

Author Directions: Navigating your success from PhD to Book

5 Key Tips for Turning your PhD into a Successful Monograph



Introduction

Some PhD theses make for excellent books, allowing for the research to be distributed more widely, often providing a springboard for a successful academic career. However, it is important to remember that a book is a very different product from a thesis and not all good theses would make good books. Publishers consult with academic referees and make the decision not only on the academic quality and standard of a volume, but on its potential commercial value and market.

The 5 key tips in this paper will help you assess and adapt your own work before presenting it to your chosen publisher.

5 Key Tips for Turning your PhD into a Successful Monograph:

1. Understanding commercial value
2. Could your title be part of a series?
3. Considering the audience
4. Choosing an appropriate title
5. Editing – revise, modify & adapt

Understanding Commercial Value

1

The academic strength of your thesis may not be enough for publishers to consider it the right fit for a book. Publishers must consider whether your thesis as a book would be a commercial success.

The potential of a PhD thesis to form the basis of a book is not decided by academic quality alone, but also by its potential commercial value. Some theses lend themselves better to being published as journal articles, some transition well into books, some can be appropriate for both, while some are not suitable for either format. When a Commissioning Editor considers new proposals for publication, his or her approach is not as an academic, but as a publisher.

What does commercial success look like for a research monograph? Such books tend to be published in hardback and eBook formats with a small first print run. Commercial success for these books can be measured by unit sales, but readership is increasingly important as libraries move toward rental and other access models where they pay based on how the book is being used. To understand the commercial value of research-level books, the key is to understand the importance of the international library market. This is likely to be the gatekeeper for a wider academic readership that primarily include advanced students and academic researchers. Research-level books may appear on reading lists which helps increase readership, but such readers are less likely to require their own copy than for textbooks.

A book based on a narrow research area, or focused on a small data sample is less appealing to readers internationally and thus is less likely to be acquired by a library. Such projects can be of high scholarly merit, but it may be rejected if it is considered unlikely to be a commercial success. An experienced publisher will be able to use their professional knowledge in assessing the scope of a proposal, but will usually invest in an academic review process to help judge the academic quality more broadly.

Could Your Title Be Part of a Series?

To bring your book to the attention of more readers by placing it alongside related titles, consider submitting your work to a series.

Book series can help bring your book to the attention of more readers by placing it alongside related titles. At Routledge, almost all our research titles are published in a series that are either thematic, reflect sub-disciplines, or are related to a partner organization. Details of our series can be found at www.routledge.com/series.

It can be helpful to look at existing book series in subject areas related to your research in order to see how other projects have been successful.

Some series have an academic series editor, in which case you could speak directly to them about your project. They can often provide valuable advice on the content of your book and how to submit and prepare a proposal before it is sent to the publisher. Other series do not have an academic series editor, in which case the relevant editor can offer advice as to whether your book is suitable.

2

Series are an effective tool to help market books.

Considering the Audience

You wrote your thesis with a specific, expert audience in mind. When publishing your thesis as a book, you may need to take steps to make your findings more accessible and appealing to a wider audience.

A PhD thesis is written for a specific audience: the supervisor and the external examiners. A book is published for a much broader audience and it is very likely that the potential purchaser of your book will have different expectations – for example, the literature review is an important part of a thesis, but a book purchaser will be more interested in your specific findings and research rather than the books you have read.

Sebastián Cutrona, author of *Challenging the U.S.-Led War on Drugs: Argentina in Comparative Perspective*, advises:

“To bridge the divide between academia, the policy world and general audience, both wider empirical evidence and less dense theoretical analysis might be needed.”

3

Is it possible to add international case studies or comparative studies?

Therefore, it's worth expanding on your conclusions and explaining concepts clearly. Readers of a book are less likely to be experts than are the thesis examiners. You may need to explain your findings in more detail for your book's audience – but be cautious of delving too deep into analysis of theory. Also, the full implications of conclusions may need to be made plain in a book, again for the benefit of non-experts, whereas in a thesis this may not be necessary.

Furthermore, if your PhD is on a relatively narrow topic you may want to consider how the conclusions you reach can be drawn out and expanded upon. Can they be applied more broadly in similar areas?

Would your findings be relevant in other countries? If your thesis is limited to one area, it may be wise to think about how it could be made to be relevant to an international audience by adding material related to other locations.

4

Choosing an Appropriate Title

A short title that positions the book clearly is proven to be more likely to find readers and win citations.

Evolution in digital technology combined with a significant increase in the amounts of available research has led to changes in the way that books are produced, published, and propagated. In this environment, the key word is "discoverability". Connecting authors to readers requires that publishers facilitate discoverability of research via various routes to ensure that potential readers are able to find books with ease. Bear in mind that the purchaser is not always the reader. There are three major factors to consider when discussing the title of your book with the publisher:

1. The main title of the book should position it clearly without reference to other bibliographic information, and should be as short as feasible.
2. Chapter titles should likewise, where possible, position themselves clearly.
3. Chapter synopses or abstracts can be used to enhance the metadata around books.

5

Editing – Revise, Modify & Adapt

Modifying or cutting parts of your thesis may be difficult at first, but it is ultimately a necessary part of the process.

When it comes to editing your thesis for publishing as a book, revising the introduction is a good place to start. Your introduction must be more than simply a summary of what is to follow. A strong introduction is key, as it lays claim to a specific point of view and brings together the strands that comprise the book's argument in a way that will tighten the structure and focus the overall analysis.

Ian Taylor, author of *Media Relations of the Anti-War Movement: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, explains:

"You need to realise a book is not going to be the same as your PhD"

and serves a different set of purposes. Books also tend to be a fair bit shorter. So you will need to be quite ruthless in cutting out large chunks of your PhD, possibly whole chapters, in order to turn it into a successful book. Perhaps any chapters and sub-chapters that aren't absolutely essential can be turned into journal articles, but even if they can't be, you'll probably still have to wave goodbye to them. There's no point in being too sentimental about that. Getting a book published is definitely worth it."

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While examiners will work through text regardless of the writing style, book readers will not.
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If your thesis contains a literature review, this will need to be cut in favour of engaging with related and prior scholarship in a more nuanced way. If it contains an extensive section explaining the methodology behind the research, this will also need to be reduced to a brief explanation about how you went about your research and drew your conclusions.

You may need to consider how you will adapt the language and style of your thesis to make it more attractive to a wider academic audience. This could include looking at the annotations and references and reducing any unnecessary jargon and footnotes. While examiners will work through text regardless of the writing style, book readers will not. Therefore, it is likely that extensive re-writing will be required to retain and engage readers.

Conclusion

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Turning your PhD into a book involves some obvious changes such as altering the title and cutting areas that are not necessary for a monograph. However, it is also necessary to consider how your work fits into the world of academic publishing. Although it may be of high scholarly merit, will it appeal to a wide enough audience for it to be commercially viable? Can you see where your book would fit in a current series with your desired publisher? Would your book perhaps fill a gap in that series or your field?

These are the questions you should be asking yourself as you begin adapting your dissertation to give yourself the best possible chance of having your work published.

Once you have adapted your dissertation, head over to the [Routledge website](http://www.routledge.com/resources/authors/how-to-publish-with-us) at www.routledge.com/resources/authors/how-to-publish-with-us to review our proposal guidelines, editorial contacts, and to submit your book proposal with us.

References

Cutrona, S. 10 July 2017. Email Interview.

Taylor, I. 10 July 2017. Email Interview.

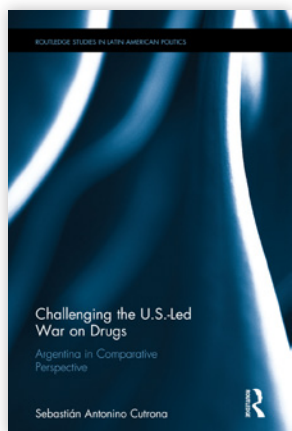
www.routledge.com/series

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For more information about these authors' books:



Challenging the U.S.-Led War on Drugs

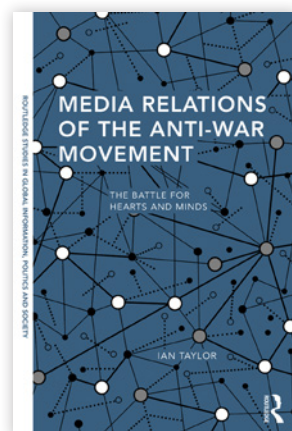
Argentina in Comparative Perspective

Sebastián Antonino Cutrona

ISBN: 9780415791885

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Media Relations of the Anti-War Movement

The Battle for Hearts and Minds

Ian Taylor

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