

From Dissertation to Book

A Professional Development Workshop

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“Are YOU writing
a book?”

PhDs are often encouraged to transform their dissertations into books...

In writing a dissertation you figured out something important and explained it in a way your advisors would understand and validate. For your book, you need to tell the story differently, with fresh insight, clarity, and a new readership in mind. You'll re-think audience, structure, and writing style; find your authorial voice; and take some time to find the right outlet for your book and convince an editor it is worth publishing.

And of course, you need to write it.

This workshop breaks down the dissertation-to-book process into key elements and considerations. Depending on where you are in the transformation, your focus will change.

“From Dissertation to Book” Explores:

- Differences between dissertation & book
- Stages in the transformation
- Common barriers
- Resources
- Q&A, plus “hands-on” work

Differences...Dissertation and Book

Dissertation:	Book:
Purpose: Scholarly, research-focused, narrow audience	Purpose: Wider audience, may include lay people
Structure: Pre-determined chapters/content	Structure: Lesser research/methods focus; Fewer quotes/citations from other researchers
Writing Style:	Writing Style: More accessible, less jargon. Clear authorial voice

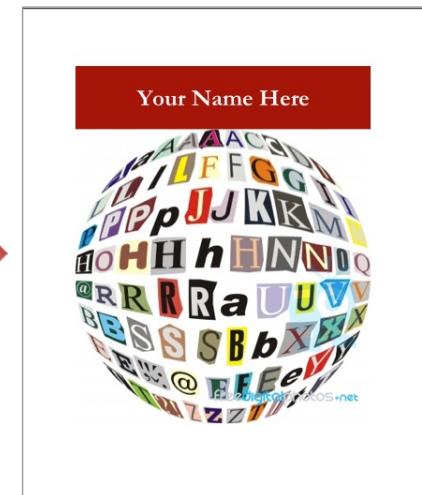
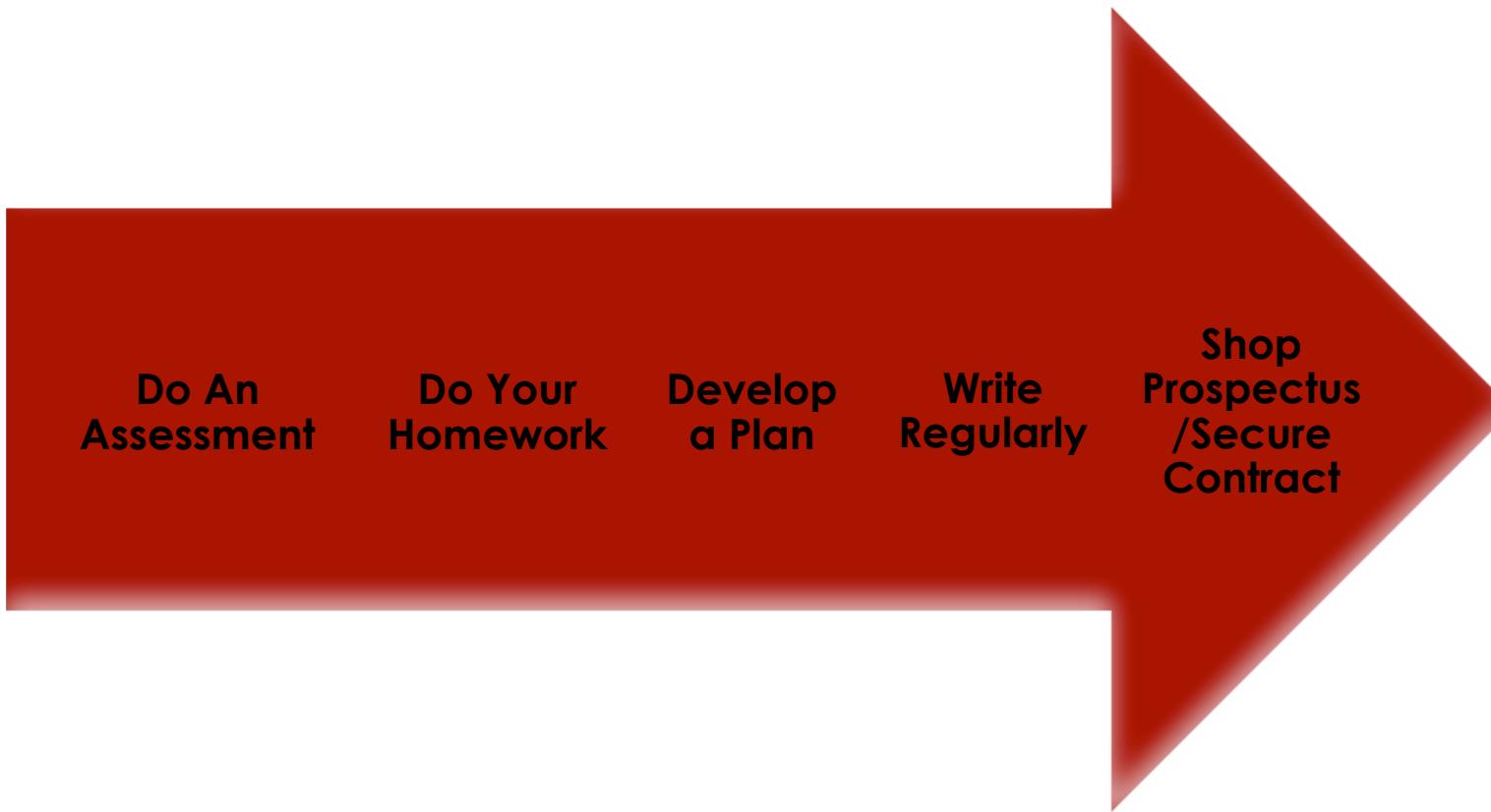
A dissertation is research focused and structured to be evidence of a Ph.D. candidate's readiness to receive entrance into the academy. Therefore, the dissertation is written for the scholarly community in a specific field, and the representatives of that community are the dissertation committee. As a result, there are field-specific rules and norms to allow the candidate to demonstrate knowledge of the literature, and proficiency in conducting and writing up original research. The dissertation must engage key concepts within the field (i.e., use the correct jargon) and clearly articulate it.

The unpublished book manuscript has a different purpose. It is intended for a wider audience (beyond the dissertation committee, and perhaps beyond your discipline). The structure can be quite variable, though there is generally a lesser focus on research methods and citations from other researchers. Most importantly, the book must be well-written, engaging, interesting, non-repetitive, and accessible. Avoid jargon. Find **your** voice.

Recommended "How-To" Books:

- From Dissertation to Book (2005) by William Germano
- Revising Your Dissertation: Advice from Leading Editors (2007) by Beth Luey
- Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing it (1998) by Howard Becker

Stages in the Transformation



There are five basic stages in the dissertation to book transformation. First, you must do an assessment of your dissertation to know whether your research works in a book format. Second, do your homework to evaluate your professional obligations, resources, and publishing options. Third, develop a plan of action that involves writing a prospectus, developing a timetable, and aligning your obligations and expectations. Fourth, get going on a regular writing practice (daily if possible). And finally, shop your crisp and compelling prospectus to acquisitions editors. After you secure your book contract, the book transformation is imminent. Keeping the end in mind helps to work through all of the intermediate stages of book development. First things first.

Stage 1: Do An Assessment

Appropriateness: Book or articles

Intent: Audience and goals?

Feasibility: How much overhaul does it really need? Is there enough content for 1 or 2 articles in advance of the book?

The first step in turning your dissertation into a book is deciding **whether it should be a book in the first place**. Does the topic require sustained & detailed treatment that can unfold only in book form, or can you make your points just as well (or better) in several articles?

If you have an academic position, how your department treats books in tenure & promotion is an important consideration. Some departments almost REQUIRE books for tenure, while others see articles as most important, and books as "extras." Do you know whether you are in what they call a "book department" or an "article department"? If not, find out. Start by looking at what your colleagues publish (books or articles).

Visioning your audience will help you to give your dissertation a **makeover**. To find out how much of one, you'll consider what is new & interesting about your topic & your findings; whether you'll need more data (and what's involved in getting it); and how the book meshes with your overall research agenda. You'll also think about new developments since you completed the dissertation. To create a book manuscript, you may be able to do a lighter revision of the DIS, or you may have to do a total re-write. After your initial assessment, you can **develop a plan**.

Stage 2: Do Your Homework

Map Out Professional Obligations:

Teaching, service, administrative work, personal demands

List Resources/Needs:

Work negotiations, release time, summer funding, external funds, child care, software, yoga classes

Identify Publishing Options:

University press, book series, cross-over/trade

Before you can develop a plan of action, you will need to do your homework to map out your obligations, identify your resources (possibly seeking new ones), and identify publishing options. First, you need to know what your institution expects from you in terms of teaching, service work, administrative responsibilities, and the personal demands you must balance with them all. Second, what resources do you have, and what do you need to support writing time? Be exhaustive in your list. Finally, consider your publishing options. University presses are often best suited for an early-stage academic career. A book series might be good for “niche research” that contributes to the field but won’t attract a wide audience. Cross-over/trade publications are a good option for public sociology topics that are likely to attract a wider readership. Your personal and professional goals unite to provide the space, the energy, and the resources for your big project.

Tip: Browse your bookshelves and bibliography. Which presses publish your favorite works? Read publishers’ catalogs. Ask colleagues for suggestions.

Stage 3: Develop A Plan

A. Craft a Prospectus/Proposal

The document that envisions the book

B. Create a Reasonable Work Plan

Mapping out goals and projects in time

C. Align Your Obligations and Expectations:

Negotiate along the way

Every huge undertaking needs a plan. Writing a book requires a vision (represented by your prospectus), a reasonable work plan, and alignment with your obligations and expectations. The Book Prospectus is the ultimate preparation for the “dissertation to book” transformation because it involves envisioning your dissertation AS A BOOK. It helps to guide book development and maintain a clear focus. Without a reasonable work plan and alignment of your obligations and expectations, even the best idea will not come to fruition.

This section outlines important steps in developing your plan.

A. Craft a Prospectus

In About 5-8 pages:

- What is your manuscript about?
- Why is it sociologically/socially important?
- What is the proposed table of contents?
- Who is the likely audience?
- What are the competing/similar books?
- What is the status of the work?
- What are your personal marketing plans (e.g.. author website, blog, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Who might review your book?

An engaging prospectus will open with a hook that invites the reader to want to know more. Is there an interesting anecdote, an important news item, or some surprising data?

"This book examines the social ramifications of the "pink ribbon culture" surrounding breast cancer. Based on eight years of ethnographic observation, analysis of breast cancer advertisements and awareness campaigns, and interviews with hundreds of breast cancer survivors, supporters, advocates, and caregivers, PINK RIBBON BLUES: HOW BREAST CANCER CULTURE UNDERMINES WOMEN'S HEALTH argues that, although breast cancer advocacy has moved the disease into the light and empowered millions of women, it also deliberately diverts attention from several important facts..."

After the hook, back it up with your central argument and your book's contribution to scholarship, the literature, specific groups, or to society at large. Be sure to describe your audience. For DAMAGED GOODS, Nack states:

"I foresee four possible audiences for this book: undergraduate courses in Sociology and Women's Studies; graduate seminars in Sociology, Women's Studies, Anthropology, and Public Health; an applied audience of health professionals who seek to gain insights from patients' points of view; and the large population of people living with genital herpes and HPV."

B. Create a Reasonable Work Plan

- List goals
- Identify projects
- List steps for each project
- Map each step onto your weekly calendar

A key strategy in the writing process is to be specific, realistic, and grounded in a timetable. A Reasonable work plan involves setting clear goals, identifying smaller projects involved, listing steps needed to do those projects, and mapping it onto your calendar. Literally. For extra help and encouragement:

- ***Time Management From the Inside Out*** (2004) by Julie Morgenstern.
- ***The Clockwork Muse*** (1999) by Eviatar Zerubavel.
- ***Inside Hire Ed's Career Advice Column*** <http://www.insidehighered.com/advice>
- ***The Academic Ladder*** <http://www.academicladder.com/>
- **National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity** – Training, Mentoring Community <http://facultydiversity.site-ym.com/>

Sample Work Plan

GOAL: Transform Dissertation to Book

Project 1	Assess Dissertation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the dissertation.2. Make a list of things to be removed.3. List articles that might be drawn from what is removed.4. List material to be added.
Project 2	Evaluate Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Apply for internal/external grants2. Negotiate release time.
Project 3	Start Writing Book	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Re-read & focus the manuscript.2. Create a new table of contents.3. List possible illustrations, if appropriate.4. List possible titles. Fun & Inspiring!5. Plan further research if needed.6. Order research materials if needed.7. Think about & prioritize revisions.8. Prepare book prospectus.9. Begin writing book.10. Map out each chapter.

Sample Work Plan, Cont'd.

GOAL: Transform Dissertation to Book, cont.

Project 4	Find A Publisher	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make a list of potential publishers.2. Review publisher websites.3. List requirements for prospectus submission.4. Note any book series or special areas of interest.5. List contacts: people who worked with this publisher.6. Write cover letter.7. Send completed prospectus with letter to 5-8 publishers (2-3 at a time). Follow up.8. Alternatively, query editors in advance, and set up meetings with publishers at Conferences.9. Get a contract (Press should send MS out for review).
Project 5	Complete The Book	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read & incorporate Relevant Reviewer Comments.2. Work with editor to revise/complete the MS.3. Allow others to read drafts & provide feedback.4. Complete full MS.5. Revise MS per copy-editor suggestions.6. Carefully read galley proofs & make corrections.7. Do you need to create an index?8. <i>Complete Author Questionnaire.</i>9. Work with editor to move book through production.

C. Align Your Obligations/Expectations

- Institutional/Individual expectations
- Teaching/writing
- Service
- Workload/reassignment
- Fellowships and grants

Keeping your professional obligations & ongoing needs in check MUST be part of your overall plan. Throughout the process, new and old obligations WILL interrupt your writing plan. Do a periodic check-in to make sure your institutional & individual expectations are in sync. If they are not, take action and make adjustments.

If you are at an academic institution, how might you modify expectations about course load, number of new preps, summer teaching? What are the expectations for promotion and tenure, and are those also mapped out into your six-year career plan? Do those expectations mesh with your own expectations for writing and doing new research? What resources for support and professional development does your institution offer? If you are teaching, are you over preparing, trying to cover too much material, reinventing the wheel, or giving your students too much of your time? Does email overtake valuable writing time? Have you learned how to say "NO?"

Most institutions value fellowships and grants, both those offered internally and those that are external. Make an appointment with the Office of Institutional Research to find opportunities that will get you some writing time!

Stage 4: Write

If every time you sat down you expected something great, writing would always be a great disappointment. Plus that expectation would also keep you from writing.

Sit down with the least expectation of yourself; say, “I am free to write the worst junk in the world.” You have to give yourself space to write a lot without a destination.

-- Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones*

Resources:

- **Publish & Flourish (2005)** by Tara Gray
- **How to Write A Lot (2007)** by Paul Silvia
- **Writing Down the Bones (2005)** by Natalie Goldberg
- **Bird by Bird (1995)** by Ann Lamott
- **Hired Pen – Writing & Editorial Services**
<http://www.hiredpenchicago.com/>
- **The Academic Ladder** <http://www.academicladder.com/>
- **National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity** –
Training, Mentoring Community <http://facultydiversity.site-ym.com/>



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- Read good writing in your field
- Read about writing
- Develop a daily writing practice
- Every day, write first
- Time yourself
- Find your “writing groove”
- Join a writing group (or several)

Stage 5: Shop the Prospectus

Find acquisition editors at professional conferences

- Contact editors in advance to set up a meeting
- Stop by the book exhibit for a conversation
- Have a hard copy of your prospectus with you

Email publishers with cover letter and prospectus

Only send out to 2-3 publishers at a time. Let them know you're shopping the book

Once you've identified several possible publishers, shop your prospectus around to book acquisition editors. **You do not have to wait until your book is completed to pitch your project to a publisher. However, if your work is in progress, you must envision what it will look like when it is COMPLETED, before you ever attempt shop a book prospectus.** When meeting with an editor, be prepared to discuss what your manuscript is about in 2 minutes or less. Then, ask editors about their publication timetable, their process of working with authors, and how they market their books. (Note: If you have a tenure deadline approaching, be sure to let them know.)

It is okay to talk to several publishers at this stage of the game (in contrast with journal publishing). However, some publishers frown on sending an author's manuscript out for review if other publishers are doing so. If this is something you want to do, it is wise to notify and receive consent from both parties before proceeding.

Tip: Always check publisher websites for specific instructions.

Stage 5, Cont'd.: Secure the Contract

Legal contract, without much variation

- Manuscript & delivery specifications (incl. delivery date)
- Payments by the publisher: royalties, the (rare) advance against royalties, other editions/composite works, subsidiary rights/reprints, complimentary copies...)
- Standard terms and conditions
- Marketing plans for the book are separate, (non-contractual)

The book contract is the beginning of the end. In the case of publishing your book, the end is what you had in mind. There are many steps in the final stages of book development, but the contract in hand is what makes those stages possible.

Book contracts are legal documents that tend to be difficult to decipher and mostly boilerplate. The typical contract specifies manuscript and delivery, payments by the publisher, and standard terms and conditions including first rights of refusal on the next book. **Some contract details are more negotiable than others** (e.g., simultaneous printing of paperback, e-book, hardback; having a say about the cover; adding PhD after your name if marketing outside of academia, etc.). In most cases, the contract binds the author to the press but does little to obligate the press to publish the book or to market it in certain ways. An exception would be for a cross-over trade book that the publisher thinks will sell. If things go haywire you can be released from the contract, and if you received an advance, you will need to pay it back. You cannot shop your book around – nor is another press allowed to acquire it – before the contract is cancelled.

Tip: Consult senior mentors with significant book publishing experience to better understand contract terms and possible negotiations

A Timeline from Dissertation to Book (*Pink Ribbon Blues*)

- October 12 Paperback edition of *Pink Ribbon Blues* published
- Spring 12 Write new Introduction/ prepare layout for new 4-page image plate (paperback edition)
- Oct 10 Book is published
- Aug 10 Reconstruct index/ Initial index was outsourced from Press
- Jun-Jul 10 Read/edit page proofs
- May 10 Submit responses to copyedited manuscript
- Summer 10 Launch “*Pink Ribbon Blues*” website w/ blog
- May-Jun 10 Work w/ Press to collect endorsements for back cover
- May 10 Complete “author questionnaire”; author photo; approve catalog copy; mktg strategy
- Apr 10 Choose cover design
- Nov 09 Submit completed manuscript for review
- Aug 09 Negotiate/sign contract
- Aug 09 Editor receives/forwards 3 reviews; write letter(s) responding to reviews
- Jul-Aug 09 Meet with acquisitions editors/ Shop the prospectus
- Jun 08 – Nov 09 Write the book (on 12-month research fellowship)
- Spring 08 Write 3rd article based on dissertation research (published 2009)
- Summer 07 Map out the book (begin tenure track position in fall)
- Spring 07 Submit funding proposals for writing time
- 2005-07 Write 2 articles/book chapter based on DIS research (published 2007-08)
- Dec 04 Finish dissertation (begin 3-year position as visiting assistant professor)

A Timeline from Dissertation to Book (*German Professionals*)

- Jun 12 Book is published
- Jan 12 Deadline for final/print ready manuscript, complete author questionnaire
- Jul 10-Dec 11..... Write book while teaching 4/4 load (no teaching summer/winter breaks)
- Jun 10 Map out the book (chapters and timeline)
- May-Jun 10 Collect endorsements for the back cover
- May 10 Contacted by publisher of book series to request dissertation for possible inclusion.
- May 10 Negotiate/sign contract, find private editor
- Jul 08 Finish dissertation (begin tenure track faculty position in fall)
- Jun 07 Publish 1st article based on dissertation

A Timeline from Dissertation to Book (Damaged Goods)

- Fall 08 Publish 3rd article
- Jun 08 Book is published
- May 08 Launch personal website w/ blog; book signing of galley copies @Book Expo America
- Mar 08 Edit page proofs; review online catalog (correct categorization); construct index
- Feb 08 Work w/ Press to collect endorsements for back cover
- Jan 08 Review/submit responses to copyedited manuscript
- Oct 07 Create/gain approval for cover design; review/approve catalog copy
- Sep 07 Revise MS/send to editor; "author photo"; Press's "launch meeting"; author bio
- Jul 07 Receive reviewer/editor feedback on revision suggestions
- Jun 07 Assist w/ permissions for the 2 published articles based on the dissertation research
- May 07 Complete author questionnaire
- Dec 06 – Jan 07 Press's Board of Review votes in favor of contract; negotiate/sign contract
- Aug – Nov 06 Editor receives/forwards 3 reviews; write letter(s) responding to reviews
- May 06 Write cover letter and send full MS to editor
- Sep 05 – Apr 06 Write book version of dissertation (dept. chair, program director, high service demands)
- Aug 05 Meet 3 editors at ASA; 1 asks to review MS (sent 7-8 queries + requested materials in July)
- Sum 03 – Spr 05 Cross-country move to begin 2nd tenure track position, maternity leave
- Nov 02 Publish 2nd article based on dissertation
- Sep 01 Meet academic Press editor through advisor; get feedback/tips
- Summer 01 Draft book prospectus w/ detailed table of contents (move cross country)
- May 01 Finish dissertation (begin tenure track position in fall)
- Spring 2000 Publish 1st article based on dissertation

5 Takeaways: DIS to Book, to New Book

1. Stick to a timeline – and then adjust as needed
2. Translate for your audience while controlling the message
 - a. Do you need a publicity coach?
3. Do not underestimate a writing partner (may be more helpful than a writing group)
4. Contract timing and negotiations likely to differ from first book to second
5. Outsource what you can (copyeditor, indexer, layouts for images plates or other additional materials, etc.)

Tip: Prepare to “kill your darlings” and lose control of your “baby” while keeping the END in mind.



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