

A Short Guide for Writers Working on Book-length Manuscripts who may be unfamiliar with the Book Publishing Process

You have an idea for a book. Perhaps you've begun researching and writing on your topic. But you don't know much about the book publishing process. The brief Q and A below may be helpful to you.

*** At this stage in my project's development, what does a book publisher need to know about my project?**

—> A short description of the project, an outline for the project, and your commentary on the project's competition: what's already been written on the subject and why readers will appreciate your contributions.

*** How do I get a publisher interested in my project?**

—> Tell us what your project is about (subject), why it's significant and who (audience) is likely to read it.

*** How do you identify the audience for my work?**

—> We don't. You do. At least initially. As the subject expert, you're best positioned to accurately and precisely identify who the readership for your work will be. And by the way, there's no such thing as "a general audience." Instead, describe as clearly and as specifically as you can the potential audience's interests or activities and the groups — formal or informal — in which they might be members.

*** How much should I be thinking about marketing my work?**

—> A lot. Today, publishers and authors are partners in book marketing and promotion. As the subject expert, you're in the best position to identify who the project's readers are and how to best reach them. Publishers rely on authors for insight to the book's potential audience — other scholars, students, libraries, the trade marketplace, fans of the subject matter, enthusiasts of the activity, appreciators of the body of work — and authors rely on publishers to design ways to reach that audience.

*** How do we alert readers to the publication of my work?**

—> Glad you said “we.”

- By using such traditional methods as promotional postcards that are “snail mailed” to a well defined list of recipients.
- By presenting informative messages and images that are also promotional on such social media sites as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- By distributing free copies of your book to reviewers and critics writing for influential publications (print and online).
- Through press releases targeted at niche audiences as well as general circulation legacy and online publications.
- And, on rare occasion, through paid advertising placed in carefully targeted venues.

*** Once I submit my manuscript, what’s the timeframe for completion and seeing my work published?**

—> Typically, about a year. The 12 months is spent on obtaining a blind peer review and, assuming the reviewers recommend the manuscript for publication, editing, copy editing, indexing, layout and design, proofing and printing.

*** Is there a difference between how a publisher treats an original versus an edited work?**

—> In terms of assessing the work’s original contribution? No. There may be more permissions required for edited works, however.

*** How much will it cost for my book to be published? What will I have to pay?**

—> Typically, publishers handle out-of-pocket expenses. Authors, typically, pay for any necessary permissions. For selected titles, though, especially those with high-end production values, a publisher will require a subvention (subsidy). At RIT Press, we’ve worked with authors to apply for and obtain funding from a variety of sources.

*** I’d like to include images and illustrations in my work. I already have copies. Is there something else I need to do?**

—> If you created the images and drew the illustrations, then there’s probably little else for you to do. However, if your images are of someone else’s work (e.g., the vase you describe in your text) or someone else’s illustrations, you’ll need permission from the creator before we can publish them. There’s a difference, in other words, between owning an image and having the right to reproduce the image.

*** What do I need to know about copyright and permissions?**

—> In a nutshell, if your work is entirely your work, nothing. But, if your work will

include work (text, images, illustrations, music scores, etc.) created by others and that exceeds “fair use”, then you are obligated to obtain permission from the copyright holder. We can help and we can offer guidance, but the author will do the legwork. Sometimes permission is granted only after paying the copyright holder a fee; authors typically pay the fee.

*** Does RIT Press consider unsolicited manuscripts or works in progress?**

—> Sure. Tell us about your project, the need your project fills and its potential audience. Call, write or make an appointment.

*** Does RIT Press offer e-books in addition to printed texts?**

—> Yes. While most of our back catalogue is in print format, increasingly we are also publishing in digital forms. We’re especially interested in creating “enhanced” e-books; digital titles that have features unavailable in print (e.g., sound, images). Enhanced e-books, of course, require a bit more effort on the author’s part, as well as our own.

*** I’ve heard a lot about self-publishing. What’s the difference between that and having an academic press publish my work?**

—> “Self-publishing” is more accurately named “self-everything.” You will do it all. Writing, editing, copyediting, layout and design, printing, binding, marketing, promotion and publicity. And you can handle sales, packing and shipping, too. Working with a publisher means vetting the book’s contents through peer review, editorial oversight, professional copyediting and indexing, and managing the book production process. Publishers also handle orders and order fulfillment.