

Praeclarus Press



How to Write a Book Proposal

Book Proposal Overview

After pitching your book idea to an editor, the next step is to write a book proposal. Most non-fiction books are sold to publishers based on book proposals. So what you write will have a great deal to do with whether you are offered a contract. Fortunately, book proposals are relatively straight forward to produce. Below is an overview of the information that you should include.

Working Title

A working title is the tentative title for your book. The final title will be chosen based on your final book content and how we will market it. We will take into account how your book will be shelved in bookstores and indexed in online searches. In short, your working title is the title of your book—for now.

Author(s)

List your name and the names of any co-authors. This is simply one line. Your credentials and affiliations will go in another part of the proposal.

Estimated Book Length

Provide an estimate of length based on double-spaced manuscript pages. A range (e.g., 250-300 pages) generally works well. Estimated length is important because length is one of the chief determinants of price. Longer books cost more to publish and will be priced higher. For your book to be competitive, it will need to stay within a reasonable number of pages.

Book Description

Provide a paragraph-long description of your book. In short, this is your “elevator” version (i.e., a description you could give in the time it takes for an elevator ride). Make it catchy and interesting. If it is dull, chances are editors will not keep reading.



Intended Audience

Provide detailed description of your readers. The more specific you can be the better. How much money do they make? What is their ethnicity? Are they in any professional organizations, clubs or support groups? Do they frequent certain websites or online communities? Does your target audience have a specific condition, problem or disease? How many people have that condition?

How will people find out about your book? The more specific you can be here too, the better. With more than 50,000 books published each year, it's more difficult than ever for new authors to get noticed. Many books only sell a few hundred copies, and sometimes the publishers don't even recoup their costs of bringing a book to market.

Your Platform

Your platform refers to the different ways you can access your target audience. Do you have a well-established website or Facebook page? Do you speak at conferences or workshops? Do you have an established name in the field? Do you write for publications that your target audience is likely to read? Writing for magazines, newsletters, and websites can make a big difference in book sales. People are more likely to buy if they "know" you.

Competing Works

An analysis of competing works is another crucial part of your book proposal. Find out what's already out there on your topic and read those books. Describe the most popular of these books and discuss how they compare to your proposed book. Will your book have a different slant or theoretical framework? Is the competing book out of date? Is it too technical or not technical enough? Is it written for a different audience than you plan to reach? What will your book add to the existing knowledge base?



Provide the Amazon ranking for each title; the smaller the number, the better. We want to know how similar books are selling. Numbers that are too high (e.g., over 300,000) may indicate that books on this particular topic don't sell well. On the other hand, if you can find comparable books with numbers under 10,000, we will be more interested because it means that people are buying books on that topic.

Author Qualifications

This section is where you get to explain why you are qualified—indeed, the best person—to write your proposed book. Don't just recite your CV here. Instead, summarize, in two to three paragraphs, what your qualifications are *for this particular project*.

Detailed Outline & Sample Chapters

The next part of your proposal is a detailed outline of your book. List the title for each chapter. Then write a paragraph or two describing it. After reviewing your outline, we may ask for a sample chapter or two. Generally speaking, publishers want sample chapters from authors for several reasons: to check your writing style, to see if you can complete work to deadline, and to see how closely you adhere to your outline.

Conclusion

Writing a book proposal is an important first step in writing a book. Fortunately, book proposals are relatively easy to write and will help you think through—perhaps for the first time—the focus and slant of the book you want to write.

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