

From Dissertation to Book - Elizabeth Knoll

JUDY SINGER: I'm Judy Singer. I'm the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity. And I want to welcome you all to this event on book publishing. We have a great panel here, both from the publishing end and from the faculty end, to help provide insights in how you go from having written a dissertation, which I presume everybody in this room has done, and writing a book.

Some of the people who are here are people who have historically been book people. In other words, when you wrote your dissertation, you actually thought about framing it in terms of a book. Others are making a transition from having written more on the paper side, and are thinking about how you could convert those ideas into a book length manuscript. I've written three books. I fall in the second camp. I'm a statistician, so I'm primarily a paper person.

But the task of writing a book is a daunting one. There's something about being a faculty member where everybody assumes that somehow, when you turned in your dissertation and you got the sign off from your advisor and other people on your committee, you magically knew everything that you needed to know about academic publishing. And I think one of the things you're going to hear today is, that's not the case.

And so, for those of you who are in the midst of writing, I think you're probably confronting that spot on. And we hope that this gives you an opportunity to learn from a distinguished panel about how to take those next steps. To introduce the panelists, I'm going to introduce my colleague, Amy Brand, who is the Assistant Provost for Faculty Appointments. Thank you.

AMY BRAND: Good afternoon and welcome. First and foremost, I just want to say that I'm really delighted to have this panel and, also, to have-- I think for the first time in our events within the office of faculty development and diversity-- some colleagues from MIT as well, which is my alma mater. We have very limited time, and we really want to encourage discussion. So you'll notice that we have the panel being filmed, but when it comes to the time of asking questions during the Q&A, we're going to turn that off. So feel free to ask any questions you like of the panel.

In the handouts, you'll see that we've put in bios of all of our speakers. So, rather than give lengthy introductions, which they all do deserve, I will start with Elizabeth Knoll who's Senior Editor for the behavioral sciences, education, and law at Harvard University Press.

ELIZABETH KNOLL: I'm going to start-- and I hope you can hear me-- by talking about how to turn your dissertation into a book. Generations of dissertation writers have been paralyzed, at least for a while, by the philosopher Moore's comment at Wittgenstein's dissertation defense, "It is my opinion that Mr. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a work of genius that will completely change all future work and philosophy. But be that as it may, it is well up to the standards of a Cambridge PhD degree."

Probably no one said this about your dissertation. But there is an immense liberation in realizing that you are probably not a genius, at least not yet, and that your dissertation doesn't have to

show that you are-- or change the world. A dissertation, as a rule, is a demonstration of professional competence. It shows that you have mastered the literature in your field, that you can do research according to the standards of your discipline, and that you can make a persuasive and well-supported argument, at least to that very essential audience, your committee.

A handful of senior faculty advisors, here and there, and some academic programs now encourage people to write their dissertations as books from the get go. But for the most part, a dissertation is quite a different creature from a book. So how do you turn the one into the other? The answer is threefold. At the most obvious and basic level, there are the mechanics. More deeply, there's the authorial voice. And finally, perhaps least obviously-- but I think most fundamentally-- there's manners.

And I don't just mean by manners addressing people by the correct name or not insulting them, though that's certainly important. I mean the kind of manners that makes a conversation a real conversation and not just alternating monologues. Good manners means recognizing another person's position, constraints, and feelings and caring enough about them and respecting them so that you don't ignore them. In the case of book writing, the obvious first people you need to consider are your editor and the reviewers. But the really important other people to be thought about are your eventual readers.

So let me start with the easiest part, which is the mechanics. Most editors will tell you just about everything I'm going to say, and I owe a lot of this talk to some notes given by Kathleen McDermott, the Senior Editor of Harvard Press in history. First of all-- get out your pencils-- aim for a final manuscript of about 100,000 words and absolutely not more than 120,000 words all inclusive, meaning including the notes. Now, assuming 335 words per page in a 12 point font with 1 inch margins, 100,000 words is about 300 manuscript pages.

Second, keep the manuscript as sleek as possible. Limit the apparatus-- the tables, the chart, the figures, all illustrations. The more illustrations you have and the more complicated they are, the less appealing the manuscript may be to a publisher. Now many people wonder why this is true, if art-- that is, black and white art-- is not more expensive to print than text. The answer is that art is a complication, and complication is always expensive in terms of people's time, your own and the publisher's.

Art has to be a publishable quality. It has to be the right size. All the permissions for the art that you don't own yourself have to be sought, granted, and paid for by you. All legends have to be supplied and unambiguously linked to the correct piece of art. And everything has to come in together and on time. I think you can probably see why this can create complications.

Then there are the elements in the text that you should reduce or remove completely. The first, the literature review. Discussions of other author's work need to be integrated with your argument or in the notes. Second, the use of other author's characterizations of problems or events or ideas. Speak in your own voice. Third, limit quotations. Often quotations are used to allow you to invoke an authority. Use only quotations that say something in a memorably pungent or eloquent or funny way. And keep them short. Use quotations to vary the voice in the text.

Limit the number of notes, especially the discursive notes. I have an author right now whose manuscript is 103,000 words of text, which is basically fine, and 89,000 words of notes, which is a lot less fine. This is not a model that you should follow. And I'm not allowing him to either, but it's very painful for him to have to cut his 90,000 words of notes down to approximately 10,000 or 15,000.

Avoid chapter opening abstracts and chapter summaries that essentially repeat the chapter opening abstracts. And you know who you are. In this chapter, I will discuss the nautical and legal maneuvering that led to the Norman conquest between the years of 1025 and 1035. I will show A, B, and C. And then at the end of the chapter, you say the same thing. Please don't do this.

Try to avoid using a lot of subheads and a lot of subdivisions within chapters. Let the chapters flow as a continuous statement and a continuous argument. Avoid using subtitles in the chapter titles or quotations in chapter titles. They often just get too long and hard to read.

And try to make sure that all the chapters are more or less the same length. Avoid the extremes of many short chapters or a few very long chapters. 15 typed pages is probably too short. 70 typed pages is probably too long. I have a manuscript right now of about-- it's a reasonable length. But it has only four chapters, and each chapter is 75 pages long. It's un-digestible. One can at least see what it's about, but it's very hard for readers to sort of make their way through chapters that long.

Now these are some of the most essential, basic mechanical changes. As you revise and rewrite though, you'll need to mull over matters that are more ambiguous and more arguable and that are more of a judgement call, which gets us to the questions of voice and style. Now editors like me will always, always, always say, avoid jargon and insider lingo.

The line between jargon and a technical term with precise and useful meaning for people in the field is, admittedly, a hard one to draw. What is jargon? It can follow Justice Potter Stewart's famous line on pornography, "I know it when I see it." More often though with jargon, it's more likely to be the case that your friends know it when they hear it. If they can't understand a chapter or a passage or worse, if they start to laugh when you read some of it aloud to them, you might want to think about rewriting.

A highly theatrical editor whom I used to work with sometimes tells his postdocs, "Take your work home and read it to your husband. Read it to your dog. That will help you turn this manuscript, which is 28,000 times too long, into something neat and crisp and what people would want to read." If you absolutely need the insider language, and you don't want to unpack it or explain it, then keep it, and be prepared to make the case for it. But bear in mind that that will come with a cost. Insider language may mean-- almost certainly will mean-- a smaller market for your book. And that may limit the eventual publisher's enthusiasm, or at least the degree of enthusiasm for the book.

Take some thought with your table of contents. Remember that it will be the very first thing that any reader sees after the title page. Susan Boehmer, who's the Editor in Chief at Harvard Press,

says that a table of contents should be a poem. Now poetry may be asking a lot, but your table of contents can be clear, immediately digestible, and it will outline the book's argument and scope. It should fit on one page, and a reader, in scanning it should be able to see what this book is about.

Write a real introduction and a real conclusion. In the introduction, say what is the book's central argument. What is it contributing to the field? What important puzzle is it solving? What previously unknown story is it telling? What piece of conventional wisdom are you overturning? And in the conclusion, tell us what the consequence is. What difference does it make if you're right? How might your argument, or your discovery, or your approach help make more sense to some other current significant work or problems in your field?

These questions about the introduction and the conclusion take us to the big picture of the difference between a dissertation in a book and why I make a point of emphasizing manners. A dissertation is an exercise. Part of the reason writing a dissertation can sometimes be so painful is that, on one hand, it matters so much to your academic progress and your career, and on the other hand, it matters not at all to the wider world. You probably already know this from Thanksgiving, when your aunt Debbie asked you to explain, again, exactly what it is you do. In fact-- and this is an important point-- the larger world is so wary of dissertations that you should scrub the very word dissertation from the final manuscript that you turn into the publisher, because some library wholesalers will not buy any books that can be recognized as revised dissertations.

But a book is different from a dissertation, and it's much, much more satisfying to read and to write. With a dissertation, you have something to prove. With a book, you have something to say. The purpose of a dissertation might be, in part-- realistically-- to show how much you know. The purpose of a book is to make an argument and join or create a conversation.

As a potential book author, you already have some academic authority. You have that PhD. You're at Harvard, which is a name to conjure with. You have given conference talks, and you published articles. Your purpose now is not to prove yourself so much as it is to prove your case to the people who care about it. That will probably not be a huge group of people. Just as your dissertation is probably not the *Tractatus*, your first book is probably not going to win a Pulitzer Prize, unlike, say, Paul Starr's *Social Transformation of American Medicine*. That's probably just as well, because what would you do for an encore in your second book? You need to have something to strive for after you're 30.

But you do want your book to be read and to be readable by all the people who care about what you care about. That's why editors will plead with you to keep it short, make it clear, omit the unnecessary words. What editors are really doing is asking you to put yourself in your reader's place. Think about them as real people. They probably are real people.

In fact, you probably already know some of them. They will be, in the grand scheme of things, people who are a lot like you. Busy, intermittently impatient, with their own interests and their own turf to defend, but essentially curious, intelligent, imaginative, and as impassioned as you

are about the subject. Otherwise, they wouldn't read a review of your book, let alone the book itself.

But life is short, and attention spans are getting shorter. The secret truth, which I hereby reveal free of charge, is that even the senior people in your field would rather not read more pages of jargon laden academic writing than they have to. They've already read quite a lot of it. What they and other people in your world want to know is what you have to say, how you're backing it up, and why it matters. And they want you to say it as strongly but also as straightforwardly as you can.

Here's a story that I think is helpful. The great physicist Murray Gell-Mann is famous for knowing not just everything about physics, but everything else, too. He always pronounces the names of people in places as native speakers of the languages would or should. In fact, he has been said to correct native Ukrainians on their pronunciation of Ukrainian.

There is a story that he once told Richard Feynman, also a great physicist-- a colleague of his at Caltech-- that he had just returned from "Moe-rhay-ah." When Feynman finally established that Gell-Mann meant the city known to most English speakers as Montreal, he said, "Hey, Murray. Do you believe that the purpose of language is communication?"

It's a kind of parlor game to argue about who is the greater physicist, Feynman or Gell-Mann, and it's almost certainly a silly question. But every editor and most readers would put an extra couple of flowers on Feynman's grave. The purpose of language is communication. The purpose of your book is to talk to other people.

And now, Phil will tell you about talking to the first round of other people, which is the publishers.

PHIL: Thank you.

From Dissertation to Book - Philip Laughlin

PHILIP LAUGHLIN: Thank you.

[CLAPPING]

And I'm happy to say we did not overlap at all in our content. We're safe.

First of all I'd just like to start off by thanking Amy Brand, the former Cognitive Science Editor at MIT Press for inviting me to speak at the Harvard Club today. I'm confident this will be the only time in my life that someone asks me to speak at an Ivy League institution, so I'm particularly grateful that today's proceedings are being videotaped and posted on the web. I'm looking forward to sending URL to my incredulous friends.

In addition to giving me my 15 minutes of internet fame, I'm happy to be here because preparing this talk was an educational experience for me. I have to confess that although I've been in my current position for about 15 months, I had never even seen, let alone read the MIT Press submission guidelines for book proposals until Amy had sent them to me about three days ago. It turns out it's an extremely useful document, definitely more thorough and professional than what I have been giving authors, so I strongly encourage everyone here to refer to it when you begin approaching publishers. I think the advice contained in it is universal enough that you could follow these guidelines for just about any academic publisher, not just MIT Press.

As useful as these proposal guidelines are though, they don't give you a sense of the process that I go through when trying to decide what to publish. It's sort of the difference between reading a recipe and cooking a meal, so I'd like to supplement these guidelines you have with some background information that you might find useful.

The first point that I'd like to emphasize to any aspiring author is one that I'm sure that we can all sympathize with. And that is, yours is not the only email that I received today. Like most of you, I'm drowning in e-mail. I receive about 1,000 work-related emails every month, and the vast majority of them are about dozens of book projects that are already under contract and being written, recently completed and need to go into production, and currently in production and need to be ready for the next catalog season.

And at any given time, some percentage of these projects, hopefully a small percentage, are in crisis mode. Sometimes I'm involved in a very delicate contract negotiation with some big name author. Sometimes a manuscript has to be rushed into production immediately to meet some important deadline. And sometimes an author is irate about a copy editing, typesetting, or a cover design job. That one doesn't happen too often, but it does happen occasionally, it and needs to be addressed quickly.

So, a significant chunk of my attention and energy is already monopolized by authors who submitted book proposals to me at least a year or two ago. I don't say this to discourage anyone from contacting me. But I do want to make it clear that, on a typical day I'm not just sitting on

my hands hoping that someone sends me a book proposal to look at. I usually have a pretty full plate already.

The second point that I'd like to emphasize is I already received far more book proposals than I could ever hope to publish. Buried somewhere in those 1,000 work emails I received every month, are about 20 to 30 queries from potential authors who are interested in seeing their books published by MIT Press. So during any calendar year, I'm likely to receive somewhere in the neighborhood of 250 to 350 book proposal submissions. Essentially what this means is that, even if I apply the most rigorous standards for acceptance and rejected 90% of what I received, I would still have enough book projects to meet my signing goals and to keep MIT'S production department busy. And in case you're wondering, an acquisitions editor should be publishing between 20 and 40 new books per year, depending on what field you work in.

So I'd like to emphasize that no matter who you are, or where you got your PhD, or how good your ideas are, if you submit something to me at MIT Press, there's a very good chance that you will receive a polite rejection letter from my assistant. Please don't take it personally. The problem isn't necessarily with you, the problem is really the system that we all operate in. I believe academics refer to it as a social dilemma. This embarrassment of riches that I sift through every month definitely has an influence in how I respond to authors and their book proposals.

So a third point I'd like to emphasize today is, there are entire catalogs-- or entire categories of books that I frequently reject out of hand. For example, English language translations. For whatever reason, whether it's the subject areas I've worked in or the publishers I've worked at, English language translations don't seem to do very well. And when I say work very well, I am speaking in the crudest possible way about copies sold and revenue generated. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I would never publish a book translated into English from a foreign language, but it's pretty unlikely that I'll be interested in them.

Anthologies of previously published material is another category I'm wary of. MIT Press used to publish anthologies very successfully in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of those anthologies are still in print and continue to sell steadily, but we've seen a pretty dramatic decline in the sales of new anthologies over the past decade. So I'm not quite so eager to publish in this book category anymore.

In philosophy, the edited conference volume is very difficult sell these days, and I've passed on quite a few of them in the past year.

And finally, the humble festschrift, the edited book in honor of an esteemed professor, is something that we'll do occasionally, if the right people are involved and it fits our list, but for the most part, I try not to make a habit of it.

I realize I'm starting to sound like a broken record here, but without wishing to be negative or discouraging, I would also include the revised doctoral dissertation on this list. I don't think there's any publisher anywhere in the world that is currently plotting to corner the market on revised doctoral dissertations. I'm not sure exactly how many dissertations are written in the US every year, but I'm pretty confident that only a tiny percentage of them are worth publishing.

And the ones that are worth publishing, generally have very modest sales potentials. And by modest, I mean a few hundred copies, so the potential return on investment is pretty low. To put it in stark, realistic terms, even if your revised dissertation merits publication, we're still kind of doing you a favor by publishing it, not the other way around.

However, I will confess that I've recently broken my own self-imposed rule in four of the five categories that I've just listed. Within the past year I've signed up an anthology of previously published material, and within the past month alone, I've signed up an edited conference volume by a philosopher, a festschrift for a philosopher, and a revised doctoral dissertation from a philosopher. Furthermore, it's quite possible that in the spring of next year I'll sign up another revised doctoral dissertation from a political theorist. So it is possible to get a book published by a respected University Press, even if it falls into one of these less desirable categories.

What did these authors do to beat the odds? I'll focus on the two doctoral dissertations since that's the purpose of today's gathering. In the first example, the philosopher who I've already signed up did something very simple, he shamelessly used his connections. He became friendly with a series editor of ours and asked her for help in crafting his proposal and submitting it to us. This was a very clever strategy because, if I didn't want the book, I would have to reject two people, not just one. And the second person would have to be a senior faculty member who had previously published a book with us and is a pipeline for future book projects. So even if I really wanted to reject this project, I would have been forced to come up with a very compelling reason to do so and communicate that in a very delicate way.

And the second example, the political theorist who has not yet signed up. I had actually approached her last spring to review a manuscript for me, which she did a great job on, by the way. A couple of months later, she contacted me and asked if I was interested in reviewing her award-winning dissertation, and in seeing if it would be of interest to MIT Press. The fact that this person had written a very constructive review for me in a timely manner put her in a positive light already, so I was a bit more receptive to her proposal than perhaps I would have been otherwise. But what really got me interested in the project was that it had a unique interdisciplinary thesis that I had not seen anywhere else-- attempting to merge empirical psychology with political theory. Plus she clearly knew the MIT backlist very well, and could articulate how her book would fit into our overall publishing strategy. So she had clearly done her homework and presented herself in a way that made me take her seriously.

In both of these instances the authors had a tentative connection to the press that they were able to exploit-- one through a series editor, one by acting as a reviewer. Because of these connections, I probably gave these authors a little bit more of my time and attention than they normally would have. And by a little more of my time I mean, gave their emails a couple of minutes rather than a couple of seconds. Of course, if the proposals they had submitted to me had been poorly conceived or uninteresting, the conversation probably would have stopped there. But the fact that they were also able to deliver that they were able to deliver well-crafted proposals that were able to withstand the peer review process was what really sealed the deal.

But what if you don't have an in with the publisher? What can you do to improve your chances of being taken seriously? The first thing I would suggest any aspiring author is do your homework.

And I've always wanted to say that to a roomful of professors, do your homework. Don't just start sending queries out to any random publisher. Spend 30 or 40 minutes on Amazon looking for the three or four most relevant publishers for your work and focus on them.

By relevant publishers, I mean publishers that consistently produce books on your subject area to this day. If the last book that a publisher produced on a particular topic was over 10 years ago, that's usually a sign that they pulled out of that area and aren't looking for new projects. Maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago one could be acceptably ignorant on this point, but today there's really no excuse for the author who sends his manuscript on pre-socratic philosophy to the MIT Press, which actually happened to me recently.

Second, when making an initial approach to a publisher, keep it brief. Really, I only need three or four sentences to determine whether or not I'm interested in seeing something, not three or four paragraphs, not three or four pages, certainly not three or four chapters. Three or four sentences are fine. If I want to see more material from you, I'm perfectly capable of asking for it.

What you want to avoid at all costs is this, is my lone, low tech visual aid. This is an actual book proposal that was sent to me about a month ago from an author. The very first email that he sent me. And as you can see it is six pages of single-spaced material, full of all the jargon that Elizabeth was railing against a few moments ago. Plus another 20 pages in attachments. Unless this is a love letter written to me by Gisele Bundchen, I'm not going to read this. I think I spent about 30 seconds perusing it, and then I forwarded it to my assistant to reject. So, don't be this guy. Really, there's absolutely no need to send that much material in an initial email.

Third, if I do respond to your initial query and ask to see more material, you will really help your case if the material you submit follows APA style or Chicago Manual Style. If I have to make formatting changes to read what I've sent, that's not a good starting position for you. There is absolutely nothing wrong with double-spaced, New York Times Roman font at 12 points. And it will greatly increase the likelihood that I will spend a few minutes, rather than a few seconds on your project. This seems like a very simple thing to do, but you'd be surprised how many authors get tripped up on this small detail.

Fourth, if you think your submission is-- if I think your submission is interesting and worth considering, I'll send it out to three or four external reviewers to look at. When choosing a reviewer, I'm not looking for your arch nemesis or someone who wants to make your life miserable, but it just so happens that reviewers can be harsh and a little nasty sometimes. So when you respond to reviewer reports, it's best to stay above the fray. Don't get petty and personal in your response. Try to separate the substantive criticisms from the personal ones, and respond to those. When I present projects at publishing committee meetings, my colleagues definitely reward mature adult behavior. So, an author who responds to reviewer feedback in a constructive way, not a defensive way, is more likely to be approved.

And finally, after all this, if we do get to the stage where I send you a contract for your revised dissertation, I do have one piece of advice for you on negotiating-- don't do it. Standard contracts don't vary much from publisher to publisher. And unless there is language in the contract about waiving constitutional rights or giving up a firstborn child, just sign it and send it back. Getting

your first book published by a reputable press is more important than haggling over electronic royalties. Save it for contract number two.

Thanks for listening.

[CLAPPING]

From Dissertation to Book - Peter der Manuelian

SPEAKER 1: Thank you also to the organizers. This is a privilege to be with such a great group, and I'd like to learn from you as well as sharing some of my own thoughts. I think this side of the table represents the cream of the crop. These people are the best of the best.

And so if you're able to get a manuscript accepted with either of these presses, you are in terrific hands. They will tailor and craft it, the length, the illustrations, all of that. Having an editor to try to really tighten up some of the prose is just a fantastic thing.

I'm going to maybe take the opposite approach a little bit and talk about life for the rest of us when we're not quite so fortunate or we're in a very narrow field or we're aiming at a very specific audience. And that's been my own personal experience. I'm an Egyptologist, and that's not for everybody. So that's pharaonic history and hieroglyphs and pyramids and mummies and things like that.

In trade publications, of course, you've seen them. There are plenty of coffee table books about everything you can imagine-- Cleopatra and how the pyramids were built and all of these sorts of things. But for scholars coming up, there are much more narrow and focused dissertations. And in my own experience, I've become a sort of a hybrid mutant in the publishing world. And at the risk of seeming like the enemy to my esteemed colleagues here, I'll tell you a bit more about my experience.

One of the things that fascinates me about ancient Egypt is its iconic nature, its graphical nature, so the pictorial aspect of the language and things like that. So I've been involved from the beginning with epigraphy and drawings and reproductions. And pictures play almost as large a part in my publications as the words do.

So I realized early on-- I think back in the '80s when the first Macintoshes were coming out-- I instantly saw this wonderful connection between the ancient Egyptian way of thinking and this now user interface graphically-oriented way of computing. And so I saw the Macintosh as this way for someone like me, a non-programmer, to get into the design and the layout and the word processing side of things.

And so I spent a tremendous amount of time realizing no one was going to pay for my books and to have them beautifully designed and edited and all that, that I needed to take on some of those roles myself. And I did. So my original thesis, which was actually an undergraduate thesis here and which was published several years later in a monograph series in Germany, I can safely say I designed it myself. And it's probably the world's ugliest academic publication ever produced, with an amazing array of fonts and dot matrix hieroglyphs. And I'm too embarrassed to bring it today.

But it's a learning process. And by force, really, and the fact that I'm a control freak, I try to pick up as many of the pieces of this puzzle as I could. So from altering traditional Times Roman fonts into transliteration fonts, you know, H's with dots under them and T's and D's with lines under them so that you could transliterate hieroglyphs and inscriptions and things and then

working with computer hieroglyphic fonts and typefaces. And now, of course, they're a dime a dozen, and it doesn't matter if you're on a Mac or a PC, all of these tools are there.

And from there, it's learning what dots per inch means and Photoshop files and what is publishable quality and what is just for use on the web or the screen. Same with line art and drawings, there's a-- what was the word they used? Complications, I think, illustrations. They certainly do represent complications, but by dabbling into each of these fields and then moving from Word to FrameMaker to QuarkXPress, and now to Adobe InDesign, I've been able to take on enough of these skills, I think, where I can lay out the books the way I see fit.

And so that is for those cases where you're not lucky enough to have Harvard Press behind you and wonderful professional designers there, the more of those pieces of the puzzle you can control, even if you're not doing it yourself, but at least understand some of the jargon, I think that really helps get a leg up if you're talking about a limited monograph series in academic press, places where you're going to have to come out with the publication subsidy yourself. They will take your book on if you can fork over the \$40,000 or the \$70,000 from somewhere to get it published, that certainly helps.

And that means you have to know what you're dealing with. How can you figure out what that Microsoft Word document shrinks down to in a typeset laid out document? How many pages would it really be? How many illustrations do you need, and are they full page? Do they really need to be that big? Or can they be half page or quarter page?

Do you need color? And, if so, does it have to be peppered through the text? That's a lot more expensive, because it means all your signatures have to go on a four-color or a six-color press. Or can they be bunched at the end of the book? So most of the book is much cheaper to produce, because it's just black ink and then just a section of color plates, for example.

Does it need to be hardcover or does it need to be paperback? Does it need a dust jacket? These are all the types of formal specs that any printer is going to want to know if they're going to move ahead with your project. So estimating those types of things and having a handle on that is good.

I brought a couple of examples, and I'll show you just one simple benefit of this kind of control. I did a book on a bunch of Egyptian tombstones which are rectangular, and so because I was controlling the process, I get to make the book like this instead of vertical.

And that's the kind of thing that maybe working with an editor, you may not have that kind of freedom. They're used to doing vertical books for all kinds of reasons. And there are good reasons. This one doesn't fit on a bookshelf very well. It sticks out quite a bit. But that's one of the advantages of controlling these aspects of the design process.

So over the years, I got more involved in this and produced my own publications this way, working with printers, of course, obviously, and going on press myself. And then expanded a little bit and started producing Egyptological publications for the Metropolitan Museum, for Penn, for Yale, Brown University, for other places. And that actually brought in a decent amount

of income, even though these are not trade publications they're not bestsellers, but it was an interesting sort of side source of income for me, which was not insubstantial.

The books themselves don't make money. These are probably money losers, but I'd suggest at this stage in your career you're not really out to make millions with a trade publication. You're getting your new scholarship, your new research out there.

So in a case like this, there are 500 copies of this book. It costs a lot to produce, sells for about \$150. That's probably beyond your normal price point, right? By contrast, when I needed a break from my dissertation, I did a children's book, which was just the hieroglyphic alphabet book. And that was picked up by Scholastic Press and reprinted as a paperback for \$5.95, and that sold about 200,000 copies across the country.

So it's quite a change between these different areas of focus. And I think you hit on the right term with diversity, who you're aiming at, what your audience is. Are you trying to show your new research? Focus on the colleagues in your maybe small field, or are you trying to do a trade publication or go with one of the big presses? Those are all key.

So the advantages for me were feeling in control of the process, being able to produce the graphics I needed, do the layouts I want, choose the format of the book and that sort of thing, work with different printers. The disadvantage, I would say, is that all of that has come out of my own research time. So the number of books I have written and produced personally would, I feel, be much larger if, of course, I hadn't been spending a lot of that time producing books for colleagues.

So in a sense, it was enriching because I got to know my colleagues, I got to read their works, which are in my field and, of course, I was very interested in them as well. But, again, all of that technology time comes out of my academic time and my research time.

So I'd say be aware of those issues. What are you writing? What formats does it have? What kinds of additional challenges are you facing? And then you'll be better equipped to choose the publishers that are interested, see what kind of subsidies may or may not be necessary, and to try to take the process from there and then be more in control of what's happening.

That's not for everyone. And, as I said, this is a very strange and quirky sort of career path that I've taken, where the design aspect is so much of it. But even if you're going to hand that manuscript off to someone else, it's good to know what a designer is then going to be doing.

And as a final caution, I'd say keep track of the entire process. And going forward, there is the challenge that books like this could be a bit of a dinosaur. And I don't know how much longer museums and universities will be wanting to see these small print run publications going.

And so think about the conversion of your book to other types of reading. Would you rather lug this around? Here. Here's the thickness comparison. Would you rather lug this around or that around?

And so often I see colleagues work so hard on a book, send it off, it goes perhaps to a designer and then to the press. And then they totally lose interest in the final digital files. And they're on some designer's computer in another state, and no one knows where they are. And was that really the final version when we corrected that plate or that drawing?

And I think that's just shameful. If you can hang onto the final book files, if you designed them, or know where the designer is and try to get hold of those, there will be an electronic version down the road or a web version or ways to reach a larger audience that your perhaps small print run book couldn't do. So do try to keep track of that. I think you'll find more and more that will be the way to go as these kinds of portable devices pick up steam and get ever more popular.

That is my contribution. I'm hoping that's not too at odds at what the professional presses have to contribute. But I'd welcome your feedback and questions for any of the panel. Thanks.

[APPLAUSE]

From Dissertation to Book - Erez Manela

SPEAKER 1: Now we are going to move on to our responses from a couple of distinguished professors at Harvard. First is Erez Manela, Professor of History. And then Peter Der Manuelian, the Philip J. King Professor of Egyptology will follow. And then we'll take your questions.

EREZ MANELA: Well, thanks to the organizers for inviting me to do this, and thank you all for being here. I think the perspective that I can offer will be very different from that that you just heard from the editors because I don't have their experience in receiving manuscripts and don't generally have the vastness of their experience in the publishing world. What I can say is based on my own experience, having published my dissertation book in 2007, having some other dealings with publishers over other projects, and speaking to colleagues and friends about their own experiences.

And the one thing that has struck me with that experience is how diverse and how different these experiences can be across disciplines, across fields within a discipline, and among different presses. So for example, to give an example with the divergence between disciplines, I don't know much about linguistics but my impression of monographs in linguistics that I have seen is that they tend to be full of specialist jargon. They tend to speak to a very narrow audience.

And yet, at least those that I've seen obviously got published. I don't know, of course, how many got rejected. But it seems at least within that discipline, the norms of monograph publications do call for that type of format. Now on the other hand, within the field of history, which is my own field, I have seen people publish their first books, their dissertation books, with trade publishers. And in fact, I have seen one of my own colleagues win the Pulitzer Prize for their first book based on their dissertation.

It's not common. I wouldn't expect it, but it does, it does happen. And in fact, within the fields in history that I am most closely associated with, that is, Modern American history, Cold War history, international relations, I think there is quite a good chunk of first books that get published with trade presses, with Random House, with Blackwell, several others that I could name if I gave it a few minutes of thought. But it's not that rare.

There's also a diversity among institutions. I think there are different institutions, different departments, view publishing your first book with a trade press differently. And so whichever department, or institution if you're from MIT, you're in, try to get a sense of what your colleagues might think about your choice to publish with a trade press. In some contexts, it might be seen as a poor decision. In other contexts-- certainly if it wins a Pulitzer Prize, and that book was published by trade press, I forget which one, but by a trade press-- it might be seen as a brilliant decision.

Now even within the scope of university presses, there are significant differences I've found by talking to people who have published in different presses and by reading books that have been published in different presses. So for example, while some presses will never publish footnotes, that is, the notes that are actually at the foot of the page, and will rarely publish bibliographies, other presses regularly publish footnotes and almost always publish bibliographies.

And so depending on what kind of book you want to publish and on who you think your audiences are, it really pays to do your research on the different presses, to look at books that they have published recently in your field, and to see if just in terms of the format of the book-- footnotes versus endnotes, art versus no art, bibliography versus no bibliography, length of the book, and so on and so forth, design-- whether these are, this is the sort of format that you imagine for your book. And if you do that kind of research, I think you'll be much, much happier and perhaps have much quicker success in the process of finding a publisher.

I've heard before from a number of editors the advice of eliminating jargon. Certainly some presses emphasize that. On the other hand, for example Duke University Press, I haven't seen a single book they've published that isn't full of jargon. And so again, there's a significant amount of diversity. With regard to length, yes, 100,000 words is a common recommendation.

On the other hand, and I've just now finished a-- in parentheses, I teach a lot of what we call, to my graduate students and occasionally even to undergraduates, what we call first books. First books, that is, books based on dissertations because I think graduate students have a great deal to learn from reading books that are based on these sort of intellectual projects that they are beginning to be engaged in.

And so I read and have read recently, first books, not just in my own field but in a number of other fields. And so we just taught a book called *Gay New York*, which was published in 1994. It was based on a dissertation, is a major, still considered a major contribution to American history, to queer history, to gender history, and is at least twice as long as the recommended 100,000 words.

I can easily think of four or five other examples, recent, more or less, recent examples that are much longer than that. My own book, incidentally, is not, just because I don't like to write a great deal. I prefer to say things succinctly. But there are contexts and there are ways in which you need to say things at length. You need to have thick descriptions.

And some presses do publish books that are significantly longer, do take a chance on books that are significantly longer if they think they're important enough, if they think they will sell significantly, if they think they'll be taught in classrooms, if they think they'll go into a backlist where, 16 years later, people are still teaching them in courses. And so I don't know what exactly, what set of judgments editors have in deciding whether to take a chance on a book in that way or not. But certainly just looking at things that have been published more or less recently, you can see a great diversity of formats, of lengths, of shapes, forms, sizes.

Now with regard to getting a contract, approaching a publisher, again, I've found, at least in my discipline, a significant diversity among fields. It's fairly common for me when I talk to people in fields that are considered, I suppose, by presses a less marketable-- let's say, I don't know, medieval Russian history-- that they experience, it's just an example, that they have significant, it takes them a significant amount of time to find a publisher. And it's not an easy process.

I've rarely come across a colleague, you know, who's at Harvard or has graduated from Harvard, who did not manage to find a publisher ever. That's despite trying. But it can be a long and can

be an arduous process. On the other hand, and I think, and I actually would like to pose this as a question to our colleagues here from the presses, my sense here is that in general, and again, there are differences between presses, in general, academic presses, university presses, have, are more reluctant now to publish what they see is narrow monographs than they might have been 10 or 20 years ago.

On the other hand, there's a flipside. They're more eager, I think now, to publish things that they think will have a substantial market. So what that has meant for people in American history, in Cold War history, again, which is fields that I know, are fields that I know very well, is that we are finding it very easy to get publishing offers. In fact, we oftentimes-- and I've heard this, I've experienced this myself, I've heard this from others-- we don't need to approach publishers because publishers approach us.

They somehow hear about the projects and they send us inquiries about, would you be interested in sending me a chapter or a proposal or something along these lines. Quite a few of my colleagues have been approached by literary agents, again, out of the blue because they've heard about their projects. I've so far myself have resisted that temptation for reasons which I can discuss in the Q&A if anyone is interested, but quite a few of my colleagues, again, in the fields of Cold War and Modern American history, do have literary agents and do publish through literary agents, sometimes placing their books in university presses, sometimes placing their books in trade presses.

And they have found agents to be, so you probably didn't want me to mention agents in this context. I know it's a freighted, it's a freighted issue. But they find them especially useful in that part about negotiating that Phillip just mentioned at the tail end of his talk. And while it's true that on the whole, publishing with an agent is more common in one's later books, not the dissertation books, I can think of, again, quite a few examples of colleagues who have had an agent even with their first book.

So again, there's a great deal and great degree of diversity in this experience, I've found. And I'd like to keep my remarks short so I'll end here. I'm eager to hear what questions you have and to respond to your concerns.

PETER DER MANUELIAN: Shall we move on to me? Or, OK. Great.