

Five chances to reset the terms of your book contract (Part 1) *By Steve Gillen*

If you published the first edition of your textbook ten or more years ago, you may find yourself occasionally muttering to yourself, “I wish I knew then what I know now.”

Why is that?

Historically, the publishers start the book contract negotiation game with all the cards . . . backs to you. You have one card . . . it's face up. And it tells everybody, “I'm new at this but I'm excited. Just tell me where to sign.”

Publishers have generally been the gatekeeper to a published book. While this may be less true now, with self-publishing and Open Educational Resources (OER), the publishers still have the most established distribution channels self-publishers

cannot begin to match. Even the smallest of publishers does many deals each year . . . and the largest may do thousands of deals a year. The publishers have generally been doing these deals for a long time. They have experience in and data about the market, with which they are in regular contact. They know what their competitors are doing. As employees move from publisher to publisher, information moves with them. They have confidence (some might say arrogance).

In the face of this, the first-time author has exactly nothing, including no confidence. The result is that as often as not that first time author signs whatever is put in front of them, just happy that a publisher will give them the time of day. *continued on page 4*

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I have an idea for an academic book. What is my first step in launching this project? *Answered by John Bond*

Whether it be an academic monograph, textbook, or other type of book, the first step is to solidify “The Idea.” This process has several components. My recommendation is approach this in a stepwise fashion:

1. Start by writing a short, one sentence summary of the project (less than twelve words).
2. Then write a three to four paragraph description. This should be similar to what you might see on the back of a book or marketing copy. Describe the book, its features and benefits, and who the book is geared towards. These two exercises help define what the book is and therefore what the book is not.
3. Now, create a table of contents. Add in a working title and subtitle for the book. For the title, think about what keywords should be included. Keep the title short and perhaps catchy. All of these items can
4. Research and clarify who your customer is. Create concrete descriptions of your target audience. Be specific. “Anyone interested in science” is too broad and non-specific. “Undergraduate engineering students” or “certified accountants” digs into who your book is made for.
5. Now, list three competitive in-print books. Write a paragraph for each about how your project will specifically differ from, or be better than, each individual book. Be realistic.
6. Make a list of the pros and cons regarding writing the book on your own, or with a co-author(s), or whether you want to edit a book with many contributors. After evaluating this list, make the decision that is best for your project.
7. Author marketing and promotion have become important decision points for publishers when they decide on a project. *continued on page 8*

Call for Proposals



**Proposal Deadline
October 4, 2021**

Visit: <https://bit.ly/2WbRYLB>
See Page 7 for Details



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President's Message

Doing the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion

I once again find myself writing about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in textbooks. Not because I am—or feel myself to be—an expert in any aspect of DEI. Far from it. I am writing again because these concerns continue to weigh on me.

As a textbook author, I have a grave responsibility that goes beyond the obvious promise to deliver useful content for learning my subject. It is not only my descriptions and explanations and examples that affect my users—it is also the voice and vision that comes through those written words.

The attitude projected through a textbook's pages can touch the lives of readers and have meaningful impact on them. We may encourage our readers this way, but when not fully inclusive, our attitude may instead become a barrier to learning.

A conviction that I need to be better has dawned slowly. I started out with the naïve attitude that a desire to do good and be inclusive was enough. I've discovered, however, that my own lens is not an accurate one. It has not been informed by the discrimination, invisibility, and outright injury experienced by my colleagues and diverse readership. I need the help of others to see that, so that I can refocus my lens to a wider view.

I've also discovered that mere awareness will not accomplish what I must in my writing. I must also do the work.

The DEI conversation has ramped up within all the academic disciplines in the last few months. In anticipation of this, TAA established its Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI). Already, the CDEI's work has had substantial impact. For example, I have received helpful information and advice that helps me and others to do the needed work and improve our textbooks.

Along with my team, I have also begun this work in my A&P textbooks. Using what I've learned from the recent TAA Annual Conference, articles from *The Academic Author* and *Abstract* (the TAA blog), and resources found in my own research, I've already started making substantial changes in my textbooks. And what I've found is that, well, it is indeed work. Work that is difficult and, at times, frustrating.

One obstacle that I encountered early in this process is the lack of guidance on what, exactly, we must do to be inclusive in our writing. It seems simple, doesn't it? Include everyone. But how one does that in textbook writing is not always clear.

I was already aware of various publisher guides for authors, many of which have been recently updated for inclusivity. However, these are not complete. Most often, these publisher guides lack guiding principles that may help authors as they encounter specific issues when writing in their respective subject. Instead, the guides seem to focus on a few broad style recommendations that are general in application.

For example, they may advise us not to use "his" or "mankind" or other gender-biased terms for generic references to humanity. But when it comes to discipline-specific terms such as "daughter cell" or "sister chromatid," we are on our own to find alternatives. These terms have emerging alternates in the literature (offspring cell; duplicate chromatid) but some do not. It is often challenging to find established alternatives. It may be tough to decide what to do with a clearly problematic term that does not yet have an acceptable alternative. Should we make one up? Doing so may be more inclusive, but will it serve students who are expected to know the language of their discipline?

Sometimes, my focus on being inclusive has made it difficult to write prose that is simple and clear enough that beginning college students can read it without difficulty. For example, I can change "mother's blood supply" to "uterine blood supply" without making things awkward. But repeatedly referring to parents and offspring in a chapter about prenatal development or genetics without excluding those who are adopted members of a family is difficult. Instead of changing all terms, or being vague in my use of terms, or adding convoluted disclaimers to each use of a term, another method is to briefly explain inclusivity concerns with terms they really must learn.

Even though this process is hard for me, and I'm sure I'm making mistakes, I have found a hidden benefit. For example, books in my discipline often use terms such as "normal" and "abnormal" that in many cases can be problematic. If a condition is merely out of the ordinary, we have sometimes dubbed it as "abnormal" with no concern for how that affects individuals on the outskirts of the diverse spectrum of humanity. These individuals are not defective—they are wonderfully unique and healthy.

If I refer to "normal" body temperature, am I referring to that useless number marked "normal" on my little thermometer from the local pharmacy? Or am I referring to a more accurate average human body temperature? Or am I referring to what is "normal" for a particular individual—which is nearly always the case in my textbooks. Replacing "normal" with a synonym such as "healthy" (or perhaps simply deleting the word) has made many passages simpler and easier to read. These edits may also be more accurate, as well.

As I integrate DEI sensibility into my work, I am making my textbooks more valuable for the many learners who will be using them. An ongoing practice of learning about DEI concerns and how to address them helps me in the process of adjusting the focus of my own lens. TAA, through our CDEI, continues the supportive work needed to sustain authors. Will you join me in rolling up our sleeves and making the world a better place?

—Kevin Patton, Ph.D.
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Finding time to write: Important, yes! Impossible, no!

Reviewing your student assignment practices By Dannelle D. Stevens

The best insurance policy for success in academe is to write (and publish) your work. Yet, you say, where or where do I find the time to write, especially with all the feedback and grading I have to do?

This article is the first in a four-part series focused on finding hidden pockets of time for your own writing. This article will reflect on one aspect of your teaching practice: the assignments you have students complete.

What happens when you hand out your syllabus in that first face-to-face class? The students breeze past your well-crafted course description, clearly written objectives, and inspiring teaching philosophy to one place in the syllabus—the assignments. They ask themselves, “What do I have to do in this class to earn a grade? How much work do I have to do?” Their behavior belies the fact that assignments are very important to them—as important to them, as they are to you.

Let’s discuss the first two steps to finding hidden pockets of time by paying more attention to student assignments.

Step 1: Reflection and evaluation of assignments

Critically evaluating every single assignment is crucial. What is your current practice? How many assignments do you give? How often are they due? What is the purpose for each one? After reflecting on these questions, dig down deeper:

- **Read the description in the syllabus.** Were the students confused about the assignment description last time? Do you need to revise it?
- **Reread your course objectives.** Check the match between the assignment and the course objectives. Where does this assignment fit in with the course? Does it reinforce learning through practice with course concepts? Extend learning to a new topic? Synthesize content read and/or discussed in class? Analyze material? Push students to be creative with the content? Or a combination of these?

On a scale of 1 (least confident) to 10 (very confident), the big question is how confident are you that the assignment really meets your course objectives? If you have any doubt that the assignment is busy work or redundant or too confusing for students, it is time to rethink, revise, substitute, or even eliminate that assignment. Checking the inherent value and contribution of the assignment to student learning is the first step in finding hidden pockets of time for your writing.

Step 2: Communicating Assignments Frequently and Effectively

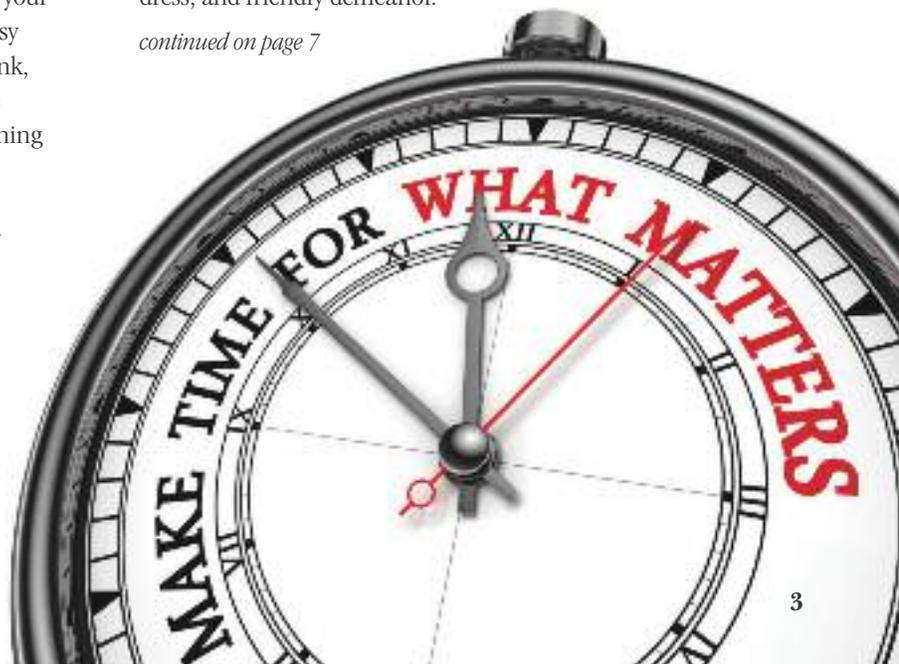
Once upon a time a faculty member told me that it took her 45 minutes to explain an assignment. With just a 90-minute class period, I thought (but did not say, of course) “Wow! That is way too long. I like to use class time to teach content!”

In terms of assignments, how, when, and where you communicate the details about assignments will significantly impact your time and student response. Clear assignment expectations given to students in a variety of consistent ways saves time and fosters higher quality work by increasing

confidence and reducing confusion. Let’s look at these different ways to communicate:

- **Use your syllabus:** Provide detailed description of each assignment; use supplemental handouts when needed. If you use rubrics, cut and paste the assignment description from the syllabus onto the top of the rubric. That in itself often helps students see the link between the syllabus and assignment assessment on the rubric.
- **Crowd-source student questions:** First night of class, divide class into small groups or online put students in break-out rooms to read through the assignments. Have them pool their questions to be asked when the whole group meets back together. Often they will answer each others’ questions and you won’t have to.
- **Make a screencast:** Pull up the assignment on your computer screen and talk through your expectations using a video recording of your screen and your voice. I use Screencast-o-Matic for the recording and upload it to Youtube. You can also make a recording using the screen share and recording features on Zoom or use the audio feature on online course programs like Canvas or Blackboard. Students can be referred to the recording, play it at their leisure, and stop and start it to clarify confusing portions. One great advantage of this tool is that each student receives exactly the same instruction.
- **Create an FAQ (frequently-asked-questions) Sheet.** You may not be able to cover all the details of an assignment in class or on your syllabus. However, an FAQ sheet can pick up the small details. For example, if your students are going off campus to observe a community meeting, an FAQ sheet might be very helpful in addressing your expectations for on-time arrival, appropriate dress, and friendly demeanor.

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Five chances to reset the terms of your book contract *continued from page 1*

Then, years later, you've spoken to other authors, you've joined TAA, you've acquired more experience, more wisdom, and maybe some self-confidence . . . and you join the chorus, "I wish I knew then what I know now."

All is not lost. There are at least five events that can open the door to re-negotiation of your book contract. Some of these doors, the publisher might even inadvertently open for you, never expecting that you might turn the tables on them.

And still, there are a lot of authors out there who allow themselves to drift along, believing their publisher to be their benevolent benefactor, looking out for the author's best interests. Don't get me wrong – I'm not saying all publishers are malevolent. But they are for the most part rational, as the economists would say.

So, what are these five events I mentioned:

1. Your publisher calls for work to begin on a new edition and sends an amendment to your contract to memorialize this . . . with a few additional "updates."
2. Your publisher says that it is replacing older contracts with a new form that reflects changes in its business practices dictated by changing markets.
3. You're ready to scale back your participation and begin the transition to a new co-author.
4. You've completed an audit of your royalty account and are in the process of negotiating settlement of your underpayment claims.
5. Your termination right under US copyright law matures.

We'll examine the first two of these in this article. The rest will follow in Part Two of this article series in the fall edition of the TAA Newsletter.

Revision for a New Edition

In all great likelihood, the contract you have anticipates that your book will need to be periodically revised. The contract will say that the publisher decides when this should be done; that you will have the first option to do it; and that it will be done pursuant to the terms of your existing contract, as though the new edition were the work being published for the first time. Your contract will also anticipate that you may be unable or unwilling to participate in the revision and it will say what happens in that event.

Publishers will memorialize the call for a new edition in a variety of ways. Some will do this by letter, some will do it by a contract amendment, and some will propose an entirely new contract. However the publisher decides to handle this, the document should provide only for a due date for the revision manuscript and perhaps a description, in more or less detail, of what is expected in the revision manuscript (sometimes this revision plan is left to be determined later). Advances, grants, and publisher commitments to cover third party permissions fees and other charges are typically

expressly limited to one edition only. Any other changes in any other provision require your written consent, which you are not obligated to provide. You already have a contract, and it is binding on both parties – you and the publisher. You can just say, "No!" as Nancy Reagan advised in the 80's, albeit about something else.

The "Updated" Contract

Your publisher may, from time-to-time, casually suggest that it is updating all of its author contracts and present you with the new form, with little to no mention of what has been "updated." But just as we say above, you already have a contract, and it is binding on both parties – you and the publisher. Neither one of you has the legal ability to force any change on the other. It does not matter if the market has changed. It does not matter if the publisher's business practices have changed. It does not matter if your current publisher acquired your contracts/copyrights in an acquisition from another publisher and now wants to move you to its own form of contract. It does not matter if your book is no longer "profitable" on the current terms (and though they may claim this, they will almost never show you the numbers). Unless you consent to something else, the publisher has only two options:

- Publish the new edition on your existing terms
- Decline to publish a new edition

The only reason your publisher might choose the second option is if in fact a new edition would lose money for them (in which case you probably won't care because it's also not making much for you).

The Bottom Line

If your publisher is using one of these tactics to push out an "update," either by amendment for a revision or as a new form with more current provisions, you can bet that they are doing it for one reason – because the new terms are better for them than the old terms. In isolation, there is nothing wrong with this. Parties often amend their existing agreements by mutual assent. The problem here is that publishers generally will not be candid with you about what has changed or why and they generally will not tell you that you have a choice.

But now you know. And now you are in a position to do something they won't expect, which is to ask for something in return. More on this in Part Two. ■

Steve Gillen worked for nearly 20 years in publishing prior to entering private practice in the middle 1990's. He is presently Of Counsel at Wood, Herron & Evans (a 150+ year-old Cincinnati law firm focused on intellectual property) where he concentrates his practice on publishing, media, and copyright matters. Steve is a long-time member of the TAA Council, a regular presenter at its annual conferences, and a frequent contributor to TAA publications of every sort. sgillen@wbe-law.com



What is critical race theory and why it should matter to academic authors

By Stacie Craft DeFreitas

Recently, since the popularity of the 1619 project and its connection to critical race theory (CRT), there has been significant confusion about what CRT is. CRT used to be only known and debated by scholars in law, education, sociology and other related fields, but now it is troubling the minds of the parents of elementary students, among others. Let's start with what it is, talk about what it isn't and end with discussing what academic authors need to know about it.

What is CRT?

Critical race theory was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw and others in the 1980s to examine issues of racial bias in the legal system. Critical race theory has several key tenets. Primary among them are that racism and oppression are a part of the American system due to our unresolved history of slavery, and in order to make changes to that system, one must tell the stories of the oppressed and marginalized. These stories have typically been left out of discussions of history and other related fields. CRT is designed to help us to understand and change this system which maintains barriers to many people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, those with disabilities and so many other non-mainstream groups. It is a theory of activism for change.

Many are afraid of CRT because they would desire that we forget our history of slavery and imagine that everyone in the United States is currently on the same playing field, not recognizing that many were born on third base and others were born 100 miles from the ballpark. Many of these differences stem from systemic racism that has thwarted the efforts of many, African Americans particularly, from prospering in this system. Some people would argue that racism is gone and that the African Americans who are struggling do so as a result of their own inabilities. CRT would suggest this is a very uninformed argument and note that Black people face so many barriers, that it is a wonder that they have been as successful as they have been. Black people in the U.S. today currently must combat with the following concerns:

- Being more likely to receive longer jail sentences for the same crime as White people
- Receiving lower incomes despite the same level of education
- Being less likely to receive a home loan despite income
- Attending public schools that are less well funded
- Receiving lower quality healthcare
- And many other factors that impact their daily lives

All of these occur due to the system of racism and oppression that has been perpetuated in the United States since its inception. The repercussions of this blatant racism persist today because of systems that have historically (e.g., redlining) and currently (e.g., biases of

health care providers) created barriers to the success and thriving of many in the United States including Black people. CRT suggests that the only way to change these systems is to call them out and make an active effort to change them so that the American Dream can be a possibility for all its citizens.

Critical race theory would be used to suggest that the systems in place that allow and maintain racism are the problem and must be modified. Many may be a part of that system and not recognize their role. The employees who process the paperwork at the bank may be denying loans based on a score that they receive but may not know that the system that creates the score is biased against people of color. CRT attacks the system, not individuals, and that is where change should be made, on the systemic level.

What CRT is not

- CRT isn't typically taught in K-12 settings as it is a specialized theory mostly taught in graduate school and in some undergraduate programs that examine issues of oppression and marginalization of people.
- CRT does not focus on teaching people that they are racist, but that systems in the United States are built upon racism and perpetuate racism.
- CRT is not just teaching accurate history, but CRT may encourage individuals to teach accurate history as they engage in counter storytelling (telling the stories of those in history who have typically been left out of the textbooks).

It is important to note that some schools are teaching children about issues of racism, oppression, and diversity, but this can lead to improvements in the current system. If parents participate in these discussions with their children, we will move towards a more equitable and prosperous U.S. for everyone. If we can move beyond our fears and discuss the realities of the world in developmentally appropriate ways, we can make positive change.

Why should academic authors care about CRT?

Critical race theory is important to academic authors of various disciplines because it is a theoretical base to consider as they engage in research, teaching, leadership, and applied roles. Academic authors who study issues of racism or oppression of any type may find CRT a useful tool to understand and combat these issues. CRT tells us that we should move beyond just perpetuating knowledge from mainstream Americans in our research and writing, to including the voices of all people. Historians and others who tell the stories of people in their writing should consider the perspective that they are taking and whether they are intentionally or unintentionally leaving out the stories of marginalized and oppressed groups.

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UPS, FedEx, and You: Goal setting by deliverables

By Tracey S. Hodges

The beginning of a new academic year is a great time to set intentions and think about goals. Goal setting can seem arbitrary or ambiguous, particularly for large projects that take months or years to complete. What if you thought about your goals in terms of the final product of a semester? Deliverables. Deliverables are the concrete items you will deliver to yourself or others at the end of a period.

- 1) Make a comprehensive list of current projects. Give the projects names that you can easily identify. Consider a project as anything that is taking time and requires planning – a paper, data collection, teaching a course, conducting reviews for journals.
- 2) For each project, designate 1-3 deliverables that are appropriate. A draft of a paper, completed round of data collection, or six completed journal reviews. Make deliverables specific and tangible. Have written paper is not something you can hold in your hands. 30-page manuscript draft is concrete and tangible.
- 3) Move all of your “deliverables” from each project into one document or column. Take a look at the total and ask “is it reasonable to expect a human working 40+ hours a week to complete this in the semester?” Almost always, the answer is “no.”
- 4) Rank order the deliverables from “highest priority” to “lowest priority.” What are the projects you are most excited about or that most directly align with your skills and expertise? What is most valuable to you? Those deliverables need to be ranked highest, indicating they will receive the most time and energy. Have no more than five deliverables as top priority.
- 5) Create specific semesterly, monthly, or weekly goals around your top five priority deliverables. Designate your time based on the priority. The top priority should get the most time and energy for the semester. Using a management tool such as your calendar, Trello, or Kanban Flow can help you see incremental progress toward completing the deliverable.
- 6) Examine your deliverables and determine if anything can be delegated out. Do you have a student who is looking for a project? Do you have a new collaborator who may enjoy working with you? Note that delegating may mean being in the role of an advisor or mentor so account for this time. This process can be particularly effective for moving lower priority projects forward.
- 7) Communicate with co-authors or collaborators. Send out emails or communication to let others you are working with know what time and energy you can commit to the project. Also, communicate that you have a specific project that will be receiving most of your time. Clear communication ensures others know what to expect from you and that you have other commitments already planned.

Use this process throughout the semester as you re-evaluate or create new goals. Remain focused with a limited number of deliverables at a time and design your goals around tasks that lead to those deliverables. Happy Goal Setting! ■

Tracey Hodges is an Assistant Professor at The University of Alabama where she teaches writing pedagogy to future and current teachers and graduate seminars on writing productivity. She has written more than 40 articles and book chapters focused on literacy instruction and writing. She also writes daily, working toward her deliverables!

What is critical race theory and why it should matter to academic authors

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Even scientists and mathematicians, who may feel their disciplines do not intersect with racial issues, can benefit their students by adopting a CRT perspective. By including diversity in their texts and writings, they present content in which people of color and other marginalized communities see themselves as being represented and actively participating in these disciplines. Students of color need to see themselves in the pictures and language of these texts and need to be mentored because, as a result of a racially charged history, they are often less likely to have social networks that include scientists and mathematicians than European American students.

As teachers and leaders in academia and publishing, academic writers can be champions of diversity, equity, and inclusion, bringing the ideas of the marginalized into mainstream spaces by utilizing the

ideas of CRT. This would mean exploring and working to understand the impact that laws, policies, and practices have on marginalized populations. Academic authors are positioned to create a culture in which their writing more accurately represents the realities of the world that we live in because we are highlighting the diverse voices of so many and learning from their experiences. ■

Stacie Craft DeFreitas is an Associate Professor at Prairie View A & M University in Texas. She is a co-editor of *Critical race studies across the disciplines: Resisting racism through scholactivism* and author of *African American Psychology: A Positive Psychology Perspective*.

TAA's 2022 Conference Call for Proposals

TAA is accepting session proposals for its 34th Annual Textbook & Academic Authoring Conference which will be held June 17-18, 2022, in Indianapolis, IN. The conference will be held at the beautiful Conrad Indianapolis, a 5-Star luxury hotel rated high for its service and location. A highly interactive event, the conference will be attended by authors and aspiring authors of textbooks, journal articles, and other academic works, as well as by industry professionals from across the country.

We invite the submission of presentations relevant to writing, publishing, and marketing textbooks and academic works (textbooks, journal articles, academic books, and monographs). Interactive, hands-on sessions are encouraged. The proposal deadline is October 4, 2021.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

Time Management and Writing Productivity • Tech Tools to Enhance Your Works • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Scholarly Writing • Publishing Industry Updates & Trends • Writing Projects for Different Stages of the Writing Career • Navigating Copyright and Permissions • Contract and Royalty Negotiating and Monitoring • Marketing Your Works and Creating Your Brand • Trends and Opportunities in Open Access/OER • Mentoring Strategies and Benefits • Writing Groups • Trends in Digital Publishing •

For information visit: taaonline.net/taa-conference-call-for-proposals

Nominations for the 2022 Textbook Awards open Sept 1

For more than 20 years, TAA has supported emerging and veteran textbook and academic authors through its annual Textbook Awards Program, which includes three award categories: The McGuffey Longevity Award, recognizing textbooks and learning materials whose excellence has been demonstrated over time; The Textbook Excellence Award, recognizing excellence in current textbooks and learning materials; and The Most Promising New Textbook Award, recognizing excellence in 1st edition textbooks and learning materials.

Nominations for the 2022 Textbook Awards will be open September 1 through November 1, 2021. Open to members and non-members, textbooks and learning materials can be nominated by authors or publishers. Works are judged by textbook authors and subject matter experts for their merits in four areas: Pedagogy, Content/Scholarship, Writing, and Appearance & Design. Each entry is judged on its own merit in these four areas regardless of other nominations in the same field or category. Self-published books and e-books are welcome.

For more information or to nominate your works, visit TAAonline.net/Awards.

Finding time to write *continued from page 3*

While I recognize that these extra efforts at communication will initially take time, in the long run they save time. You will benefit from fewer emails, fewer office hour appointments, higher quality student work, and faster grading—all because students know your expectations. The final result is more time for you and more time to write.

The next two articles in this series will address the pockets of time hidden in your feedback and grading practices. The final article will delve into creating student assignments that actually can help you as a scholar and writer. ■

Professor Emerita at Portland State University, Dannelle D. Stevens has authored numerous journal articles and five books. Her most recent book, *Write More, Publish More, Stress Less! Five Key Principles for a Creative and Sustainable Scholarly Practice*, is based on research and working with national and international faculty on the complex tasks associated with balancing teaching, writing, and publishing.



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TAA's Fall Webinar Series

All webinars are free to TAA members. For more information on these webinars and to register, visit TAAonline.net/webinars.

How Do Publishers Evaluate Book Proposals and Query Letters

Wednesday, October 20

2-3 p.m. EST

Presenter: John Bond, Publishing Consultant, Riverwinds Consulting

The Query Letter and Book Proposal are the go-to means of communicating an author's ideas to prospective publishers. But how do publishers assess Book Proposals? When they read a Query Letter, how do they evaluate the idea, the author, and the market? Publishing Consultant John Bond examines these common author documents and then uses a publisher's magnifying glass to look at them through their eyes. By reviewing Query Letters and Book Proposals for the publisher's wants, the author will be better equipped to create more attractive projects that will secure greater attention and possible publishing contracts. John will discuss best practices for creating these documents as well as the do's and don'ts.

Draw Your Readers In: How-to's of Digital Textbook Illustration

Wednesday, November 3

1-2 p.m. EST

Presenter: Paul A. Krieger, author of Visual Analogy Guides

Have you ever wondered how digital illustrations for textbooks are created? Paul Krieger, an author and illustrator, will demonstrate the process of how he uses a Wacom tablet and Adobe Illustrator software to create original illustrations for his books. He also designs his own book covers and will offer tips for creating more appealing and effective book covers. In addition, he will show authors how they can easily start a handy digital sketchbook using an iPad, an Apple Pencil, and an inexpensive app called Procreate. Whether you are simply curious or want to try your hand at illustration, join Paul to see how digital illustration is done.

How to Hook Your Audience

Thursday, December 9

1-2 p.m. EST

Presenter: Erica Machulak, Ph.D., Founder, Hikma Strategies

This one-hour webinar will offer a framework and actionable strategies to write research narratives that inform and engage non-specialist audiences. It will focus specifically on how to develop a brief, effective research summary tailored for a target audience beyond your field who may or may not have a research background. We will explore how to create common ground, prioritize key points, preserve credibility, and invite curiosity. The principles discussed in this webinar can be applied to a wide range of genres such as op-eds, educational case studies, and summaries for funding proposals. Participants may wish to come with a research topic in mind and to workshop their topic in a notebook during the webinar. ■

ASK THE EXPERT *continued from page 1*

Think about ways you feel comfortable connecting with your readers and audience. Coming up with exact ways to promote your book will help you to plan for this key aspect of committing to a project.

8. Establish a realistic deadline for completing the project—then add six months to that.

After working through this process, let this information sit for a week before you come back to it to review for possible changes. Don't become wedded to any one aspect of your idea. Projects can grow and contract, both can be beneficial. Once you complete your review, make changes that help improve the project overall. Look to make your book compelling, attractive to publishers, and (dare I say) commercially viable. I suggest you take a summary of the items above and share them with two or three trusted colleagues. Ask for honest advice and be willing to make more adjustments.

These steps will help you define the project. Understanding your effort early on will help you in many ways but mostly give you direction and focus. Lots of work remains down the road but this is a great start. Good luck! ■

John Bond is a publishing consultant at Riverwinds Consulting. He works with individuals on publishing and writing projects. In his career, he has directed the publishing of over 500 book titles and 20,000 journal articles. He is the host of the YouTube channel "Publishing Defined." jbond@riverwindsconsulting.com.

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