Chapter 1

The Publishing Partnership

> I promise to do all I can to make you a great publisher even as I expect you to do all you can to make me a great author.
>
> Robert Frost to Alfred Harcourt

Faculty members are always writing or talking about writing and of necessity are always thinking about publishing. Each has an article nearly finished, about to be started, or stuck somewhere in the middle. Many have a book manuscript under way or under consideration at a press. And some are complaining, half-sincerely, about the tedium of reading page proofs. Although writing and publishing are discrete processes, they are interdependent. Why write if no one will publish? And what is there to publish if no one writes?

Despite this interdependence, academic authors and publishers of scholarly books and journals do not always understand each other very well, and they sometimes find it difficult to coexist peacefully. Publishers and journal editors lose sight of the tremendous pressure to publish that is exerted on scholars, particularly young, untenured scholars. Authors, for their part, are guilty of not understanding either how publishing works or how to use the system to their advantage.

Publishers' indifference to the scholar's plight, although perhaps regrettable, does serve a purpose. The editor considering a manuscript who remains conscious at every moment that the fate of another human being is at stake may not make the best decision. Especially in this era of scarce academic jobs and often unrealistic administrative demands for "productivity,"

failure to publish early and often may force a scholar to resort to driving a cab or designing Web pages. But the editor who too generously takes that into account and publishes too many marginal manuscripts may also end up driving a cab. Authors' ignorance of publishing, however, is both self-imposed and self-destructive. It is not difficult to learn how the world of scholarly publishing works, and it is foolish not to make the effort. Once you understand what publishers want from authors, it is easy enough to provide it and thereby improve your chances of publication. That is what this book is designed to help you do.

Publishing What You Write: How to Use This Book

In an ideal world, people would write only when they had something important to say. Discovery or inspiration would be the driving force. In the real world, though, this is only one of several worthy motives. Academic authors do write for the pure joy of communicating ideas, but they also write for tenure, money, and fame.

Let us assume for the moment that you are writing because you want to get tenure, be promoted, or get a raise. Perhaps you want to publish so that you can find another teaching job at a more hospitable institution. In these cases, depending on your field, you are going to have to write articles for scholarly journals and possibly a book or two for scholarly presses. Because university administrators believe that the refereeing procedures of these journals and presses guarantee the scholarly value of the works they publish, they accept such publication as evidence of the author's scholarly accomplishments. Chapter 2 explains how to find an appropriate journal for your work and how to speed up the refereeing process; it also offers suggestions for effective article writing and for revising talks and speeches for publication. Chapter 3 is devoted to the problems of revising a dissertation for book or journal publication. Chapter 4 describes the various sorts of book publishers and tells

how to decide which publisher would be best for your book. It also suggests ways to make responses more prompt and acceptance more likely. Chapter 5 tells how to work with a publisher, including an explanation of how to read your contract and a discussion of how to seek grants for publication costs. In Chapter 6, I offer advice on editing multiauthor books and volumes with many contributors and compiling anthologies.

Perhaps you are not concerned about tenure or promotion but do want to make some money. In that case, skip the journals and monographs and get to work on a textbook. (Either that or shift to romance fiction, apocalyptic novels, or diet books.) Journals do not pay authors, and few scholarly books generate significant royalties. Writing textbooks, however, can be profitable. As you will learn, the money is not quick or easy. Writing a textbook usually will not help you get tenure, because many university administrators mistakenly exclude textbook writing from scholarly activity. Although writing a textbook does not require original research, it does demand a comprehensive knowledge of the field and an original, well-thought-out perspective on it. Chapters 7 and 8 will help you write a textbook, find a publisher, and see the project through to completion.

If it is fame that you seek, you need to write a book that nonacademics will read, that will be reviewed in newspapers and popular magazines, that will be stocked in bookstores, and that achieves a respectable sales rank on Amazon.com. This is not as easy as it sounds and requires authors to involve themselves in the publishing process in new ways. And although writing books for general readers is more profitable than writing monographs, it is typically less lucrative than writing textbooks. Chapter 9 discusses the writing, publishing, and economics of trade books.

Chapter 10 explains the mechanics of authorship, regardless of whether you are writing a journal article, monograph, textbook, or trade book: how to prepare an electronic manuscript, obtain permission to quote and to reproduce illustrations, proofread, and index a book.

Because money is so often a bone of contention, I have summarized the economics of book publishing in Chapter 11. There

you will find an explanation of why books cost so much and where the money goes, along with an analysis of the impact of online publishing on costs and prices.

Chapter 12 discusses new opportunities in digital publishing.

Finally, the bibliography, which is briefly annotated, lists books on writing, guides to journals in various fields, style guides, and further information on most topics covered in the book. It is organized topically, following the order of the text.

In addition to the pleasure and pride of seeing one's ideas and words in print, publishing can lead to security, status, wealth, and (occasionally) fame. Surely it is worth the effort to learn a bit about it. This book is an introduction to scholarly publishing. The serious writer needs several other books as well.

The Scholar's Bookshelf

Anyone who writes should own *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White. This brief paperback solves the most common difficulties of grammar and diction and offers sound, memorable advice on clear writing. I read it once a year without fail. (Full information about this and all other works mentioned in this book is provided in the bibliography.)

You must also own a good dictionary. Although the Merriam-Webster dictionaries (the third edition of the unabridged or the latest collegiate edition) are the most generally accepted, I prefer the *American Heritage Dictionary* because it provides good usage notes and has a more pleasing layout. Its CD-ROM version provides spoken pronunciations. Another popular choice is the *Oxford American Dictionary*. If you plan to write a book, you must own *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Nearly every book publisher relies on it, and it is the authority for many fields on note and bibliography style. It also tells you how to proofread and index your book. It is fairly expensive, but it is worth buying. If you deal with British publishers or

journals, Judith Butcher's *Copy-Editing: The Cambridge Handbook* will be helpful.

If you become interested in the world of academic publishing, you many want to subscribe to the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* (formerly *Scholarly Publishing*), published by the University of Toronto Press, and to *Publishing Research Quarterly* (formerly *Book Research Quarterly*), published by Springer. If you do not subscribe, make sure your library does and take time to browse through the journals occasionally. *The American Scholar* includes at least one article a year on some aspect of book publishing, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* frequently includes news and feature stories on scholarly publishing.

The Publishing Partnership

While authors are worrying about getting their books published, editors are out busily acquiring manuscripts. It is the same process viewed from different angles. The reputations of authors and publishers ride on the same books. When a book is well reviewed or wins a prestigious award, both author and publisher share the glory. The book that succeeds commercially puts money into both the publisher's coffers and the author's pocket. When a book fails – critically, financially, or aesthetically – author and publisher share the disappointment. Why, then, is there conflict between partners? Ignorance is one source of conflict. The author who does not understand the refereeing process, who does not read the contract, and who does not learn to proofread is bound to be unhappy with how long it takes to get a book accepted, to feel cheated on discovering that the publisher will not provide an index, and to become outraged when a reviewer points out typos.

Illusions about money are another source of friction. An author whose book is priced at $40.00 and whose royalty is 10 percent figures "$4.00 per book, and they're printing 1,500, so I should get $6,000." Unfortunately, the royalty may be

paid on net receipts (20 to 40 percent less than gross), at least 100 copies will be given away free for reviews and publicity, and not all the other copies will be sold. When the first royalty check arrives and the author gets, say, $1,500 – knowing that the first year is probably the best – disappointment sets in. With disappointment comes suspicion. Where does the rest of the money go, anyway? Authors who do not know what it costs to produce a book and who do not understand prices and discounts are apt to think mistakenly that presses are getting rich from their labors. They are not. University presses do make money on some titles but rarely more than the authors do. Successful trade books make money, but authors should not be misled by the six- and seven-figure advances paid to a handful of best-selling authors and celebrities. For most serious nonfiction books, royalties are respectable but far from extravagant. Textbooks, too, should make money for both author and publisher, with the amount depending on the number of students who enroll in the relevant courses, the book's share of the market, and the book's longevity.

Some authors and librarians, irritated by what they view as exorbitant prices for journals and books, are hoping that electronic media will eliminate the need for publishers, or at least reduce prices. Electronic media certainly play an increasing role in scholarly communication, but it is unlikely that either publishers or high prices will disappear. The value added by publishers in acquiring, reviewing, selecting, and improving articles and books is too often overlooked. Paper, printing, ink, and postage represent a small part of scholarly publishing costs. In addition, publishers must meet readers' expectations that electronic media will have useful features not available in print media, increasing costs further. If you want to know about the impact of technology on book and journal prices, just ask a librarian.

Throughout this book, I explain the financial implications of various policies and technologies, and Chapter 11 discusses the economics of scholarly publishing in some detail. I hope that this will reduce one source of mistrust. Chapter 12 will, I

hope, contribute to constructive discussion of new media and their uses.

Editorial changes can lead to disputes. Most writers have worked hard on their manuscripts, and many resent any attempt to alter their words and punctuation. They view the editor's suggestions as attempts to take over their books, and they see editorial queries as questioning their authority. The editor, however, is trying to correct errors, clarify meanings, and eliminate clumsy constructions in order to make the author's book better. I hope that the sections in Chapters 5, 8, and 9 on working with your editor will help you to develop happy and productive relationships with those who labor to improve your writing.

Some authors also fear that their publishers are not doing enough to sell their books. The level of marketing effort, and the types of marketing activity undertaken, will depend on the nature of your book and the publisher's estimate of the size of the audience. Chapters 5 and 9 explain the marketing strategies of scholarly and trade publishers and suggest ways authors can help to reach the largest possible market.

Much of the conflict between authors and publishers is rooted in the very interdependence that makes them partners. Authors resent having their professional stature and even their livelihoods rest in the hands of nonacademics. And just as faculty members often comment on how great teaching would be if it weren't for the students, publishers occasionally long for the day when books would magically appear without authors. With a little understanding, however, the two sides can get along quite nicely.

This book is, in a sense, an effort at making peace as well as informing. The writer who understands publishers will be more successful in dealing with them and will make the publisher's life much easier. Writers may view my effort as one-sided, because all the instruction is directed at them. Throughout the book, though, I have set a high standard of behavior for publishers and have suggested ways authors can hold publishers to these standards. For most authors, publishing

is rewarding and even fun. Needless to say, the same is true for most editors, or they would be in a better-paid field. I hope that this book will make publishing easier for both authors and publishers and that it will reduce the friction that often seems inevitable.

Chapter 2

Journal Articles

> He put his hand into the well-known nook under the pillow: only, it did not get so far. What he touched was, according to his account, a mouth, with teeth, and with hair about it, and, he declares, not the mouth of a human being. . . . "Gayton, I believe that alchemist man knows it was I who got his paper rejected."
>
> M. R. James, "Casting the Runes"

Journals are the medium most frequently used by academic authors to disseminate the results of their research. In some fields, particularly in the natural and physical sciences, book writing is rare. A biochemist may publish hundreds of journal articles and never think of writing a book. Journals are also the least professionalized of the publishing media. In the humanities and social sciences, journals are often edited on the side by academics with regular teaching and research assignments and without professional staff.[1] (This is far less common in the physical and natural sciences.) The advent of personal computers, desktop publishing, and electronic publishing has led to the creation of numerous small, specialized journals run out of faculty offices. Electronic journals that are "printed" only after they reach subscribers' computers are becoming plentiful; these are even easier to start and cheaper to distribute.

The growth of specialized journals since the 1960s has expanded opportunities for publication. At the same time, the

[1]Should you ever become a journal editor, you will want to consult *Journal Publishing* by Gillian Page, Robert Campbell, and Jack Meadows (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

end of the academic hiring boom of that decade and the stabilization of the size of the academic community have decreased the number of submissions received by many journals. This adds up to improved possibilities for getting good articles published, even if they are on very specialized topics. It also means that mediocre work can be published in less prestigious journals that need to fill their pages. This phenomenon, in turn, has generated efforts by research councils in Europe and Australia to rank journals, allowing these agencies to quantify the accomplishments of faculty members, departments, and institutions. Some U.S. universities attempt such rankings less formally.

Pressure to publish sometimes tempts scholars to rush their work into print before it is ready. They may take a conference paper that has not been thought through completely, give it a quick rewrite, and start submitting it to journals. Given the range of journals out there, they may well get an acceptance letter. This is really not a good idea. Publication is a form of self-presentation. It will often be the first time a colleague at another university learns about your work, and it is something that hiring and promotion committees will read. Publishing immature or sloppy work is akin to showing up for a job interview without combing your hair or washing your clothes. Everything you publish should enhance your reputation, not merely add a line to your curriculum vitae. Take the time to make sure your submissions are your best work, and try to place them in the best possible journals. The keys to quality publishing are writing well, selecting carefully the journals to which you submit your work, preparing your manuscripts properly, and communicating clearly with journal editors.

Writing Well

Good academic writing is clear and succinct. (To use myself as an example, I first wrote that sentence: "For the purposes of academic writing, writing well is writing clearly and succinctly." I read it, saw that it was neither clear nor succinct, and rewrote it. Reading and revising are essential to good writing.