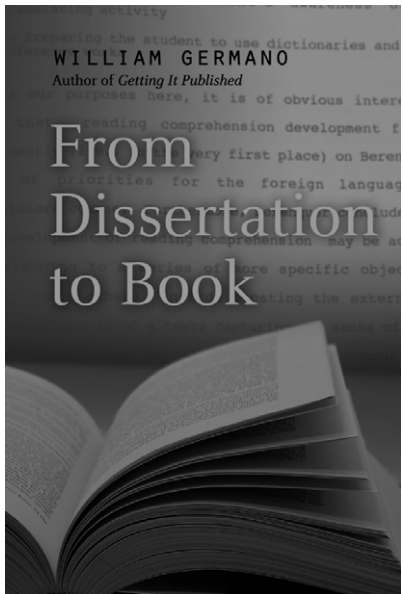




Books on Books



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About twenty-five years ago, as a newly-minted acquisitions editor for a large educational publisher, I walked in (in industry jargon, a cold call) to a young assistant professor's office at a prestigious US west coast university. Well into our conversation the professor mentioned that he had just finished a manuscript and he was about to contact publishers. Would I be interested in reviewing it? I not only reviewed the manuscript, I later signed the professor to a publishing contract, and the book became an instant academic and financial success. The book is still in print and, several editions later, is now considered a classic in its field.

If the young assistant professor had read either of William Germano's excellent primers on book publishing I doubt that the professor's manuscript would have been sitting on his desk awaiting an editor. The professor would have known exactly what to do and been able to generate considerable interest among publishers. Thankfully for me, two decades ago books on how to get published were in short supply and the mystery of the publishing process was far more widespread among professors than it is today. Germano takes the mystery out of getting published.

William Germano's two books are part of the outstanding series that the University of Chicago Press publishes, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing, now containing over twenty titles that explore practically every aspect of the printed word. The newest series addition, *From Dissertation to Book*, provides the dissertation author with sensible, real world advice on how to rethink, reshape, and rewrite a dissertation into a manuscript coveted by publishers. The nine chapters in this concisely written book are packed with valuable suggestions on repackaging

into a commercially publishable work material originally intended for a small committee of scholars. Germano intentionally limits his advice to authors planning to rewrite their dissertations into serious works published primarily by university presses and commercial scholarly publishers. However, I think that much of his advice is universal and of value to anyone who is writing a book—especially a first book.

Germano guides the new Ph.D. through the mental anguish one experiences after spending so much time on one project—do I really want to rewrite this thing that has consumed so much of my life? Should my dissertation become a book? How about using the chapters that are the best as a springboard to a book with a slightly different thrust? Realistically who would want to read my book—a loyal few, a limited number of scholars, or a much broader audience? There is a huge amount of soul-searching that needs to be done by the author before a decision is made on revising the dissertation. Honest answers to Germano's thoughtful questions will aid the dissertation writer in their final decision.

If the author moves forward to repack-age the project, Germano presents in the book's middle chapters the publisher's acquisitions editor's mindset. He details what editors look for in every proposal and manuscript that reaches their desk: audience, voice, structure, and length. If the editor isn't convinced that all four elements are present there is little chance the editor will offer a publishing contract. Chapters five through eight are the chapters that a dissertation writer

mental insights into writing and publishing serious books, primarily nonfiction. The author draws on his vast publishing experience to provide succinct yet amazingly thorough background material on every aspect of the publishing process. He clearly knows his stuff.

The thirteen chapters cover book publishing in systematic order from what publishers do to a published book. The book begins by describing the various categories publishers fall into—trade, textbook, scholarly, reference, and self-publishing and cautions the author to write a focused book that fits a publisher: "No publisher wants to take on a manuscript with multiple personality disorder." Chapter three on writing the manuscript has a wonderful, brief section on the fifty-page rule followed by all editors—consciously or not: "If the manuscript doesn't work in the first fifty pages, it's out." Chapters four and five on selecting an appropriate publisher and preparing the book proposal describe the enormous amount of non-manuscript work an aspiring author must undertake to ensure that the book has a serious chance for external review. Chapter six repeats key information appearing in *From Dissertation to Book* as Germano looks into the acquisitions editor's psyche and how that should shape the book proposal. The last half of the book covers a variety of useful writing-related topics: single-authored works and anthologies, copyright issues, the publishing contract, manuscript delivery, and just when an author sighs with relief that they are finally finished with their part, comes a slap-in-the-face chapter reminding the author that he or

no publisher wants to take on a manuscript with multiple personality disorder

should read, reread, and reread again. I consider them the author's business plan to preparing a product for market. A firm understanding of these chapters will increase exponentially the author's chance of having her/his manuscript reviewed. The book ends with three key checklists that convey the basics of the entire book:

- the differences between a dissertation and a book—dissertation=a few long chapters, book=several chapters of readable length,
 - things the author should not do—never assume that even an award-winning dissertation is already a scholarly book, and
 - take care of manuscript basics—double-space throughout...no exceptions.
- From Dissertation to Book* is a gem. Although *Getting It Published* was published in 2001 it is a natural follow-on to the just-published *From Dissertation to Book*. It offers all who read it—authors, editors, publishers—funda-

she plays an important role in proofing the manuscript and marketing the book. The work is never finished!

Getting It Published offers the reader encouragement, an optimistic tone, and an engaging writing style. Germano believes that any scholar with a realistic idea, practical expectations, and armed with the information gleaned from this book will get their work published. I agree. ■

From Dissertation to Book by William Germano, University of Chicago Press, 2005. x, 141 pp. Hardcover \$35.00, ISBN 0-226-28845-5, Paperback, \$16.00, ISBN 0-226-28846-3; *Getting It Published: A Guide for Scholars and Anyone Else Serious about Serious Books* by William Germano, University of Chicago Press, 2001. xiii, 197 pp. Hardcover \$35.00, ISBN 0-226-28843-9, Paperback \$15.00, ISBN 0-226-28844-7. Both titles can be ordered from www.press.uchicago.edu



An Invitation to Join the Academic Publishing Session at ICAS 4

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Academic publishing is an extremely diverse field: university presses, commercial presses, small presses, large presses. Within this diversity, factors such as the local economic and political situation as expressed in tax regulations or limitations on free enterprise—and realised in various ways in practice—make the publishing industry differ almost from country to country. It also means that each press faces different problems and opportunities. It is very much in the interest of authors to be aware of this variety of 'press cultures', as an insight into these may help authors improve their publication proposals, and thus their chance of being seriously considered and getting published.

The session on Academic Publishing at ICAS 4 is meant first to give PhD students and scholars insight into the criteria for admitting manuscripts for publication at different kinds of presses; to this end, there will be lectures by a Western university press representative, by a commercial press editor, and by an Asian publisher. By nature of their roles and the specific interests involved, a book proposal from a budding author is read from different perspectives by author, publisher, purchaser-and reader.

One of the main discussions in (academic) publishing pertains to electronic publishing: e-books, cd-roms, online databases and open access. What will happen where, and at what pace, remains uncertain, but it is clear that electronic availability will change the ways in which scholars will access and process information. And this means that the role of the academic publisher as an intermediary between writer and reader will also change. A separate paper will be devoted to this particular feature.

Inevitably, matters such as the promotion of publications—including digital marketing—the role of libraries, the future of the printed book, academic (and thus publishers') overproduction, and specific problems within each country will come to the fore. Leading themes, however, will be how to ensure the maintenance of quality, how to achieve optimal distribution, and how to keep up with the fast pace of changes affecting academia and the publishing industry alike.

Speakers at the session will include Triena Ong of ISEAS, Singapore, who will talk about her experiences as an Asian publisher, with an emphasis on electronic publishing and digital marketing; Mark Wolterling of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, The Netherlands, who will concentrate on electronic publishing; Albert Hoffstädt of Brill Academic Publishers, the Netherlands, who will speak from the perspective of a Western commercial press; and lastly a representative who will speak from a Western university press perspective.