

# *Publishing Panel: Book Proposals and Environmental History Journals*

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# Revising

- Talk to supervisors for advice
- Look at published books in the field, as well as series
  - Does yours fit into a particular series?
  - If so, read some books published in that series.
- For thesis revision to book, you may need to:
  - rethink your content, structure, length, style, readability
  - revise chapter titles, cut notes down
  - Think carefully about illustrations (as these are expensive in a book)
- Use active, not passive voice

# Things editors look for

- Original research (new archival discoveries, unique synthesis of ideas, interdisciplinary work)
- Relevant to an ongoing debate in the academic field—clear statement of where the book sits in relation to existing historiography
- A clear and persuasive argument
  - Clear statement of main argument; lively language; engage the reader.
- Connects with a defined audience, i.e. has a big enough audience to support the book
  - Need to look at other books in area.
  - What does your book do that is different? How does it add to debate?
  - Do not say there is nothing in the field: this implied you do not know it, and/or (for publishers) there's no market.
- Does the book fit with our list? Is there a series your book would fit with? Your proposal or cover letter should demonstrate some familiarity with the press

# The Proposal

## 1. Title

- Be clear and descriptive. And think about search terms! Some examples:
- *The Unruly PhD: Doubts, Detours, Departures, and Other Success Stories*
- *Islam and Controversy: The Politics of Free Speech After Rushdie*
- *Tiananmen Exiles: Voices of the Struggle for Democracy in China*
- *Digitizing Government: Understanding and Implementing New Digital Business Models*

## 2. Description

Think about who's going to read the proposal and ensure it conveys the aims and contribution of the book

## 3. Content

We'll need a detailed breakdown + Table of Contents (TOC)

## Competition – or comparable titles

How will your book fit with the rest of our list? This is worth some research as it tells us how many sales we can expect, whether we have published books that your title can be marketed alongside, and how we might be able to get the edge over competitors in terms of positioning

# Life cycle of a Palgrave monograph

Proposal submitted and vetted by editor

Top-level editorial work between editor and author

Peer review process (2-3 months)

Editorial board

Contract

Manuscript prep

Permissions

Manuscript delivery

2nd peer review / Editorial vet

Manuscript enters production (6 months)

Copyediting

Proofs

Publication!

# Common mistakes

- Lack of clarity of argument
- Inability to situate proposal within broader environmental history field:
  - for example, the series I co-edit (Palgrave World Environmental History) accepts MS from various disciplines, but the arguments need to be situated within environmental history
- Geographical scope: publishers can perceive it as problematic to publish in a narrow area or small country (e.g., New Zealand) as they think of sales. Even if study localised, needs to engage with broader arguments to show its relevance to other studies/regions.
- (my own personal one) Assumption that Western history is the only history:
  - e.g., statements like “nature study developed apace in the nineteenth century“

# Articles

- Focussed and sustained argument
- Engagement with field of study (historiography)
- Clear abstract + keywords

# Choice of journal

- Main (specialist\*) ones:
  - *Environment and History* (highest ranked)\*
  - *Environmental History*\*
  - *Journal of Historical Geography*
  - *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*
  - *Agricultural History*
  - *International Review of Environmental History*\*
  - *Global Environment*

## Which one to choose?

- Be strategic (when starting out); otherwise don't worry about it
- See which ones are highly ranked by your university; if not, ask supervisors or colleagues

# Writing and Questions

- Formulation of argument/signposting
  - How do you do it?
- Structure is important way of developing to argument: showing progression of ideas; change over time
- Is it appropriate to include illustrations – particularly if the book is intended for general and specialist readers?
- Are publishers more likely to be interested in environmental history books for non-specialist audiences?

# Thanks

- Ian Tyrrell (UNSW) and Jade Moulds (Palgrave Macmillan)