trans scholars, disabled scholars, scholars from poor and working-class backgrounds, and scholars at the intersections of these categories. This marginalization and oppression compounds with the publishing industry’s own problems of racism, elitism, and other toxic dynamics that are unfortunately so familiar in the academy and beyond it. In calling attention to this, I don’t mean to discount the work scholarly presses have done to publish books by writers from underrepresented and historically excluded groups, books that have shaped fields and advanced causes for social justice. It’s undeniable, though, that social capital and entrenched systems of power still count for a lot in decisions about who and what gets published and promoted.

A handbook is not a solution to the structural defects of academia or publishing at large. Yet I hope that this handbook will assist you—especially if you’re a scholar who has been marginalized, oppressed, or abused in academia—in going forth with the confidence that you’ve produced a proposal worthy of serious consideration by the kinds of publishing professionals you’d want to collaborate with on your book. They are out there, and I hope the knowledge you gain from this guide will help you find them.

How to Use This Book

I’ve structured this guide so that you can follow the progression of the chapters in order as you draft and pitch your scholarly book proposal. I begin by showing you how a book idea becomes a manuscript under contract and how to select appropriate presses for your particular project (chapter 1). The next several chapters will guide you through drafting the elements that will make up your book proposal package, including your letter of introduction (chapter 2); a discussion of similar books (chapter 3); a description of your target audiences (chapter 4); an effective overview of your project and its thesis (chapters 5 and 6); compelling chapter summaries (chapter 7); and all the other information that publishers commonly request (chapters 10 and 11). Along the way, I explain how good titles and a strong voice can help sell your book, first to publishers and then to readers (chapters 8 and 9). Finally, I walk you through how to approach publishers when you’re ready (chapter 12), and I offer advice on how to navigate the submission, peer review, contract, production, and promotion processes (chapters 13 and 14).

While this progression of chapters will work well for some readers, you should feel free to consult the chapters of this book in any order. If you’re already somewhere in the middle of working on your proposal or you just need help in a particular area, you should be able to dip into the table of contents.
and find the information you need. I’ve designed this guide with the rhythms and constraints of scholarly life in mind, because I understand that you’re probably trying to fit work on your book proposal in between many other professional and personal activities. The discrete steps presented across the book will allow you to assemble a proposal out of manageable building blocks that you can complete at your own pace, even if you only have a few spare minutes per week. If you set larger blocks of time aside, you can probably have a complete proposal ready to discuss with publishers in just a week or two. I’ve put the steps in an intentional order to help you craft your proposal most efficiently, but you may choose to tackle the steps in any sequence and at any pace that makes sense to you. I hope that you’ll keep this book close at hand throughout your publishing career so that you can consult it as a reference as questions arise. Always remember that the index is your friend.

Each chapter begins with a brief narrative discussion of the topic at hand, followed by a step or set of steps to complete. To offer further assistance and context, I offer “Time-Tested Tips” drawn from common pitfalls and successes. Each chapter ends with a set of answers to questions frequently asked by prospective authors. These tips and questions are also presented in a list, broken down by chapter, toward the end of the book, so you can locate them later for quick reference if you need to.

In addition to the main chapters, this guide includes several tools to assist you in crafting your proposal and navigating your publication journey. Comprehensive checklists synthesize all the steps and tips from across the main chapters to provide a master list of the elements to be included in your book proposal package. You can use the checklists to perform a final quality check on your proposal after you’ve assembled it or to organize your work plan from the beginning. You will also find sample documents—two prospectuses, a letter of introduction, and a response to reader reports—that you can use as models for your own. These are real documents my clients have used successfully, and I’ve highlighted areas of particular effectiveness and appeal so that you can emulate them if you wish. Suggestions for further reading will point you toward books you may find helpful at various stages in your writing and publishing process. Downloadable worksheets and other resources to assist you in completing the steps laid out in The Book Proposal Book can be found online at bookproposalbook.com.

In creating this guide, I draw on my years of experience working with hundreds of academic writers on their book manuscripts and book proposals. My clients have signed contracts and published award-winning books with dozens of competitive university presses. I am in direct contact with aspiring authors
every day, and they approach me with the issues they hesitate to discuss with colleagues, mentors, and acquisitions editors. My advice is based on what I have seen work for authors and on numerous conversations with acquisitions editors themselves.

I also draw on my experience as a scholarly author. Three years after completing my PhD, I published a book based on my doctoral dissertation, and I well remember what it was like to fumble through the often-confusing process on my own, despite having generous editors and mentors to help. I understand the challenges you’re facing as you set out to write and pitch your scholarly book, because I’ve faced many of these challenges myself. I can’t take all the anxiety out of submitting your hard work for judgment by others, but I hope to eliminate a good deal of the uncertainty from this endeavor for you.

Any publishing professional will tell you that there is no singular “right” way to write a successful book proposal (though they’ll usually grant that there are plenty of wrong ways). For this reason, general advice will only take you so far. While this book takes a practical approach, offering templates and tips that might seem prescriptive at first blush, keep in mind that they are just there to give you a point of departure. Different editors have different preferences, and while I’ve tried to synthesize those into the broadest possible recommendations, there will always be room for variation. Indeed, I’ve seen many authors successfully publish scholarly books without following every piece of advice I will present here. I also acknowledge that this guide is limited to helping you navigate the scholarly publishing system that currently exists, not imagining a better system that could be pushed for and one day realized. All that said, I believe that having a sense of the present unwritten “rules” of scholarly publishing will set you up to push and break them to best effect, should you decide to do so. The way you plan and pitch your book is ultimately up to you, but I will do my best to get you started on the right foot.

Index

acknowledgments, 70, 73
acquisitions editor: collaboration with, 25–26, 149; connecting with (see connecting with an editor); editorial assistants working with, 144; feedback and line edits by, 125; final review of manuscript by, 135; mentioning your time constraints to, 116; offer from, 124–26; principles that guide, 28; response to proposal from, 116–18, 122; results of peer review and, 10–11; revisions to manuscript and, 76; role of, 6–7, 8, 11–12, 25–26, 29; seeking approval for a contract, 11–12; seeking author for new list or series, 24; seeking out potential authors, 18, 90–91. See also questions to ask editors
acquisitions process, 7–8; flowchart of, 13; for trade publishing, 20
acronyms, 86–87
advance contract, 12, 122, 133–34
advance on royalties, 120, 124–25
advertising, 146–47. See also marketing and promotion
afterword, 73
agent, 20–21, 25
annotated table of contents, 68, 71, 99. See also chapter summaries
appendices, 70, 73
AQ (author questionnaire), 47–48, 137–39, 141
argument, defined, 56
argument of the book, 54–61; advanced by every chapter, 72; chapter-level contributions to, 60, 68–70, 74, 79, 81; chapter order dictated by, 71–72; developed before submitting proposal, 61; editors’ desire for strong thesis and, 28, 29, 54; as main thesis, 57; with nested sub-arguments, 60; one-liner version of, 58–59, 109; one-paragraph summary of, 57–58, 109; prioritizing one main argument, 59–60; in project description, 62, 63; revealed in book and chapter titles, 80–81; rhetorical questions and, 60–61; stating, 56–58; strong, 28, 29, 54–55, 61, 85; strong verbs in proposal and, 60 art. See images
Association of University Presses Subject Area Grid, 18
Atwood, Blake, 173–76
audience, 44–53; articulating, 46–49; for book spanning multiple contexts, 52; comps and, 37–39, 42; for cover copy, 142–43; for cover design, 146; for crossover book, 46, 50–51; demonstrating sufficient size of, 27; described in prospectus, 7, 63; for different approach to shake up a field, 50; distinct from market, 51; estimating number of readers in, 52; evidence of interest in your topic and, 35, 50; for first book on a topic, 34–35; four different types of, 44–46; interdisciplinarity and, 52–53; known best by the author, 148–49; letter of inquiry and, 32, 48; marketing and, 44, 46–49, 51, 93–94, 142; nonacademic professionals in, 93–94; not too specific, 49; for research set outside U.S., 36; of subfield rather than broad field, 51; title and, 146; well-defined for publisher to target, 44. See also readers
author biography, 90–91, 92, 94; previously published material listed in, 97–98
author platform, 43, 89–90, 91, 92, 93
author questionnaire, 47–48, 137–39, 141
Authors Guild, 131
award submissions, 139, 144, 142, 147

For general queries, contact webmaster@press.princeton.edu
background knowledge, woven into body chapters, 72
back matter, 70
biased reader reports, 132–33
bibliography, 70
big idea, 55, 60, 62, 78. See also argument of the book
blog: in author platform, 89, 92; promotion using, 139, 142
blurbs, 138
book reviews editors, 139
Branded Difference (McClearen), 157, 165–72
catalog listing of publisher, 138
chapters: changed in developmental editing, 76; with cohesive, bounded argument, 74; lengths of, 74–75; number of, 74; order of, 71–72; roughly equal in length, 75
chapter summaries, 68–76; book title and, 78; with clear sense of direction, 69; contents of, 70–71; creating for already-published books, 71; length of, 73–74; organization of book revealed by, 71–72; in prospectus, 7, 99; style and voice in, 85; transitional language in, 69–70
chapter titles: effective examples of, 79; provided with chapter summaries, 70; searchable, 77; with wording that reveals argument, 81
checklists: for assessing proposal, 153–55; for evaluating publishers, 15–16; steps to complete, 151–52
Cherry, Elizabeth, 48–49, 57–58, 157–64
Chicago Manual of Style, 88
coda, 70, 73
commercial academic presses, 8, 19, 20
committee. See internal committee’s approval comparable or competing books, 37–43; from comparable publishers, 41; emphasizing the positive about, 41; found when researching presses, 15, 39; including one from target press, 42; nonscholarly books in, 42–43; number to include, 42; as section of prospectus, 7, 37–40; for similar audiences, 37–39, 42; well-known titles in, 43
close: in editor seeking internal approval for contract, 10, 11–12; negotiating, 12, 124–26; reviewed by Authors Guild, 131; signing, 126, 131; trying to get released from, 133, 134
copy editing of your book: disagreements with edits of, 144–45; production editor and, 136; provided by press in contract, 125; in publisher’s cost calculations, 95; receiving manuscript following, 136–37
copy editing of your proposal, 86, 88
copyrighted material. See permissions
core thesis. See argument of the book
costs of publishing scholarly book: assigned to author, 96; components of, 95–96; funding for, 96–97, 104; images in book and, 96–97, 104; length of manuscript and, 96; publisher revenues and, 27
course instructors: disciplinary jargon and, 83; promotion to, 142
cover copy: audience for, 142–43; author questionnaire and, 138, 141; hiring freelancer to write, 143
cover design, 137, 145–46
credentials of author, 7, 89–90; convincing a publisher about, 92–93; describing in factual terms, 87; in letter of inquiry, 33; list to start you on, 91–92; from outside academia, 93–94
criticism: in peer reviewers’ reports, 123; worrying about, 29, 85, 105
crossover books, 20, 21; audience for, 46, 50–51; as goal of writing, 149; in list of comps, 41
current events, relevance to, 35–36, 140
CV: author version of, 7, 90, 91, 92; sending as email attachment, 110
deadlines: for award submission, 141; in contract, 128, 144; for manuscript submission, 97, 118, 119, 144; in production editor’s phase, 136
design: costs of, 96; of cover, 137, 145–46
developers, 136
developmental editor: hiring freelance help of, 104, 117, 124; tasks of, 75–76
digital components, 22
discount code: for adopting instructors, 141; on flyers, 139; for preorders, 140, 141
dissertation: embargo of, 102; goals of acquisitions editors and, 29; mentioning book’s origins as, 102; stylistic issues in, 82; title of book and, 81; turning into book manuscript, 55; unrevised, 24–25, 28, 82
due dates. See deadlines
editorial assistants, 144
editorial board: composition of, 11; editor’s presentation to, 11–12; giving approval to offer a contract, 6–7, 11; results of peer review and, 10; results of second review and, 136
editors. See acquisitions editor; copy editing of your book; developmental editor; production editor endorsements, for promoting your book, 138, 141
epilogue, 70, 73
fair use, 136
filling a gap in the literature, 28–29, 34
first book on your topic, 34–35
fit: of press with your goals, 15–16; of your book with press’s offerings, 14, 17, 18–19, 33
footnotes in proposal, 87–88
foreword, 73
formatting manuscript for publisher’s guidelines, 136, 143
For the Birds (Cherry), 48–49, 57–58, 157–64
Fortunato, Alfred, 82
freelancers, hiring, 143
front matter, 70
general readers, 46. See also crossover books
Germano, William, 117
goals for your book, 149–50
hedgy language, 85
illustrations. See images
illustrator, hiring, 124–25
images: costs associated with, 96–97; discussed in prospectus, 7; permissions for use of, 124, 136; submitting for manuscript production, 136; subvention for cost of, 104
independent publishers of serious nonfiction, 19, 20
independent scholars, 2, 93
index: author’s responsibility for, 96, 125; created at same time as proofreading, 137; not summarized in proposal, 70
indexer, professional: advance to cover cost of, 125; funding for cost of, 104, 146; hiring freelancer, 143, 146; preparing to do it yourself, 146
initialisms, 86–87
institution you’re affiliated with, 93
interdisciplinarity, and audience, 52–53, 83
internal committee’s approval: to offer you a contract, 10, 11; to proceed with peer review, 9
interviews, promotional, 140

For general queries, contact webmaster@press.princeton.edu
introduction chapter: as Chapter 1, 75; common and expected, 73; contents of, 72; covered in chapter summaries, 70, 72; length of, 75; as writing sample, 103

jargon, disciplinary, 83, 86

job applications, and timing of contract, 116

keywords: book title and, 78; for marketing your book, 138, 142; on your website, 91

length of manuscript, 95, 96, 100–101

letter of inquiry, 30–34; audiences and markets in, 32, 48; author biography in, 90; core argument in, 55, 57; length of, 34; omitting footnotes or references, 88; one-liner in, 59; press instructions and, 109–10; sample of, 173; sending if no submission instructions, 112; sending with proposal, 109–10; to series editor, 113, 173; simultaneous submission mentioned in, 33, 98; style and voice in, 85; template for, 31–33

life experience outside academia, 93–94

list of acquiring editor’s books, 8; building new list, 24

literary agent, 20–21, 25

literature review: distinct from comps list, 37–38; revised from dissertation, 102, 103; as tool for articulating audience, 49; unnecessary in proposal, 28–29, 63, 66

Luey, Beth, 101

manuscript: difficulty meeting contract deadline for, 144; finishing after signing contract, 75–76, 135–36, 144; length of, 95, 96, 100–101; never sending unless asked, 112; preparing for production, 116; reviewed a second time when finished, 135–36; specifications of, 95–97; status of, 7, 97. See also peer review; revision of manuscript marginalized groups of scholars, 2–3, 16, 111, 120

market: compared to audience, 51; comps and, 37–39; reviewers’ perceptions of, 10

marketing and promotion: audience and, 44, 46–49, 51, 93–94, 142; author questionnaire used in, 47–48, 137–39, 141; author’s promotion efforts, 139–42, 147; foreword or afterword used in, 73; title of book and, 77, 81, 126, 137, 145–46. See also publicist

McClearen, Jennifer, 157, 165–72

methods. See research methods

multimedia components, 22

multiple submissions, 10, 17, 23–24, 33, 98, 119–21

offer, 124–26. See also contract

one-liner: book title and, 78; capturing main claim, 58, 62; effective examples of, 58–59; practicing, 109; used in promotion, 142

open access, 22–23, 96

oppressed groups of scholars, 2–3, 16, 111, 120

organization. See structure and arc of book

outsourcing tasks, 104, 124–25, 143

overview. See project description

passive voice, 84

peer review: acquiring editor arranging for, 9, 122; acquiring editor’s decision based on, 10–11; committee approval to proceed with, 9; with exclusivity requested, 10, 23, 117–18; by independent publishers, 19; materials needed for, 9–10; not anonymous in both directions, 10; of partial vs. full manuscript, 119; second round of, 11, 135–36

peer reviewers, 6–7; asking to exclude someone, 103; persons suggested in proposal, 98, 102–3; viewed as collaborators, 149

peer reviewers’ reports, responding to: decision-making by the press and, 10, 122–24; if racists or otherwise biased, 132–33; if you don’t agree, 129–32; with revision plan, 124, 126–30, 131–32, 135–36; sample document, 173–76; after second review, 135–36; template for, 127–28; thinking broadly in, 128; thinking concretely in, 129
permissions, 136; for author’s previously published material, 97–98; cost to author, 96; hiring freelancer to deal with, 143; to use copyrighted images, 124, 136
practical implications of your research, 45–46
practitioner, as audience for your book, 45–46, 50
praising your own work, 87
preface, 70, 72–73
previously published material, 97–98, 101
production editor, 136
production phase, 136–37
project description, 62–67; book title and, 78; copy edit of, 86; following guidelines from target presses, 64; length of, 65; making contribution clear, 64–65; not excessively abstract, 66–67; other people’s scholarship in, 63, 66, 83–84, 85; research methods in, 63, 65–66; staying general about structure, 63, 64; style and voice in, 85; template for, 62–63, 64
promotion. See marketing and promotion
proofreading of typeset proofs, 137, 143; advance to cover cost of, 125; cost to author, 96; funding for cost of, 104; hiring freelancer for, 137, 143
proposal: checklist for assessing, 153–55; checklist of steps to complete, 151–52; editor’s feedback or criticism about, 117; generating raw material for, 30; including prospectus, CV, and writing samples, 7; meeting editor with hard copy of, 112; publisher’s submission instructions for, 9, 17, 104, 109–10; sending only what’s asked for, 112; strong core argument in, 55, 61, 85; submitting, 109–10; submitting before manuscript is finished, 118–19; tailored to each publisher, 121; unrequested information in, 104. See also CV; prospectus; writing sample
prospectus: assembling, 99–100; components of, 7, 99 (see also specific components); defined, 7; examples of, 157–72; sending as email attachment, 110. See also project description
publicist, 139–41, 142, 146–47. See also marketing and promotion
publishers: types of, 19–20. See also target presses; university presses
publisher’s guidelines: for formatting manuscript, 136, 143; for submission of proposal, 9, 17, 100, 109–10, 112
publisher’s website: promotion of your book on, 138; submission instructions on, 9, 17, 109–10, 112
publishing process. See acquisitions process
qualifications. See credentials of author
questionnaire for marketing department, 47–48, 137–39, 141
questions to ask editors: about contract, 125, 131, 133–34; about proposal submission, 33, 103, 106, 113, 117, 119; about reader reports, 122, 132; when gauging compatibility, 9, 11, 106–8, 111
Rabiner, Susan, 82
racist reader reports, 132–33
readers: distinct from market, 51; need to attract sufficient number of, 27; preliminary, in publishing process, 6–7, 8; in United States, 36; writing in order to connect with, 6; writing proposal for certain kind of, 29. See also audience; peer reviewers
reading materials out loud, 86
references in proposal, 87–88
research methods: in appendix, 73; in project description, 63, 65–66; in summary of introduction, 70
review copies, 139, 140
reviewers. See peer reviewers
revision of manuscript: advance contract and, 133; to prepare for second review, 11; in response to reviewers’ reports, 124, 126–30, 131–32; in response to second review, 135–36; to restructure after signing contract, 75–76
revision of proposal, for style and voice, 85–86
rhetorical questions, 60–61
royalties: advance on, 120, 124–25; negotiating, 125; in publisher’s cost calculations, 96
sample chapters. See writing sample
sample documents: letter of inquiry by Atwood, 173; prospectus for Branded Difference, 165–72; prospectus for For the Birds, 157–64; response to reader reports by Atwood, 173–76
sample of your writing. See writing sample
scholarly book, parts of, 72–73
scholarly presses. See commercial academic presses; university presses
scholars, as audience, 45
search engine optimization (SEO): book title and, 77; pre-selection titles and, 18
series: call for proposals for, 9, 113; possible advantages of, 23; of press trying to build new series, 24
series editors, 6, 8, 9; connecting with, 110, 113;
final review of manuscript done by, 135;
letter of inquiry to, 113, 173
sexist reader reports, 132–33
simultaneous submissions, 10, 23–24, 33, 98, 107, 119–21
social media: acquiring editors active on, 17, 18; author biography and, 90; author platform and, 89, 92; contacting editor on, 8; promoting your book on, 139, 140
status of manuscript, 7, 97
steps to complete, checklist for, 151–52
strong argument, 28, 29, 54–56, 61, 85
structure and arc of book: chapter order and, 71–72; chapter summaries and, 70–72; clear sense of direction and, 69; developmental editor and, 75–76; in project description, 63, 64
students as audience, 45. See also course instructors
style guide: for use by copy editor, 137, 145; to use for proposal, 88
style of proposal: conveying personal voice, 82, 86; copy editing and, 86, 88; not praising or undercutting yourself, 87; recurring issues with, 82–85; repeating the title, 87
subject of book: identifying target presses for, 18; not fitting usual categories, 21–22
submission of manuscript for production, 136
submission of proposal, 109–10; exclusive, 10, 23, 117–18, 120–21; before manuscript is finished, 118–19; to multiple publishers, 10, 17, 23–24, 33, 98, 119–21; publisher’s guidelines for, 9, 17, 100, 109–10, 112
subtitle: descriptive information in, 79–80; effective examples, 78–79; process to come up with, 78; wording that reveals argument, 80–81
subvention: for production costs, 97, 104; for professional indexer, 104, 146
table of contents: annotated, 68, 71, 99; in prospectus, 7; with well-crafted chapter titles, 77–78, 81. See also chapter summaries
target presses, 8; for book different from norms of scholarly books, 21–22; for book with digital components, 22; for book with open access, 22–23; building a new list or series, 24; evaluating, 15–16; gathering submission information for, 17; goals for your book and, 149; good time for first approach, 25; identifying, 14–15; identifying subjects published by, 18; number to send proposal to, 23–24 (see also multiple submissions); researching, 15–16; summarizing your book’s fit with, 17, 18–19; types of, 19–20, 21. See also connecting with an editor
templates: for letters to editors, 31–33, 108; for project description, 62–64; provided by publishers, 64, 90, 98, 104; for response to reader reports, 127–28
tenure: deadline for, 116; scholarly audience and, 45
thesis. See argument of the book
time constraints on your end, 116
timeliness of topic, 35–36
timeline to completion: estimated in proposal, 97; of revisions after peer review, 127–28; sample chapters and, 99
Index

• 197

title of book, 77–81; avoiding references to specific knowledge, 80; changes advised by editor or marketing team, 81, 126, 137, 145–46; changing after submission of proposal, 81; effective examples of, 78–79; not using dissertation title, 81; process to come up with, 78; repeating in the proposal, 87; wording that reveals argument, 80; working title, 7, 99

topic. See argument of the book; subject of book

trade presses, 19–20; literary agents and, 21. See also crossover books
typesetters, 136
typesetting, 137. See also proofreading of typeset proofs

underrepresented groups of scholars, 2–3, 16, 111, 120

university presses, 8, 19; differences among, 21; trade titles published by, 20, 21. See also acquisitions editor; editorial board; series; target presses

voice of author: confidence in your vision and, 148; editors’ preferences for, 82; reading out loud and, 86

website of author: description of book project on, 90–91; posting images on, 96; posting supplemental material on, 22

website of publisher. See publisher’s website

word count: for a chapter, 70, 74; for the manuscript, 7, 96, 100–101

working title, 7, 99

writing sample, 7, 98–99; choice of chapter for, 103; including notes and bibliography, 104; peer review of, 10; polished status of, 104; sending as email attachment, 110