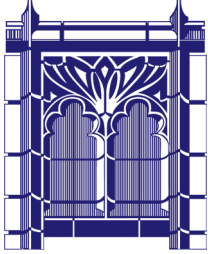


Turning Your Dissertation into a Book



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
mentor memo
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By Lorri Hagman

This Mentor Memo, part of a series, responds to graduate students' requests for advice about navigating graduate studies successfully.

The series also addresses topics in career preparation and professional development. For more information and to suggest topics, contact Graduate School Dean Jerry Baldasty at baldasty@u.washington.edu.

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It is often good to think about publishing your dissertation as a book, but recognize that you'll need to revise it extensively to appeal to a wider audience and to compete in the literary marketplace. Here are some guidelines to help you in this process.

Timeline

- Allow plenty of time!
- The review process can easily take up to a year, as it entails a peer review of your manuscript, potential revisions, further peer review, and then approval.
- The editing process can easily take a year to a year and a half; it entails copy editing, design, typesetting and proofreading, preparation of the index, printing, and binding.

Dissertations differ from books in several ways

- Dissertations are highly specialized, while books are geared to educated general readers.
- Dissertation audiences are usually under 100—books about 500 or more, in general.
- In a dissertation, the author's authority must be proven; in books, it is assumed.
- Dissertations contain extensive documentation (to prove authority) while books document to credit sources and help the reader.
- Dissertations can run long; books are often far shorter.

Elements that make a good book

- A title that is concise, memorable, intriguing, and includes essential key words
- Organization that is clear and effective
- A succinct introduction
- Illustrations that enhance the text
- Sections that are meaningful either alone or as part of the total book
- Navigational aids: chapter titles, running heads, subheads, notes, bibliography, index
- A voice (relationship of author to reader) that functions like an invisible tour guide or creative storyteller, and avoids sounding like a lecturer at a podium

there's more... >

The revision process

Basics

- Forget your dissertation. Forget your committee.
- Be bold!
- Clarify your modified topic and audience.
- Determine how to present it in a dynamic way.

Details

- Remove unnecessary references to yourself.
- Remove conspicuous chapter intros and summaries.
- Make style parallel in chapter titles, captions, chapter openings and closings, subheads.
- Revisit the Introduction and Conclusion.
- Remove unnecessary notes; condense or combine others.
- Remove most cross-references.
- Remove unnecessary examples and data.
- Make chapter openings strong, clear, and inviting.
- Add definitions of jargon, foreign terms, biographical and historical dates.
- Brainstorm several possible titles and subtitles.
- Tighten prose.
- Use active verbs.
- Begin and end sentences with words you want to emphasize.

Resources

The Chicago Manual of Style. 15th ed. (2003). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

German, William. (2005). *From dissertation to book*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Harmon, Eleanor, et al., ed. (2003). *The thesis and the book: A guide for first-time academic authors*. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Lucy, Beth, ed. (2004). *Revising your dissertation: Advice from leading editors*. Berkeley: University of California Press.