
A Guide to Book Publishing for the Social Science Writer



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TASA: The Australian Sociological Association
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About the author

Allan Kellehear is a sociologist and Professor of Palliative Care at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Allan has held several academic appointments at universities and colleges in Victoria and NSW. In 2000, he was British Academy Visiting Professor at the University of Bath, UK, and the Religious Experience Research Centre at Westminster College in Oxford. Among his various publications he is the author or editor of 15 books. These books include academic monographs, textbooks and trade books.

About TASA

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- Promote sociology in Australia
- Facilitate sociology teaching, publication and research
- Enhance the professional development of TASA members

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Introduction

Book publishing has become an increasingly fraught professional activity for the academic these days. Quite gone are those halcyon days when you could easily get your PhD published as a 'scholarly work'. Publishing costs have escalated so much that even the most idealistic commercial publisher can ill afford to publish 'studies' which will interest just a few hundred readers.

The common attitude of Australian publishers in particular suggests that unless your book will sell above 1500 copies there will be little commercial interest in your work. Can your argument, your theory, or even your idea for a textbook sell at least 1500 copies? Think. Think hard and honestly because you can be sure that either the anonymous reviewers, the commissioning editor, and, or, the publisher's editorial committee will be asking the same question - and answering it dispassionately, mercilessly.

If you are Anthony Giddens or some other iconic person, your book - whatever it's on - will probably sell that number just because disciples, fans, or the simply curious will buy that many copies anyway. For the rest of us plebeians, more organised strategies and thinking are required. It all starts with The Book Proposal. Here is the first evidence for the publisher that you can even write at all. So that document should look professionally put together and should always appear well thought through.

Remember those simple but important bits of advice we give to our undergraduates when they go out to apply for their first jobs? Don't mis-spell your university's name, or your own for that matter; and in the interview, don't act like you might in some tutorial on a hot summer's day; and do think through how your current studies might apply in the case of the job you have applied for. We say these types of things because impression management is so often the stuff of little things. And so it is with publishing.

For the publisher, publishing is a business first and foremost. For us, publishing is about scholarship and teaching. We worry about whether the critical response will be favourable or whether the students or subject coordinators will find the text worthwhile. The publisher worries about whether we can meet deadlines, whether we have writing ability that their copy-editor doesn't have to perform expensive miracles on. Assuming you have a decent

manuscript, getting published then, is about understanding what the publisher expects of you, doing it, and avoiding exploitation in the process.

And because publishing is a business, we as academics need to make sure that we are not naive or unrealistic in our expectations about the processes - the politics of proposal submission, matching manuscript with the 'right' publisher, royalties and print runs, and your rights generally as an author or editor.

In the pages which follow, I outline some specific guidelines for how to put a book proposal together. Following that advice, I describe where to send the proposal and provide some advice about the different types of publishers for you to consider before sending away. In the third section of these notes, I provide some simple advice about what to ask your publisher when that great day arrives when you are offered a contract to publish.

After this, I outline some general queries to explore with your publisher just before the book is released on the market. At the end of these notes is an example of a book proposal. If my notes about how to put together a proposal are too hard or boring to follow, just copy the form and outline of my example.

And finally, remember Sigmund Freud's immortal words to his wife, "Darling, if one of us should die before the other, I think I shall move to Paris". Don't be egotistical. Your past supervisors, thesis examiners, or even current colleagues might think you have a brain the size of a small planet but it is good writing and a receptive market that permits one to sell books. You can strut your stuff, but you also need to persuade thoughtfully and carefully in your proposal.

Good Luck.

The form that the Book Proposal should take

The Proposal should be written out according to the following guidelines and order:

1. **Full title and subtitle** of the proposed book.
2. **Author/s or Editor/s** with highest degree after names.
3. **The first paragraph should be a three sentence abstract.**
4. **The next paragraph/s should then elaborate on the highlights of the book;** the main sections (not chapters) mentioning the basic argument developed or data analysed. Do not harp on method. Do not mention that the manuscript was formerly a thesis, if this is the case. Do not make this section of the proposal longer than 2/3 paragraphs.
5. **Describe the audience you are writing for,** in other words, the literary level that the book is pitched toward - the working class; first year undergraduate sociology students; academic colleagues; postgraduates in public health; ‘the ordinary lay-person in the street’ etc. 1 or 2 paragraphs here.
6. **Describe the market for the book.** Who will actually buy the book?; X or Y type university courses; social workers in hospital settings; the educated lay person browsing general bookstores; academic libraries; union leaders; school teachers...school students! etc. 1 or 2 paragraphs. Describe the competition here as well. What books will rival your own for sales and how will yours be as good, or preferably, better?
7. **Chapter outlines** ... one paragraph (50-75 words) per chapter preceded by a brief chapter title. If this is an edited book, the title should be followed by author’s name and academic/professional position.
8. **Manuscript details.** Space these clearly, a line each on their own; size of manuscript (how many thousand words); delivery date (month and year); number of tables, photos or any other unusual feature likely to interest their production department.
9. **The last paragraph should contain a brief description of WHO the author/s or editor/s actual are.** Mention qualifications, current position, publication highlights,

prizes or awards, prestigious professional positions on societies or journals, etc. With publications mention **highlights** i.e. former books; or 3 or 4 of the most prestigious journal titles that you have appeared in; or the number of articles you have published.

10. **With the proposal you should enclose one, or if possible, two sample chapters** for their reviewers. Do not enclose the whole manuscript unsolicited. Do not send “raw” thesis chapters without stylised revisions which purge it from its obsessional origins.

The proposal should be accompanied by a brief cover letter not substantially greater in length from one sent to a journal. Indulgent or rambling letters may be read as your newness to all this, an interpretation to avoid at all cost. And finally, and importantly:

DO NOT “submit” the proposal one at a time to various publishers. They are not journals. Send to half a dozen at a time. This is not unethical or wasting their time, providing you undertake not to sign until you have heard their decision. Some publishers like you to “submit” only to them so that this gives them a stronger bargaining position over you when, and if, they decide to make you an offer.

Provide them a reviewing deadline or arrange to come to some agreement about how long it is acceptable to wait for a decision. I think 60 days is more than enough. Failing to do this will allow all parties to be at the mercy of the slackest reader they select, prolonging the whole process unnecessarily.

Where to send the Proposal

Basically, you have five choices of where to send your proposal: Scientific & Technical Publishers, The University Press, Commercial Publishers, Trade Publishers and the Internet.

Scientific & Technical Publishers

There are dozens of these. Check any list published by the distributors “DA Books”. Some better known examples are:

- **Greenwood/Praeger (USA)**
- **Edward Elgar (UK)**
- **Springer-Verlag (EUR)**
- **Kluwer (EUR)**
- **St Martins Press (USA)**
- **Whiting & Birch (UK)**
- **Baywood (USA)**

These publishers accept technical monographs only - not textbooks or any book for the trade market. Academic and professional libraries are the main market target. Manuscripts must be of international interest. Small but continuous print runs in lots of 500. Royalties between 7-12%. Low-key marketing but genuinely international distribution. Mostly hard covers and often sold for AUS\$100+.

The University Press

Not much of an option in Australia, most having sold out to producing coffee table books by their local entomology or archaeology department. Market interests vary - some texts, some trade, the odd monograph. Many are only interested in texts of national (local) significance which is good for those of us who develop local studies. Sound local distribution, but international distribution can be poor or next-to-none. Marketing abilities worse still.

In the USA, these can be very good especially for academic monographs. The marketing and distribution there can be very good but it depends on who you sign with. Some have

international distributors. Resistant to local material, standard royalties, good production values, expensive copy. Examples:

- **Australia:**
 - NSW University Press
 - Queensland University Press
 - Melbourne University Press
- **USA:**
 - State University of New York Press (SUNY Press)
 - Indiana University Press
 - University of Chicago Press
 - Yale University Press
 - University of Georgia Press

Commercial Publishers

These are most likely to publish anything providing they can reach one of three markets - students, professionals or trade. Therefore textbooks are popular with them. Anything reasonably fashionable and upbeat will also be considered, e.g. The “North Fitzroy Book of the Dead”, or “Semiotics of Feminist Painting by the Yorta Yorta”. A book used by practising social workers or school teachers will also appeal to them. They will not take monographs unless these can be marketed in one of these three ways. Local material for local publishers OK, International material with local relevance is also OK. Many local commercial publishers are now co-publishing with international publishing houses – Allen & Unwin, for example, might co-publish a manuscript with Sage or Routledge in London. Marketing and distribution can be very good. Royalties between 5% - 15%. Print runs 2-3,000. Examples:

- **LOCAL:**
 - Allen & Unwin
 - Macmillan
 - Oxford University Press
 - Cambridge University Press
 - Ausmed (prefers manuscripts with international appeal)
 - McGraw-Hill
 - Thompson Educational
 - Tertiary Press
 - Pearson
 - Pluto Press

- Federation Press
- Social Science Press
- **Overseas:**
 - Routledge
 - Palgrave-Macmillan
 - Open University Press
 - Polity-Blackwell
 - Oxford University Press or Cambridge University Press (UK or USA – these are different branches)
 - Sage

Note: Cambridge is an exception to my comments. They will publish a book entirely on academic criteria. Note also that all Oxford University Presses are independent franchises, so rejection from one is not necessarily rejection by all.

Trade Publishers

Some sections of commercial publishers and some whole commercial publishing companies are dedicated to the trade market. If you think you can write a “popular” book, a book for the common person on the street, then you can always attempt to give the Academic Acquisitions Editor a miss and ask for the Trade Editor. Royalties are reputedly better here and your book always appears in nice places like Angus & Robertson’s, Collins Booksellers or Readings. You occasionally do exciting book signing sessions in a Coles Supermarket or some City or Shopping Mall. Examples:

- Penguin
- Hill of Content
- Random House
- Allen & Unwin
- Fontana
- Text
- Duffy & Snellgrove
- Spinifex

Internet Publishers

These are relative newcomers to the book publishing game. The jury is still out on the status and prestige values for this type of publishing for academics. Nevertheless, there are three things to consider here:

1. You may want to reach citizens of the world-wide-web because your argument, research findings or textbook concerns them directly.
2. This type of publishing may be the future and you might like to get in on the ground floor.
3. Given a choice of being unpublished or virtually published, hey, virtual has to look good! You will need to surf the web to find these kinds of opportunities but one recent site that you can look at is [<http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ddl.htm>] Check it out!

I would be very happy for readers who HAVE had some experience in this kind of publishing to send or phone me about their experiences. Your experiences could help others in future editions of this pamphlet.

If you should be offered a contract

When the publisher finally ‘phones you with an informal offer don’t forget to make the following inquiries (if they send you a letter, ‘phone them to discuss these issues):

1. **Royalties?** 5-15% is a common range for us academics, the higher rates tend to be for textbooks or well known authors. Sometimes no royalties are offered for the first 500 or so copies if the publisher sees the proposal as a commercial risk but wants to try the manuscript anyway. It’s up to you! If they offer NO royalties and you have submitted to less than 7 or 8 publishers, tell them no, or to wait a couple of months. If this offer comes after 40 submissions, take it! Some scientific and technical publishers have graduated royalties, such as 5% for the first 500 print run, 10% for the next 500, and 12% thereafter. You should know that this is not unusual or, given the difficulty of selling academic works, not unreasonable either.

Please seriously reconsider any prospect of signing with a publisher who offers NO royalties. Remember that this is basically an unfair trade practice which degrades you and makes it harder for the next author who comes after you. The publishers which have done this in the past are well known and some are quite prestigious - playing on your desire. Ask around your department for who they are. When you add up what you would lose from your personal coffers in royalties in the first year of publishing, you are better off seeking a grant or subsidy for your book at your university or humanitarian organisation.

With subsidy, you can put a modest \$3-4000 or so to a commercial publisher who will help you recoup this in the normal course of marketing your book. This is a subsidised book, not vanity press. In other words, this is not self-publishing. Self-publishing is paying for the whole production - a cost that may be considerably higher than \$1000. Always try 20 or 30 publishers before considering subsidies. Many universities now acknowledge the difficulties of publishing research-based work and offer a subsidy/sponsorship deal for their staff. Ask at your university. If they DON’T have one, ask them why not! IF subsidies are not offered at your university you can always approach peak bodies, professional societies, government departments or private or philanthropic organisations to explore the possibilities of them offering a publishing sponsorship. If your material is relevant and valuable to them in some way they just might help you out – with appropriate acknowledgment of course!

2. **Print run?** Scientific and technical publishers target libraries, so continuous print runs of 500 or so are usual. Big commercial publishers might talk in terms of 1500 to 3000.
3. Hard cover or soft? This will effect the price of the book and its attraction or otherwise for students. Of course, hardcover often makes the book look handsome but handsome tends to also be expensive...
4. **Manuscript on disc?** Does the publisher simply want the manuscript on disc or camera-ready (suggests that your publisher relies heavily on desktop publishing), which is a lot of trouble for you or someone. Disc or no, you should also ask how many hard copies are to accompany the disc.
5. **Copyright?** Who will own it, you or them? You should ask other authors what they think the advantages or disadvantages of either are.
6. **Copyright releases?** If you have quotes, illustrations or tables from other work which are longer than 100 or 200 words (ask the publisher) who will write to those people and ask copyright permission to reproduce the stuff in your book? Publishers rarely do this for you nowadays.
7. **Complementary copies?** Ten is reasonable, five is mean. Remember, apart from friends and relatives, personally giving copies to colleagues encourages the book use or adoption. In a networking sense, this is more personal than a publisher simply sending complementary copies.
8. **Submission-to-release time?** If they are planning to release the book 18 months or so after you submit the manuscript, you might reconsider. Six months is good, 12 months is common.
9. **In-house reviewing?** Your manuscript example chapters and proposal will be peer reviewed and then a contract issued if you are successful. But they still have not seen the whole manuscript. Will they send it out to reviewers again when they have the whole manuscript? And is the contract issued dependent on that review outcome? Check this.
10. **Ask about distribution and marketing.** How will the book be advertised? Which and how many journals will be sent review copies? Which, if any, bookstores will hold copies? You will need to decide if these are adequate before signing.

- **Note A:** If your book is an edited volume you need to ask the publisher about contributor contracts. You will need to decide whether the contributors will share in a percentage of the royalties or whether they will be paid a one-off payment (usually anything from \$100 to \$200). If the book is a collection of scholarly essays with a limited print run (and no profits in sight) contributors usually only expect a complimentary copy of the book.
- **Note B:** If you sign with an overseas publisher (especially in the UK), remind them to send you their local tax exemption form so that you don't pay tax twice on your royalties-paying there and then at home!

When your book is published

When the prospect of seeing the actual book comes a little closer ensure that the following events take place:

1. That you are consulted about the cover design of your book. I always ask to see a draft design. Don't just accept what they are offering. The look of the book should be important to you. Looks do play a significant role in marketing appeal.
2. That you are issued an "advance" copy of your book. The printer will send the publisher 2 or 3 copies of your book for approval before shipping the rest. Make sure you receive one of these to check.
3. Ask for sample book covers (if they have these). These covers are very useful advertising exhibits on your department noticeboards or open day displays or library exhibit areas of staff work.
4. Ensure that a quantity of book flyers (100-200) are sent to you. These are often single page A4 advertisements of your book with ordering information on the rear side or bottom of the page. They are very useful to send or to give to interested inquiries.

Finally, remind the publisher to send you any published reviews of your book that they happen to receive.

An example of a book proposal

The remainder of these notes provide an example of a book proposal drawn up by the fictitious academic Dr Tetsuko Toogood. Try to follow the format as closely as possible, or in any case, pay close attention to the sections on 'readership' and 'market'. The author blurb at the end of the proposal gives the publisher information about the proposer so should be done with a careful, but not exaggerated view of your own achievements. Publishers may still ask you for a CV anyway.

Publishing as Illness

The medicalisation of an academic practice

Tetsuko Toogood, Ph.D.

This book will be a comprehensive analysis of the social and cultural basis of the Academic Publishing Experience (APE), its impact on popular culture, and its dominant academic explanations. The aim of the book is to present a variety of sociological perspectives on the APE which are designed to demonstrate the social nature of the experience and disparaging explanations. This will be achieved over three central parts of the book.

The first part will contain chapters devoted to showing how the APE is actually dependent on the social circumstances and cultural background of the writers. The second part will look at the historical and cultural reasons for the rise in incidence and popularity of the APE. The final part of the book will examine neuroscientific and psychoanalytic responses to the APE and provide a critique of these perspectives through a novel combination of case study examination and literary analysis.

Some parts of the book will be based on previously published studies and essays by the author. These have appeared in medical or literary journals. However, the introductory chapter (1), chapters 4 & 5 and final chapters (7, 9) will be entirely new. Therefore most of the proposed chapters will be new or revised work.

The book will be written primarily for people with a tertiary (College/Uni) education background and will also be useful to professionals and academics who have an interest in the area. There are large, relatively well educated, reading publics who do not read medical journals or specialist journals on academic writing, but who nevertheless are hypnotically drawn to, and fascinated by, the academic writing experience. This book will allow ideas which have so far been limited to purely research audiences, particularly academic ones, to be reached by these diverse reading publics. This more accessible presence permits sociological ideas about the APE to enter wider professional circles. From that position, its intellectual contribution can be readily used by those who wish to challenge medical or psychoanalytic ideas: ideas that are currently recycled endlessly in both popular AND other professional forums (e.g. journalism, literary criticism, DEETYA, politicians, etc).

On the academic side, of course, most of the new chapters will appeal to readers who are already familiar with my work. For researchers and teachers who do not read medical journals (e.g. everyone) or psychoanalytic journals (e.g. many, if not most of us) but who nevertheless work in areas where this topic has relevance, all this material will be new. Finally, the proposed book permits, what may have been previously viewed as isolated insights, to now be understood as part of a larger perspective and project. In this way the book should have considerable appeal.

In market terms therefore, I believe the book will be of interest to all those with any interest in the academic publishing experience across the medical, health, behavioural and social sciences, not to mention the humanities. In addition to this I expect particular interest from sociologists, especially in the USA, in the Sociology of Religion, Health & Medicine, and Occupations. The Commercial and Academic Publishing business community and educated New Age readers with interests in this topic should also find this book attractive, as indeed they have with previous scholarly treatments of this subject in philosophy (Dennett, Arkana 1990), religious studies (Davies & Hawkins, Oxford Uni Press 1987) and psychology (Skinner, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan 1982). There is currently no competition for this book. If published, this book will be the first monograph to approach the subject in this way.

The proposed chapter outline is as follows:

The Academic Publishing Experience as Social Experience

1. Popular Images of the Academic Publishing Experience

Will describe and review the main popular images of the APE: the non-western APE; the medicalised, illness relate experience of APE, life review publishing (autobiography), meetings with bright lights and deceased beings (biography); the contradictory community reactions of intrigue, fascination, stigma and rejection; images of life after the Academy; the ‘hard’ science/sceptical explanation; the psychoanalytic ‘life-denial’ explanations. These images will be described and challenged as an introduction to the following chapters which continue this criticism in greater depth.

2. Academic Publishing Experiences across different cultures

Will review academic publishing experiences in several non-western countries and compare and contrast their features with those commonly associated with the Western experience. Argues that several features previously thought to be universal (writers block, poor royalties), and hence amenable to biological explanation, are not. Sociological explanations are put forward to explain the cultural differences. (Previously appeared in *Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease*).

3. Unusual Circumstances ... Unusual Experiences

Will describe how the main features of the APE occur not only to people in professional danger and social crisis (contract staff) but others who are nevertheless unconscious, tenured and quite healthy. The example of shipwrecked castaways is discussed to show how the central characteristics of the APE have little to do with being unconscious and/or on contract. APers undergo a kind of rite of passage. This encourages them to review their lives and facilitates an alteration to their identity. (Previously appeared in *Social Science & Medicine*).

The Community Reactions

4. The Community Reaction

Reviews the survey work conducted by myself and other colleagues in countries such as Australia, China and the US. Examines the reasons for some of the conflicting issues surrounding stigma of experiencers, the media fascination for APE's and the Western belief that APEs are probably illnesses or simply dreams. Lay attitudes and those of professionals such as doctors, nurses, publishers, and hospital chaplains are examined.

5. Some Rhyme and Reasons

Explores the many possible reasons for the complex social attraction and repulsion toward the APE discussed in the previous chapter. Describes the historical and cultural reasons for the popular interest in the APE in terms of the decline of established religion, shifts in the demography of postgraduate populations, development of resuscitation technologies in certain academic disciplines, the rise of self help movements and the broader interest in issues surrounding appointments and promotions.

6. In Pursuit of the Ideal Society (not heaven)

Examines social images of particularly deep/prolonged APEs which purport to see another society. Compares these with ideal societies from our past - cockagne, arcadia, perfect moral commonwealth, millenarian societies and utopias. Argues that both the feelings reported in APE and the popular interest in them relate to a re-emergence of utopian social values in the later half of this century. (Previously appeared in *Journal of Publishing Studies*).

The Academic Reaction

7. The Rhetoric of Neuroscience

Despite repeated declarations by biological theorists of their allegiance to science and hence value neutrality, this chapter demonstrates the politics implicit in their explanations of the APE. Examines the language, rhetoric and metaphors of neuroscience to argue that medicalisation, professional dominance and a continuing conflict with religion drive theorists from medicine and psychology to overstate their case and to present theory about academics as "fact".

8. Psychoanalysing a rabbit near-death

Demonstrates how the psychoanalytic response to the APE is identical to its response to any non academic idea of publishing. This is well illustrated through the case example of Margery William's story *The Velveteen Rabbit: Or How Toys Become Real*. This story, similar to the academic publishing experience, has attracted significant psychoanalytic interest over recent years because a well published rabbit receives promotion BUT loses tenure. The rabbit's promotion scene is described in the story using classic APE features. In this chapter, the story is reanalysed as a social metaphor for the lives of recent academics everywhere. The implications for how psychoanalytic responses should be understood from this are discussed in this new light. (Previously appeared in *Journal of Publishing Studies*).

9. Crisis and Meaning

The project of demedicalising the APE means that these experiences can be seen in the context of other marginal social experiences at the fringes of social regulation and control. Argues that the academic publishing experience is a typical experience of crisis. This has already been demonstrated by an examination of the social and psychological experiences of shipwrecked castaways but a further illustration is attempted by examining the experience of bereavement. The way an experience is generally understood is linked to the academic narrative styles that control the story. This point is the focus of the final part of the chapter and explains why we consistently see the APE as a medical/illness phenomena rather than the life/social experience that it really is.

Manuscript size: Approximately 80,000 maximum.

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About the Author

Tetsuko Toogood holds a Ph.D. from Tsukuba University and is Associate Professor in Sociology at Kyoto University, Melbourne Campus, Australia. She teaches undergraduate programs in Social & Political Theory and the Sociology of Work and Occupations and offers a postgraduate course in the History and Politics of Academic Life.

She is the author of *You Need Not Perish: The Gift of Writing and other Academic Graces* (Harwood 1990), *Tenure: A Guide to Methods* (Allen & Unwin 1993) and *Promotions and Publishing: Attack of the Clones* (Praeger 1999). She is also co-editor (with Tetsuwa no Atom) of *Unobtrusive Careers: Political, Ethical & Methodological Issues* (Cambridge University Press 1993) and author or co-author of 75 articles on subjects ranging from pet loss, feminist Catholicism and the deconstruction of academic life.

In 2001, Dr Toogood was the recipient of The Age Prize for Fiction for *A Room with a Pew* - her best-selling book about love and deceit in a monastery.