To a publisher, each book is an investment, estimated to run some $30,000 pre-printing or production. Recouping those costs requires sales of at least a couple hundred books. You need to show them there’s an audience for your book, including classes.

Position your book and consider your scholarship in terms of a conversation about a market, not as proof that you’re smarter than someone else. Know your market, choose a leading book in that area that did well or attracted attention, and explain what’s different about what you would provide. Why does your book need to exist, why are you the one to write it, and why are they the press that should publish it (i.e., people who liked book A will also like mine)? Facts aren’t bragging.

Avoid fine nuances in your proposal. The publisher isn’t the same audience as your reader. Give a very brief overview of your proposal: what’s the driving thesis you’re trying to advance and what’s different about it from what other people may know?

Figure out what your individual contribution is or what your data suggest. Be specific and direct. Most people don’t have time to read about what “may or may not” be true.

That applies to lit reviews too. Consider your readers. Don’t make them wade through reams of text about what other authors have said, losing your own voice in the process. Remember, people are reading you, not those others.

It’s increasingly hard to find reviewers. If asked to suggest names, keep your goal in mind: to get constructive, hands-on help from those whose input you would value for improving the book not just endorsing you.

Peer reviews are a jumping-off point for negotiating the future of the book. In book publishing their role is more advisory; the Editorial Board has the final say. How you respond to reviews can go a long way in shaping how they are received by the publisher. Show that you’ve considered them seriously however you decide to respond and don’t present a hostile defense. Consult your acquisitions editor if you have concerns.

Help the publisher identify potential marketing sources for your book. Show where people know or recognize you. The publisher won’t be turning to your CV for that information. You have a network you can tap into that the publisher may well not know, including Facebook groups, listservs, podcasts, and conferences.

Ready to put your proposal on paper? Drop in to Turning the Page, our online faculty writing group that offers dedicated writing time in a supportive environment every Friday from 9-11 am. Just click this Zoom link to join.

And if you’re looking for help with a statistical or research problem outside your ken, we have selective access to The Analysis Factor, a group of experts in statistics, statistical software, and data analysis and visualization. Email us to learn more about this consulting service or the other research resources available from the FSC.

In a recent online presentation, development editor Laura Portwood-Stacer of Manuscript Works offered some advice for authors about pitching a book to an academic press. Here are a few pointers on pitching a book to an academic press. Here are a few pointers on pitching a book to an academic press. Here are a few pointers on pitching a book to an academic press. Here are a few pointers on pitching a book to an academic press.

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