An Introduction to Academic Publishing

We would like to propose a panel on publishing aimed at graduate students and recent graduates to give them an insight into this important but often confusing side of professional scholarship. The panel will present issues in the publication of books and articles from the perspective both of the author and the publisher to better familiarize young scholars with the many steps of the publication process. It will present the process as a whole, from the initial draft to the finished product.

Publishing is a contentious topic when it comes to graduate students. The "Publish or Perish" mentality looms large over the rest of the academic world, but when and where a graduate student should publish remains controversial. Should young scholars publish as many articles as possible wherever they can, or should they be cautious about where they publish their work? Is it dangerous to publish articles that are only tangentially related to their primary field of study lest prospective employers get the wrong idea about a scholar's interests, or does a wide range of publication show breadth of knowledge? Likewise, when should a recent graduate begin the process of turning his or her dissertation into a first book? How does a prospective author find a publisher for their new book? Where does the relatively new resource of digital publishing fit into this conversation? This panel hopes to open up a discussion of these issues and offer young scholars the advice they need to navigate these difficult processes.

The panel will consist of two parts, the first presenting material on article publication from the point of view of both an author and an editor, the second discussing the process of publishing a first book. The first section of the panel will walk prospective authors through the most important steps of publishing articles. It will highlight

strategies on how to avoid the most common pitfalls. An experienced scholar with numerous publications to her name will present on what is entailed in turning a seminar paper or conference presentation into a journal article. An editor of one of the field's standard journals will explain the editor's side of the publication process. This will give graduate students and young scholars a better idea of what to expect once they have submitted a article, how long the publishing process might take, and what kinds of contributions might be expected of them during the editing process.

The second section will focus book publication. A recent first time author will share his experiences turning his dissertation in to an award-wining first book, with an eye to some of the difficult decisions that prospective authors might face. Finally, paper from a representative of a major publisher will give an insider's perspective on the vetting and editing process, highlighting the academic and financial considerations that an editor takes into account when working with a new manuscript.

The Dos and Don’ts of Publishing an Article

This paper considers some aspects of the process of writing an article for a scholarly journal in Classics. Should publishing an article be a priority for a graduate student? We will consider the following topics:

- Is my idea appropriate for a journal article?
- Differences between a seminar paper/ dissertation chapter and an article
- Identifying your audience
- Defining a topic
- What goes into an introduction?
- Style
- Deciphering the readers’ reports
- Incorporating criticism
- Dealing with rejection
- From readers’ reports to final copy
- Mind your manners!

Graduate Student Publication: an Editor's Perspective

The second speaker in the proposed panel, who is editor of one of the standard journals in the field, will offer guidance to those without much publishing experience on some of the usually-unstated "rules of the game," and on how the process works from the editor's point of view. Specifically, the speaker will address the following four topics:

1) How journals differ from one another in style, mission, selectivity, and audience, and therefore, how to choose the most appropriate one for your submission; this section will include suggestions for interpreting a journal's statement of what it wants to publish, and some important differences between American, British, Continental, and other journals. On the other hand, while you want to submit to a journal who publishes the kind of thing you have written, you may be disadvantaged by submitting an article on the kind of thing the journal has recently published a lot of.

2) What an editor looks for when reading a submission, and so how to ensure that yours gets the right kind of attention; this portion of the talk will include discussion of the process of submitting of article, understanding a journal's style sheet, presenting your ideas in the most effective way, and the writing of a good abstract in order to help get the kind of anonymous readers you want.

3) The selection process; this section will include discussion of how an editor solicits readers' reports, what s/he does with them, problems and challenges that can arise at this stage, and the editor's own role in selecting a piece for publication (not necessarily what you think, and variable by journal and by editor).

4) What happens, and when, after acceptance; this portion of the talk will discuss the timeline from acceptance to publication, including formatting, editing, copy-editing,

checking of references, and final proofs. It will also cover some rules of etiquette for corresponding with an editor, and for negotiating the sometimes-tricky waters of editorial changes.

I will conclude with a short list of do's and don't's, drawing upon my own experience and the experience of other journal editors of my acquaintance.

The Challenges of Turning a (Pretty Good) Dissertation into a (Much Better) Book

The prospect of turning a dissertation, no matter how well researched and written, into a book is a daunting one, especially when combined with the pressures of full-time teaching and the winding down of the tenure clock. The goal of this paper is to provide some insight into the vagaries of this task by sharing an account of the long, arduous, but ultimately rewarding process that led to the successful publication of my first book, which went on to win a prestigious award. Although every junior scholar's situation is different, the aim is to provide a specific case-study (my own experience) to highlight some of the difficult choices involved in transforming and reworking a dissertation into a book. These include decisions about how much one should reshape and revise the content and structure of the thesis, the proper response to criticism from editors and readers for the press, and how to balance the pressure to publish expeditiously (e.g., because of tenure requirements) with the desire to devote the substantial amount of time necessary to produce quality work.

I will provide a handout detailing the different stages involved in the process of publishing my book: the initial changes to the dissertation taken in my leave year in 2005-06; the submission to the press in November 2007; the readers' reports that I received in March 2008, the profound reconsideration of the topic and thesis undertaken in the summer of 2008, the extensive revisions made in the subsequent year, the submission of the complete manuscript in Sept 2009, and the changes made in the final stages of editing. With the benefit of hindsight, I will make a few observations about the crucial choices made over these years. First, I draw attention to my failure to obtain feedback *prior* to undertaking my initial revisions to the dissertation during my year of

leave; the result was a great deal of wasted energy and time that could have been put to more productive use had I had a better idea of what direction I needed to be moving toward. Second, I want to emphasize the decision to completely rework the project after receiving the initial readers' reports from the press. The readers (as well as the series editors) concurred that, while the basic idea and research underlying the book was promising, the execution (e.g., prose style, thesis, structure, argumentation) left much to be desired. I then had to choose whether to radically rework the book to satisfy the press (with no guarantee of publication), or try to submit it somewhere else. I chose to devote the next two years to rewriting the entire book, primarily because, after some rumination, I realized that the readers' criticisms (and there were many) were absolutely correct. The process was difficult and took a long time; there was another round of criticisms and subsequent revisions after the second version of the book was submitted to the press in June 2009. But the result was a far better book than I could have produced on my own, and I will underline several principles of revision that I believe were important in this process: the necessity to stay on topic and thus condense, pare down, eliminate as much as possible, to keep in mind the wider audience (even for specialized material) proper to a book, to work hard at clarity and fluency, and most importantly to think long and hard (and constantly) about the overarching aims of the book and not be afraid to modify one's position, even late in the game.

While the panel organizer and I recognize that my experience is not a universal one, nor necessarily applicable to others, we believe that an empirical, real-world example, examined in detail, of one scholar's transformation of a dissertation into a book

would allow graduate students and junior scholars a better understanding of a process that can be relatively opaque until one finds oneself embarking upon it.

An Enchiridion for the Publishing Labyrinth

I'd like to start by mentioning that while this talk focuses on how I personally handle my lists of publications, most of the following points would be true for most editors most of the time. I've tried to point out places where I may differ, but listeners should be reasonably confident that this represents something like a communis opinio of publishers.

When I consider a potential project, I look at academic questions and financial questions. There is no magic combination of answers that ensures a manuscript will proceed to refereeing (the usual next step); rather, I'm looking for a generally successful group of answers, or in some cases one positive angle that will compensate for others.

Academic questions include issues such as whether a work is topically appropriate to its proposed field, whether the work is observing scholarly norms of research and presentation of argument, whether the author can write well enough for the topic, and whether the work has been preempted by another publication (of more concern for textbooks and commentaries). A related question is whether I can get a project refereed: is the market so narrow there are no referees? Conversely, is it in such a new area that refereeing will be difficult, but the book will break important ground?

Financial questions are pretty straightforward. The first and foremost is, if I publish this book, will I make money, or lose money? Next, are there unusual components to the work that might let me save money, or require me to spend extra money. Lastly, given the book's likely contents, will I be able to price it appropriately for its market, or, if not, are there elements the author and I can reduce or remove that will bring its price in line?

All this can be rolled into two questions: Am I helping, if I publish this book? Can I afford to offer this kind of help?

In these nervous days, I'll also mention there are some questions or angles I do not worry about. These include the author's academic credentials. Quality is the issue, not whether you come from Oxbridge, or the ivies, or Michigan/Texas/Stanford. Similarly, in fields where there are dominant scholars, it's ok if you haven't worked with the "obvious" scholar, or don't hew to a specific party line. I want to see what *you* have to say.

Possibly also interesting are the top reasons I decline to consider a manuscript, in roughly descending order of frequency. These are not, I think, what most people worry about:

a) length: a standard monograph normally does not need to be more than about 100,000 words.
b) the author lacks necessary credentials – typically this is someone not from a classics background who is trying to write on a classics topic that requires disciplinary skills
c) the quality of the author's argument: poorly researched or poorly argued
d) young scholar trying a senior-scholar topic (topics that require extensive and rapid survey of literature, or time periods, or genres)

The refereeing process is designed both to provide helpful feedback to authors about their projects, from people coming to a work anew, and to help guide press staff about a work's publishing prospects. Different presses, even different editors, handle the process

differently, and if you're submitting a manuscript you're within your rights to ask how your work will be handled. You might suggest to your editor that you name a few referees; if you're allowed, you might also ask to provide names of one or two people who are not going to provide a helpful report. I think some editors use author-suggested names; I personally have my own lists of candidates, but I'm always interested to see which scholars authors peg as their topical colleagues.

Generally I like to get two reports simultaneously, on a full manuscript. If a work is a textbook, more reports are helpful, and usually they're shorter. Possible outcomes are two favorable, two negative, and split. What happens in those different cases varies: factors include the author's writing experience and seniority; whether the author seems able to make revisions that the referees are requesting; and the subfield in which the author is working.

My impression is that most people think of book publishing as a dreadful struggle, to be got over with claws and teeth if necessary. I would prefer to think of it as a collaborative enterprise, between authors and editors whose goals are not identical but which largely overlap. In my observation the chief traits that authors need to achieve a successful book publication are a willingness to ask questions, and persistence.