

PROTIST TOOLS

Doing A Protist Book

Introduction

The proud parent of a new book gets 2 questions. First, ‘Why did you do that?’ and second, ‘How did you do that?’ Here, I’ll ignore the first question (there are a variety of answers both reasonable and unreasonable) and concentrate on the second through the story of one particular book. The goal is to motivate others to do books on protists by showing that it can be done, to provide some guidance, to warn of pitfalls and tell of some pleasant surprises.

This is the story of a book of 10 chapters each authored by different sets of authors, covering topics ranging from physiology to fossils. The tale begins with the first contact made with a potential publisher and ends with the marketing and publicity of the book, a period of time corresponding to nearly 3 years. Excluding the authors and reviewers of the book (whom one more or less chooses), I dealt with 12 people throughout the production of the book. This story concerns them (Table 1: ‘Cast of Characters’), like a family, one does not choose them but one does have to deal with them.

Conception

The starting point was an email to Arthur Finder, senior commissioning editor at Some University Press (SUP) whom I knew through the Limnology and Oceanography Bulletin. I wrote saying I was thinking of doing a book on a group of ciliates and had lined up some well-known collaborators willing to author chapters on specific topics. I asked for advice on how to proceed and if SUP might consider such a book. His reply was swift and unambiguous: “... *this would be unlikely to be viable except as a low print run, high-priced reference work.... you may well find this a hard idea to sell to a potential publisher*”. However he also provided contacts at 3 publishers he thought might consider such an ‘unviable’ book and most importantly, a description of a typical book proposal.

A complete proposal running to between 4-6 pages would be ideal i.e., nothing too daunting for time-strapped reviewers, but with sufficient content to generate constructive/critical feedback.

1. Rationale detailing your aims and approach: why are you writing the book, who is it for, and why is such a text needed? (1 page)

2. A list of competing titles (including publication dates) explaining how/why your project differs (0.5 page). You may wish to incorporate this section into the Rationale.

3. A full list of contents with a brief description (say 10 lines) per chapter, although the more information you can include the more the reviewers will have to go on.

4. A very brief CV (0.25 page for each co-author) detailing professional backgrounds.

Undaunted and now armed with actual instructions, I wrote a book proposal including details such as a target cover price of under €50 with 20 pages of color illustrations. Also included were the number of copies held in libraries in the USA of previous, somewhat similar, titles of various ages. These holdings ranged from about 200 to 500.

Here begins the timeline (Fig. 1). The proposal went out to all the publishers I could find, namely all those listed in Table 2. In the following couple of weeks I had polite refusals from most. Many responses noted that the cover price was unrealistic and repeated Arthur Finder’s opinion that such a book was for a small market and commercially impossible. A couple stated they would take the proposal under consideration. Some publishers never responded and some took months to acknowledge receipt of the proposal. As it turns out, I had made several mistakes already. First, the proposal was too detailed. I should not have specified a price and a number of color pages nor pointed out that the most recent similar title (a more general treatment of planktonic protists) was purchased by only a couple of hundred libraries. I now know that

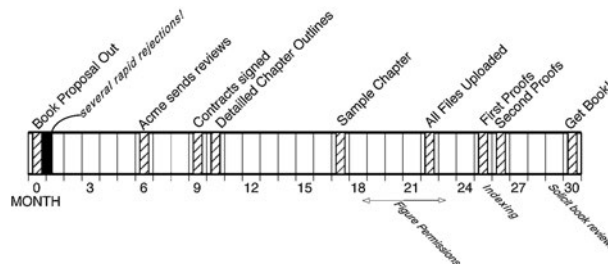
Table 1. Cast of Characters in order of appearance (the names have been changed to protect the innocent and upon legal advice).

Name	Role
Arthur Finder	Commissioning Editor - Some University Press
Thomas Titler	Commissioning Editor - Acme Press, NY
Paige Counter -a	Assistant to Thomas Titler until July 2011
Joe Fileman	Project Editor (Pre-Production) - Acme Press, NY
Francis Figures	Free-Lance Permission checker
Tabetha Secondi	Assistant to Thomas Titler from July 2011 to Sept 2012
Michael Commaking	Free-Lance Copy Editor
Sarah Pagemaster	Project Manager - Top Book Makers, Shanghai
Joel Printhead	Acme Production, Malaysia
Jeon Topman	Production - Top Book Makers, Shanghai
Elizabeth Seller	Acme Marketing, Chicago
Martha Admaker	Acme Marketing, Liverpool (UK)
Paige Counter -b	Managing Editor Acme - NY

a publisher needs to sell at least 100-200 copies of a book in the first year the book appears simply to break even on costs. Second, I should have sent the proposal out sequentially to allow changes

Table 2. Publishers and book proposal sites.

Publisher	Book Proposal site
Acme	http://authorservices.wiley.com/bk_authors.asp
Elsevier	http://www.elsevierdirect.com/article.jsp?pageid=8333
Springer	http://www.springer.com/authors/book+authors/faq+for+book+authors?SGWID=0-1725014-0-0-0
Taylor & Francis	http://www.taylorandfrancis.com/info/authors/#whypublish
CRC (T&F)	http://www.crcpress.com/managed_content/corporate/page.jsf?contentPath=/pages/resources/authors/01.4PubWithCRC.html
Univ Chicago Press	http://www.press.uchicago.edu/infoServices/books_submissions.html
Princeton Univ Press	http://press.princeton.edu/authors/msub.html
Harvard Univ Press	http://www.hup.harvard.edu/resources/authors/proposal.html
Cambridge Univ Press	http://www.cambridge.org/fr/knowledge/streams/item239592/?site_locale=fr_FR
Columbia Univ Press	http://cup.columbia.edu/static/ms_instructions
Brill	http://www.brill.com/author-gateway/publishing-books-brill
Sinauer	http://www.sinauer.com/contact/
Univ California Press	http://www.ucpress.edu/resources.php?p=guidelines

**Figure 1.** Timeline of events in 'doing' the book.

reflecting individual publisher's responses. Third, I should have located multiple contacts for each publisher since the official pathways in some cases led to nowhere at all. After a month of negative responses followed by a month of no news the project was shelved in my view. A fourth mistake was assuming that the project was dead.

Description

A full six months after the proposal was submitted I received a message from Thomas Titler, the senior commissioning editor of life science books for Acme. He said here are 3 reviews and if you have not yet found a publisher for your book, I can bring the proposal to the editorial board for approval. I replied to this first nice surprise by saying 'please do submit the book proposal to the board' and I promptly contacted my fellow contributors with the news. About a month later I received the first draft book contract from Thomas Titler's assistant Paige Counter.

The first contract listed a single author that we changed into a group of editors. We were told that the number of editors could not exceed 5 simply because the book cover becomes unsightly but we could have as many 'contributors' as we wished. After sorting out editors and contributors, the next contract items were fixing the number of total pages and illustrations and the delivery date of the manuscript. While these parameters can be altered later, Paige stressed that a fairly accurate estimation was needed to schedule production.

The first problems appeared when trying to come up with a concrete assessment of size of the book. We needed to estimate the number of words and the number of figures so that total values could be entered in the contract. The draft contract specified a book of "85,000 words equating to approximately 284 printed and bound pages" this works out to 300 words per page (usually the number is about 750 words per page). We were told that a 'figure' was considered on average to be 25% of a page. The pages for references and indexes need to be included as well. This led to great deal of confusion trying to figure out how long our chapters would be and it turned out that one should ignore the total words number in the contract, as Paige told me that the actual number of words per page is indeed about 700 (not 300). The final contract was drawn up in mid-January. It specified delivery of a detailed table of contents for February 28, and a sample chapter (specifically not an introductory chapter) for July 31st and all manuscript files to be delivered by December 31st.

The first hurdle, the table of contents, required compiling detailed outlines for each chapter. We had about 6 weeks for this according to the contract and while we had been contacting people about contributing chapters, it quickly became urgent to have concrete commitments. After some weeks of hurried emails, chapter outlines were put together. I was unsure exactly what degree of detail was needed so I wrote to Paige to for an example outline to use a model. She replied that as the book proposal was fairly detailed, we didn't really need to send an outline. This information I kept to myself because a detailed outline is needed to keep a project on schedule as well as to adjust the sizes of the chapters. The detailed outline specified in the contract was sent off on February 26th. This was also a good thing as it listed all the contributors. The lead authors of each chapter, if not already bound by the editor contract, apparently needed to sign contracts.

Development

Paige, in acknowledging receipt of the outline, noted that we really should have complete drafts of each chapter done by September to allow time to circulate the drafts among us. This sort of internal review is **absolutely vital** and I had simply not thought of it before. I sent out this information - the need for complete draft versions by the end of September for circulation among authors, as something imposed by Acme to both make it appear mandatory and hide the fact that I should have thought of this step myself. Even if chapters are stand-alone, all the authors need to be familiar with the all the material if only to avoid contradicting one another and allow cross-referencing. Obviously, inclusion of an internal review period needs to be scheduled into the overall calendar. One of the authors rightfully complained that preparation time for her chapters had been significantly decreased without warning.

Following the outline submission, the book was passed by the commissioning editor's office to production. I was now dealing with the Acme production editor Joe Fileman. The second hurdle was the submission of the sample chapter. This I took quite seriously and it fairly ruined most of the spring and part of the summer of 2011. I spent a lot of time on the figures. We had been supplied with detailed instruction on the preparation of artwork: final overall figure sizes (half or full page width), font type and size, as well as the use of tick marks, grids, etc. Such specific instructions are often given by journals but many, if not most of us, cheerfully ignore them and we are rarely called to task. However, in a book a consistent figure style is needed, otherwise it looks like a collection of reprints. I learned that each figure should be conceived from the beginning with the final print size clearly in mind. Otherwise, figure alterations can eat up an incredible amount of time. I submitted the sample chapter a few days ahead of schedule and waited for news. About a month later Joe wrote to say that it looked fine, including the figures! However, right about this time began the nightmare of permissions.

Francis Figures, a free-lance copy editor and permission specialist was contracted by Acme to catalog and verify all permission for the use of reprinted material. We had all received instructions concerning the use of previously published material and been supplied with forms to be filled by copyright owners. Now we needed to send these permissions (212 figures) to Francis for verification. From her I quickly learned a few apparently well-known facts: re-drawing or altering a figure does

not avoid a need to have permission. In fact, one should avoid changing a figure as a specific permission is needed to publish an altered version. If one uses most of the data from a table, permission is required. In fact, if the original source is even vaguely recognizable, permission is required. Re-use of figures from most journals and recent books are easily handled as major publishers have reciprocal agreements and via services such as Copyright Clearance Center. The problems occur with older books, technical reports and obscure journals.

One figure was notably time-consuming as it was from Hardy's 'The Open Sea', a book published in several different editions and forms in different countries by different publishers over a long period of time. Many, perhaps most, publishing houses have been bought or traded or spilt-up over the past 10 or 20 years making figuring out who might have copyrights to older material problematic. For this figure, I ended up with two letters from different companies both stating that they had no objection to my use of the figure although they probably did not hold the copyright. Another figure permission, from an article in a journal published by a Japanese college, was a comic routine. My first request was answered saying that the author no longer worked at the college. I replied saying I know this (actually he died decades ago); I want to use a figure from their journal. The message was answered with a copy of the article in question and 'thanks for in advance citing it'. I repeated the request again and received a message that they would be 'honored' to let me re-use the figure. This was followed a couple of weeks later by a message saying 'sorry' but that they had been hasty and the matter would have to be considered by the college president. I never heard again from them. Needless to say, I ignored the last message and submitted the permission. The lesson here is that re-using unaltered material from recent journal articles is easy but altering figures and re-use of any material from older books, small journals and technical reports should be avoided.

Production

The hurried round-robin of the authors commenting on each other's chapters was very useful. Besides improving the content, it allowed flagging of problematic figures and collating the references. The pooled reference list included over 1,200 items; verifying the formatting of the references was a mind-numbing task. However, It seemed as though

the end was in sight. All the files were uploaded on time just before Christmas 2011. A few weeks later we were told that the project had been passed on to Joel Printhead in Acme's production office in Malaysia. In April copy-editing began, Michael Commaking began going through each chapter, formatting the text, inserting call-outs for figure placements, doing light editing and checking references. We were told by Michael that once each copy-edited chapter had been verified the files would go to the typesetters for page layout.

The next contact I had was with Sarah Page-master of Top Book Makers Ltd (Shanghai) to let me know that she was the project manager for the book. It turned out that Michael was not working for Acme but was a contractor of the company Acme uses for 'pre-production'. Top Book Makers in Shanghai produces the final master files used by the actual printing factory in the Philippines. They are responsible for typesetting, page layout, and the production of proofs. Sarah had the copy-edited text files from Michael and the image files from Joel transferred to Jeon Topman who dealt with the typesetters in his company.

The arrival of the first set of proofs in May was satisfying for some of us and quite dissatisfying for others. Many of the figures were very oddly sized, not at all corresponding to the sizes for which they were drafted. A quick verification of a print-out showed that the 'printable area' the typesetters used was considerably smaller than that specified in the instructions for artwork we had meticulously followed. Furthermore, figures drafted and tagged as a full page had been reduced to allow a legend on the same page.

The first problem was determining to whom I should complain: Joe (New York), Jeol (Malaysia), or Jeon (Shanghai). It was entirely possible that none of these had ever seen the instructions for artwork we had used. Indeed, Sarah informed me that the typesetters used a standard format specified by Acme for the page layout. Bad luck for us that the format was not exactly the same as described in the instructions we had received from Acme. I appealed to Thomas, as the commissioning editor, saying that specifications we were given must be respected otherwise we would have to re-do a large number of figures. Joel told me that a solution would be found but it would involve re-doing the book proofs entirely (rather obvious) as well as forcing a re-estimation of the cost, presumably with regard to the printing. A happy surprise was the arrival of a second set of proofs with all the figures sized as we wanted a few weeks later. This set of proofs with the final correct

pagination meant I could do the indexes which was an very unfortunate choice of my own.

The book contract stated that we were responsible for supplying a completed index but we could opt to have this done for us with the cost deducted from any royalties. Compiling the terms was simple—each author supplied a list of terms and I compiled a list of each species mentioned. I thought doing an index would be a trivial piece of work, simply search for each term in the document and note the page numbers. It is not trivial, rather than the day or two anticipated it took nearly 6 days because the appearance of each term or species name has to be judged as ‘to note’ or ‘not note’, lengthy and tedious work. Especially as royalties are unlikely to amount to much, having a professional do the indexes is most strongly recommended.

Marketing

Right about this time, a few months before the book is scheduled to appear, we were contacted by Tabettha, Thomas’s new assistant. She asked for a back cover descriptive blurb (the authors write their own back cover descriptive text) and short biographical information for each editor. These items would go not only on the back cover but also on a webpage. The book was soon to have its own webpage on the Acme site as a forthcoming title. Not long after, the web page was up and not long after that it was on the Amazon sites ‘available for pre-ordering’ as well. It was with regard to the Amazon listing that I had my first contact with the marketing department. I wrote to Thomas asking if the Amazon feature “look inside” could be added and I quickly had a positive reply from the marketing department, Elizabeth Seller. She also managed to have the color plate section added to sections available for viewing. A very pleasant surprise was hearing from family members once the book was on Amazon. After nearly 30 years of publishing research papers, here was something normal people could see - a book is something special.

Amazon encourages authors (editors count for them as authors) to create an ‘author page’. According to Amazon this increases the visibility and thereby sales of the book. Why this should be so escapes me entirely but I can assure you that family and friends will be impressed if you have an ‘author page’ on Amazon. This involves little work, simply uploading a very short biography and up to 8 small images, all of which can be edited or deleted at will. As an “author” one can also upload onto to

the Amazon descriptive page excerpts from reviews of the book, under the heading ‘editorial reviews’.

As the “available” date approached it was time to start thinking about getting the book reviewed so people would learn of it. Soliciting reviews is left to the authors or editors of a book. They presumably know best which journals have a readership best suited for their book. Soliciting reviews involves first compiling a list of plausible candidate journals that publish book reviews (not many do) and then finding the correct contact person for each to ask if they might consider the title for a book review. I asked 20 journals ranging from *Nature* (a polite no thanks) and *Science* (never replied) to the *Journal of the Marine Biological Association*. It is still too early to tell how many reviews will actually appear but Elizabeth had review copies sent to 10 journals that replied positively.

The larger academic publishers each print literally hundreds of new titles every year. From what I’ve learned, in order of magnitude numbers, a book on a specialized topic (e.g., a group of protists) will likely have a print run of 500-1000 copies and production costs of about 10,000-15,000€. With a cover price of about 100€, the total maximum possible revenue is in the neighborhood of 100,000€ in the highly unlikely event that the entire print run is sold at the cover price. Furthermore, overheads must be paid over the entire life of a book. The actual profit anticipated by the publisher is most probably very much less. Consequently, specialized titles are unlikely to receive much individual investment attention from the publicity department of the publisher. Sets of new titles are periodically announced in mass emails and shown by some publishers at display booths at large conferences. However, individual help is given to authors wanting to advertise their particular book themselves. For our book Martha Admaker at Acme in Liverpool offered to draft and print the flyers I’ll be distributing at conferences.

Payoff

While soliciting the reviews the secretary called to say that a courier had delivered a package. It was from Paige, now a Managing Editor at Acme; it was a copy of the book. This provoked a stop at the store on the way home to buy a bottle of champagne and a phone call to a friend to ask if she might care to care to join a small celebration. Quite satisfying to finally see a copy- even impressed my 17 year old daughter, no easy feat! A tale that begins in February 2010 ends on a November evening in

2012 might seem long but I would say it was well worth it. I encourage others to try it - after all, doesn't every group of protists deserve a book of their own?

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