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Introduction to "Writing and Publishing for Academic Authors, Second Edition"

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Writing and Publishing for Academic Authors

Moxley, Joseph M. and Todd Taylor, eds. *Writing and Publishing for Academic Authors*,
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Introduction

The first edition of this book grew out of workshops on scholarly writing that Joe Moxley began teaching at the University of South Florida in 1988. Todd Taylor arrived at South Florida soon after. As specialists in composition theory with expertise in scholarly publishing, we noticed that after the first edition of *Writing and Publishing for Academic Authors* was published in 1992, the demand for advice on the subject continued to grow exponentially. In response, we revised the first edition, focusing on streamlining the collection so that it would read more expediently as well as adding chapters that address some of the latest concerns in academic publishing: intellectual property rights, faculty downsizing, and electronic publishing.

As with the first edition, we wanted to share with our colleagues some of the strategies that composition specialists have developed over the past two decades. When researching materials that would be of use to our colleagues in medicine, business, social studies, and science, we discovered that few books or articles existed that could help academicians understand the world of scholarly publishing. Most of the material that was available addressed the business side of scholarly publishing—covering, for example, how to begin a scholarly journal, how to advertise, or how to typeset documents. Surprisingly, practical guidelines for writing book reviews, articles, grants, and books are rarely mentioned in the literature on academic writing.

The paucity of materials on academic writing can perhaps be traced to the assumption that academicians are already accomplished writers. If they couldn't write, this line of reasoning goes, then surely they couldn't have completed a dissertation. (Or, more perversely, if they cannot write, they do not deserve to succeed as professors.) While at first the assumption that academicians are already accomplished writers may seem reasonable, we must challenge it with the realization that writing is an extraordinarily complex process. The greatest writers

throughout time have reminded us that *writing is a lifelong apprenticeship*. Our ability to develop and express ideas emerges as we confront more intellectually challenging subjects. In any case, being able to write well does not guarantee publication. To be a successful academic author, you also need to understand how to market your work.

Writing and Publishing for Academic Authors offers an insider's look at how to publish scholarly articles, book reviews, grants, magazine articles, and commercial and scholarly books. Written by distinguished scholars and editors, this book can help you overcome writing blocks, develop the attitudes and work habits of successful academic authors, and publish the results of your scholarly endeavors. These distinguished contributors explain how they decide to publish essays and books, and the authors reveal what they have learned from being scholarly writers in the humanities and sciences.

We hope that this book will help you find ways to express ideas that are important to you and to the members of your discipline. We have taken a positive view of scholarly writing because we are writers and editors. We enjoy expressing ourselves and exchanging ideas through print. We view writing as an enriching way to discover and understand our world, as a vital way to stay intellectually alive. By demystifying the processes of writing conference papers, articles, book reviews, books, and grants, we show you how you can join in the scholarly conversation of your peers.

The chapters in Part I review the working habits of successful academic authors. In the opening chapter, Joe Moxley summarizes strategies that you can use to develop, refine, and publish academic ideas. Next, Robert Boice analyzes why so few academicians write. He discusses the faculty programs that he has developed at universities and colleges across the country to help blocked academicians become accomplished writers. Boice's chapter will challenge you to reconsider your assumptions about creativity. Next Peter Elbow, whose scholarly work in composition and rhetoric over the past two decades has helped rhetoricians better understand the generative nature of language, explains how *freewriting* helps develop publishable ideas.

The chapters in Part II analyze the genres of academic writing. Gary Olson, an editor of numerous scholarly journals, offers step-by-step guidelines for developing and publishing articles for humanities journals. Olson challenges you to “adopt a kind of *entrepreneurial spirit*,” and he explains what editors are looking for when they critique scholarly articles. Donald Fiske discusses strategies for developing and revising research reports. Robin Erwin, an editor and scholarly author, talks about the importance of book reviews to the scholarly community. He explains how to approach an editor for the review and how to write the review so that it offers an original and comprehensive contribution to scholarship. Paul Smith, a senior editor at Houghton Mifflin, explains what textbook publishers are looking for when evaluating book proposals. If you have ever considered writing a textbook, then you should carefully read his analysis of the competitive textbook market.

Have you ever wondered how to organize a conference or publish conference proceedings in book form? If so, you will find chapters 8 and 9 to be indispensable. Lagretta Lenker, an editor and organizer of several scholarly proceedings, explains how to organize a scholarly conference so that its proceedings build up to an edited collection. Sara Deats, in a companion essay to Lenker's, discusses how to secure a contract for an anthology based on conference proceedings. Additionally, Deats explains how to weave together the different voices of a conference into a polished book, and she concludes with cogent advice on how to transform the dissertation into a publishable book.

In chapter 10, Naomi B. Pascal, the editor in chief at the University of Washington Press, explores the political and economic factors that impinge on what university presses publish. Pascal explains how to determine which university presses are appropriate for your manuscript and she reviews the significance and effects of the peer-review process.

In chapter 11, Judith Ruderman, an associate provost and author of many successfully funded grants, talks about how to ensure that your grant proposals are funded. She also discusses how grant writing nourishes scholarly writing.

The chapters in Part IV evaluate current issues in scholarly publishing. You should read Evelyn Ashton-Jones's essay on the role of collaboration in scholarly publishing if you are considering coauthoring a work with a colleague or colleagues. Ben Johnson stretches the fabric of scholarly writing by showing how to transform scholarly essays and ideas into commercial writing. By revealing the process through which he became a nationally syndicated newspaper columnist, Johnson shows us how ideas in the classroom and scholarly world can be exchanged for financial rewards in the business world. Janice Walker and Todd Taylor round out the collection by examining some of the most important and yet unsettled issues in academic publishing such as intellectual property rights and visions for online scholarship.