

# *How To Write for the Library Press (and Make Editors Love You)*



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Medford, NJ

**PLAN Webinar**

**August 28, 2018**

## How to Write for the Library Press

### **Impressing and Proposing to Editors**

- Be familiar with the publication.
- Put serious time & effort into your query.
- Write the right subject line and opening line.
- Spell the names of the editor & the publication correctly.
- Don't ask questions that are already answered in the FAQ, writing guidelines, etc.
- Check recent issues to see if your topic has already been covered.
- Make sure your topic is on target for the publication / publisher.
- Prove you're (your) literate.
- Explain why your proposed piece is a great fit for the pub.
- Identify yourself fully & mention related expertise.
- Mention if you have artwork to offer.
- Put clarity above creativity.
- Make sure you include all info that's asked for in query instructions.

### **Understanding the Publishing Process (she's going through)**

Creating publications is a labor-intensive, multi-faceted process:

- Proposals come in
- Compare proposals, ask questions, make decisions
- Contact author with assignment & guidelines
- Maybe evaluate a rough draft
- Assignment comes in, check for clarity / expectations
- Editing for content, relevance, grammar, etc.
- Fact-checking, link-checking
- Q & A with author; Revisions?
- Proofreading
- Layout, graphics, captions
- Internal final checks
- Sending to press
- Invoices, copyright forms, payments, send published copies

The more co-authors, the more complications there are.

Editors work in a pressure-filled, deadline-driven environment.

Editors may well take weeks or months before accepting / rejecting queries.

### **Dealing With Rejection**

If your proposal is rejected, that doesn't mean your idea doesn't have merit.

- Doesn't fit current issue theme
- Just ran or accepted something similar
- Edged out by similar queries
- Red flags: Didn't follow instructions; poor writing or explanation of idea

When one pub turns you down, see if there's another one to try.

### Differences Between Print and Online

Attribute	Online <i>Something New</i>	Print <i>Something Old</i>
<b>Text</b>	Short, punchy	Longer, deeper
<b>Links</b>	Many, embedded, live	Fewer, visible URLs, not live
<b>Graphics</b>	Low-res OK	High-res necessary
<b>Style</b>	Less formal	Usually more formal
<b>Copyright</b>	Easier to share	More restricted
<b>Timeline/Deadline</b>	Usually short	Can be quite long; months
<b>Audience</b>	More likely to skim	Likely pays more attention

### What Makes Her Want to Slap You

If you want an editor to love you, DON'T do these things:

- send lots of emails & expect immediate responses
- turn in your work at 11 p.m. on the due date
- address queries "To whom it may concern"
- ignore the internal style guide
- skip any parts of instructions / checklists
- miss your deadline—ever! (Or else!)
- decide you can't complete the assignment w/o telling her
- include links you haven't checked
- bother sending low-quality graphics
- name files "article.doc"
- embed graphics into your word docs
- go way over your word count & tell the editor "you can cut what you want"
- email the editor to ask when your payment is coming w/o checking your info
- expect your "working title" to be the one that gets published
- use acronyms without defining them
- trust spell-check alone or submit without having another human read it
- send things piecemeal

### **A Matchmaker's Expert Tips**

- ♥ Write what you know.
- ♥ Include your last name in your doc's filename.
- ♥ If you're going to be unavailable for a period of time, say so ahead of time.
- ♥ Put important keywords into your title.
- ♥ Use that thesaurus!
- ♥ Deliver both the sizzle *and* the steak.

## Book Proposal Expectations

### **1) Suggested Title and Subtitle**

Every book project starts with a working title. We'll brainstorm alternatives with you later.

### **2) Synopsis/Overview/Concept**

What is the book about and what is its purpose? Include a description of the people, organizations, issues, technologies, and products that will be covered; explain the organization of the book and any special or unique features, and describe the approach you will take to make it as useful and interesting as possible. Include your estimate on the length of the book (approx. word count).

### **3) Preliminary Table of Contents**

This is a working ToC; we expect it to evolve as the writing gets underway. If some chapters will be contributed, include the names of proposed and/or confirmed contributors.

### **4) Graphics**

Include information about illustrations, photos, charts, graphs, tables, screenshots, and so on that you would plan to include in the book, if any.

### **5) Readership Information**

Who will buy the book, and why? Include your estimate of the size of the primary markets for the book and suggestions on where/how to reach them (associations, publications, events, websites, etc.). If your book will appeal to the readership of one or more of our journals, conferences, or books, make this point. It helps in this section to know of any success stories for similar books, with sales data where available. Describe the role you would expect to play in the marketing and promotion of the book. If you have an opinion as to an appropriate price range for the book, let us know.

### **6) Competition**

List a few competitive or similar titles, and describe some success stories with sales information as available. If you have found nothing similar, describe the sources you have searched. Some competition is desirable because it suggests an established market for your book; where there is considerable competition, there should be significant and clear differences between your book and others. It is helpful to mention books that, while having a similar mission, are weak in certain specific areas where yours will be particularly strong.

### **7) Author Biography (narrative format); copies of related work**

Why are you qualified to write this book? Describe yourself and any applicable writing and professional experience (attach resume or CV if requested). Include links to any published article(s) or book(s) you have authored that you believe will help us to assess your writing ability and fitness for the proposed project. Include SASE if you wish us to return the material.

### **8) Timing**

When would you deliver a manuscript, assuming an agreement is reached within 30 days of your proposal submission?

## A Sampling of Writing Guidelines

ALA Editions (books)

[www.alaeditions.org/writers](http://www.alaeditions.org/writers)

*American Libraries* (ALA's magazine)

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/submissions>

*College & Research Libraries* (ACRL's journal)

<https://crl.acrl.org/index.php/crl/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

*Computers in Libraries* (technology magazine)

[www.infotoday.com/cilmag/contrib.shtml](http://www.infotoday.com/cilmag/contrib.shtml)

Emerald Publishing Ltd. (journals, UK)

[www.emeraldinsight.com/librarians/writing/index.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/librarians/writing/index.htm)

*Information Outlook* (SLA's magazine)

<http://www.sla.org/shop/information-outlook/write-for-i/>

*Library Journal*

<http://lj.libraryjournal.com/contact-us/submissions/>

*Online Searcher* magazine

[www.infotoday.com/onlineseacher/Author-Guidelines.shtml](http://www.infotoday.com/onlineseacher/Author-Guidelines.shtml)

*The Political Librarian* (journal of EveryLibrary PAC)

<http://everylibrary.org/how-we-help-libraries/political-librarian>

*Public Services Quarterly*

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?show=instructions&journalCode=wpsq20>

Rowman & Littlefield (books: many university presses & imprints)

<https://rowman.com/Page/RLAuthRes>

Routledge / Taylor & Francis

<https://www.routledge.com/resources/authors>

## Other Places to Look for Love

-  What are your favorite pubs to read?
-  Writing book reviews is a good way to get started.
-  Local, regional, and state associations often need content for newsletters or blogs.
-  Vendors sometimes seeks customers to write case studies or testimonials.

## Resources for Library Writers

A Library Writer's Blog:

"Have writer's block? Hopefully this resource will help librarians identify publishing and presentation opportunities in library & information science, as well as other related fields. I will include calls for papers, presentations, participation, reviewers, and other relevant notices that I find on the web. If you find anything to be posted, please drop me a note. Thanks." — Corey Seeman, University of Michigan

<http://librarywriting.blogspot.com/2018>

Emily Ford. "Becoming a Writer Librarian," In The Library With The Lead Pipe blog post. May 2013.

<http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2013/becoming-a-writer-librarian>

Academic Writing Librarians blog

<http://academicwritinglibrarian.blogspot.ca>

Rachel Singer Gordon. *The librarian's guide to writing for publication*, Scarecrow Press, 2004.

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Librarians-Guide-Writing-Publication/dp/0810848953>

Walt Crawford. *First Have Something to Say: Writing for the Library Profession*, ALA, 2003.

[http://www.amazon.com/First-Have-Something-Say-Profession/dp/0838908519/ref=cm\\_cr\\_pr\\_product\\_top](http://www.amazon.com/First-Have-Something-Say-Profession/dp/0838908519/ref=cm_cr_pr_product_top)

Carol Smallwood, Ed. *Writing and Publishing: The Librarian's Handbook*, ALA, 2010.

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Christopher V. Hollister. *Handbook of Academic Writing for Librarians*, ACRL, 2014.

<http://www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=11209>

"The academic writing toolkit: writing for professional and peer-reviewed journals"

Article from SCONUL Focus 45, 2009

<http://eprints.nuim.ie/1387/1/HFSconul20.pdf>

Jennifer Little Kegler. "Professional Writing for Librarians." Presentation given at the New York Library Association Annual Conference, Lake Placid, NY. Oct. 2015.

<http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=drakepubs>