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PUBLISHING POLITICAL SCIENCE: INTRODUCTION

For the past several years, the sessions hosted by the American Political Science Association at their annual meetings on successfully publishing in political science—one on book and one on journal publishing—were amongst the meetings’ best attended. The persistent high demand for these sessions reveals that most political scientists are eager to learn the intricacies of getting published; this book guides political scientists on the fine points of writing and publishing successfully. This collection combines the sage writing advice of established political science authors with the insider knowledge of publishing professionals; it explains how to improve your writing for, and get published in, a variety of venues. It is the first edited volume on writing and publishing to target political scientists, and as such it offers advice not found elsewhere. Political scientists at all levels of the profession will find something new and useful here, but this book is particularly essential for graduate students and junior scholars.

This book gives firsthand accounts of the current layout of the publishing marketplace for political scientists (Part I), of what works (and what doesn’t) in writing very specific types of articles or books (Part II), and of how to work with a publisher to get your work into print (Part III).

THE ACADEMIC PUBLISHING MARKETPLACE

Technological advances over the past 10 years alone, foremost amongst them the incredible growth and spread of the Internet, have revolutionized

how books are produced and sold. Web printers have made small, on-demand print runs economically feasible, a welcome development indeed for scholarly publishing in particular, which has always taken a bath on small-print-run academic monographs. Academia has responded to these advances, Sandy Thatcher notes in Chapter 3, in a predictable way: by targeting even smaller audiences and thereby selling even less. This is truer in some subdisciplines than in others, but this change, among others Thatcher introduces, shrinks the marketplace for publishing political science as a whole. The most-telling proof being that many academic presses now insist on scholarship that has never before been published—including in electronic databases or on the Internet. Many academic presses will no longer publish revised dissertations as much of the original work therein has already been “published” through the ProQuest database. This change alone will affect how departments make hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions.

All presses have had to adapt to the advent of digital technology, though different types of presses have managed in different ways. Large university presses have generally consolidated or have limited their support of less lucrative fields. Those small university presses that have survived have found ways to outsource their distribution or production, often to larger academic presses. Institutional presses, as Chris Kelaher notes in Chapter 2, often find themselves somewhere in-between—being only an arm of a larger organization shields them from the full brunt of the free market, but this protection comes with certain restrictions, foremost being that the good of the institution trumps the good of the press.

Yes, despite the prognostications of doomsday books with harrowing titles,¹ presses still exist. Someday perhaps the rumors of the death of the book will not be greatly exaggerated, but that day is not today. Society as a whole has grown path dependent on books. Like for the internal-combustion engine, DVDs, and coal power, technologies better than the book exist. My recently purchased, used copy of E. E. Schattschneider’s *Semi-Sovereign People* cannot seamlessly hyperlink to the universe of citations and refutations it beget; I cannot take notes in the text (at least not without substantially downgrading its \$3.00 resale value); I cannot

instantly send copies of it to an entire class. But I can easily carry it with me. I can bend it, drop it, and dog-ear its pages. I can read it anywhere where there is sufficient light. I like the (meager) weight of it. And I am still in the vast majority. Despite the advances that online databases such as Jstor, e-Gutenberg, or Google Scholar have wrought, or the increasing sophistication of the e-readers now on sale at your local bookstore, society remains committed to the old, in many ways inferior, technology of the book. This, I argue, comes from the tangible permanence people associate with the media of ink, paper, and binding; these give not just the book but the writing contained therein a certain comfortable heft.

WRITING FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES

I've never had difficulty writing; it's in sharing my work, which hinges on producing writing that meets a certain standard, that the difficulty enters. This is made more difficult when I set the bar for quality high by writing for my ideal audience—my wife, family, and friends. This drive to perfect for our ideal audience, when combined with a good, healthy, idealistic belief in the eternal importance of our work, inhibits so many young writers, academics, and academic writers, young and old. This inhibition can be overcome, as many of the contributors to this collection note, through practice. Writing for an hour a day will give you a better feel for your writing and for the audience you hope it reaches. But practice is time-consuming and takes a great deal of devotion. Many scholars choose a faster, easier route. They neglect that holy grail of publisher's audiences, the "general, educated reader," to write to the narrowest audience possible. Political science journals are rife with articles whose authors, in their quest to find a perfect niche where their expertise goes unchallenged, chose words not to communicate ideas but to protect their egos and reputations. Subtle shifts between the meanings of synonyms intended to elide greater clarity are sacrificed for the words the author believes the most erudite, and often the least familiar. In the process, words lose their meaning, authors lose their audience, and jargon spews forth with ease. But, then, what is the point?

Scientists of all ilk are beholden to two tasks: study fascinating cases of interaction, and report the learned results for the benefit of the

broader good. To whom we address our work is as important as the work itself, and as Beth Luey notes in Chapter 1, political science is unique among the social sciences and humanities in the sheer variety of the audiences to which it speaks, from scholars in other academic fields to members of the general public to the very practitioners of government themselves. This is an advantage that political scientists should not take for granted, yet many do so when they refuse to meet their audiences half way by explaining their data, methods, and findings in accessible prose. Perhaps it is inevitable that young scholars will continue to write for the audience for which their first major scholarly work was intended, the smallest, most esoteric grouping imaginable—a Ph.D. dissertation committee. Fortunately, academic careers are long enough to unlearn such habits and to relearn how to write for the myriad publishing audiences with which political science is blessed. Re-education of this sort has to start with the basics of good writing.

Writing is an extremely personal exercise that is difficult to take advice on from others and even more difficult to change. In Chapter 4, Tom Cronin sets forth sound advice on the foundations of good writing for authors at every academic level. Integrating just a few of his suggestions, say on bringing writing to life through sentence variation and usage of the active voice, will pay immediate dividends for authors and their audiences. Further, Cronin extols two rules on the process of writing. The first is to revise, revise, revise. The second is to set a specific number of times to revise, say five, then let whatever you're working on go.

This advice assumes, of course, that you have already started writing, whereas for many writers beginning is itself a chore. This is as it should be, Jennifer Hochschild notes in Chapter 5, for the first paragraph sets the tone for the rest of the paper. Her advice here lays out how successful articles in specific subfields introduce their argument. In Chapter 6, Jeffrey W. Knopf and Iain McMenamin move this advice forward to include writing literature reviews. If a solid introduction sets the tone for a piece of scholarship, then a thorough literature review “informs a focused setting of the scene for the argument developed in the text.” They provide a detailed plan for acknowledging, evaluating,

and building upon the work of others to frame the proposed research's contribution to knowledge.

Many political scientists write only monographs and journal articles. Though these comprise the profession's bread-and-butter, political scientists can supplement their diet (and their income) by writing for textbooks and reference books and by editing multi-authored books. When asked, I suspect that most political scientists would jump at the opportunity to write a textbook; they provide a larger audience and potential for fiscal rewards beyond that generally available to authors of academic monographs. But sufficient enthusiasm and a thorough knowledge of the subject matter, Karen O'Connor explains in Chapter 7, are not enough. Successful textbook authors must be extremely organized and disciplined to keep up with the daunting workload; much of a textbook's success depends on the quality of the press and its editors; and textbooks are often frowned upon by departments for the amount of an academic's time they take from other scholarly and pedagogic activities.

Academics who write for reference works and who edit multi-authored books can see their efforts similarly slighted when their portfolios come up for promotion or tenure. Reference books, Andrea Pedolsky, Doug Goldenberg-Hart, and Marc Segers explain in Chapter 8, are very different products than monographs, with the according benefit that your work may very well reach those outside of the discipline, and maybe even those outside of academia. Clive Thomas and Ronald Hrebendar's advice on editing multi-authored books in Chapter 9 speaks directly to the production of this book. Their advice is backed by academic editors everywhere, several of whom have mentioned to me that they assign the original 1992 *PS* article to academics thinking about taking on an edited volume. This version brings the process of editing multi-authored books current with the technological changes of the past 15 years. Editing a multi-authored book is intrinsically rewarding, but it is not for everyone. This chapter lets those considering such a project assess its rewards and pitfalls.

Mark Miller's contribution, Chapter 10, lays out the costs and benefits of reaching out in your written work to audiences in different

academic fields. The rewards clearly echo what should be the academic creed: to dispense knowledge broadly. The actual costs, advancement and tenure, may exceed the value of even that lofty a goal. Blogging, Dan Drezner writes in Chapter 11, can extract a similar or greater cost. The risks of being passed over for or losing a job are high enough to lead many academics to blog anonymously or pseudonymously. But the rewards, disseminating academic knowledge across an immense, *general* audience, are even larger.

PUBLISHING POLITICAL SCIENCE

I served as managing editor for *PS: Political Science and Politics* for the past five years and have worked for various scholarly journals prior. During that time, I was constantly surprised at how little academics know about the peer-review process, especially in light of how pervasive peer-review is for scholarly books and journals and how many academics participate in some aspect of it. I edited Andrew Polsky's 2007 *PS* article on the peer-review process at scholarly journals, and have chosen (with his permission) to reprint it here in its entirety as Chapter 12 because it is the best explanation of the process I have read.

Alex Holzman's insights into the standards and practices of book publishing as a regular discussant in the APSA publishing sessions made him a natural choice to write Chapter 13 on query letters. These introduce and pitch a potential author's book idea to a publisher. Publishers notice the care that a potential author puts into the query letter, and see that level as representative of what an author will put into their project. Jennifer Knerr carries this good advice forward to negotiating the book contract. Her contribution, Chapter 14, is unprecedented in that it uses a publisher's insight to break down every facet of negotiating a book contract for the benefit of authors. A chapter of this sort is long overdue, and armed with it perhaps authors can begin to dissipate much of the acrimony that seems to exist in author/publisher relations. Leanne Anderson's conclusion, Chapter 15, speaks to how authors can reach for the still higher goal of author/publisher understanding, and how doing so will directly benefit authors. Both parties are, after all, intent upon the same goal: publishing innovative scholarship that reaches its targeted audience.

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This book could never have been published without the support of Rob Hauck, deputy director of the APSA. His belief in the need for just such a book, and in my ability to construct it, was unwavering, and no doubt steeped in his overarching and selfless goal of constantly improving the profession. Polly Karpowicz, APSA director of publications, ably handled all details of production. Rich Pottern created the attractive cover and page designs. I have worked on the editing and production of several different journals, and assumed that compiling an edited volume would be much the same. I was wrong; it is both more difficult and more rewarding. While my inexperience receives the blame for the former, the contributing authors receive the praise for the latter. They were as flexible with their schedules as they were dedicated to this book's concept, and they have produced truly well-researched and well-written chapters. It is my belief and hope that political scientists of all stages of career will find it reliable, well-written, and, most important, useful. Finally, this book owes a debt of gratitude to my wife, Alyssa, whose good humor, thoughtful advice, and steadfast belief saw this project through from its conception several years ago to its publication several months from now.

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NOTE

¹Of which 1995's *The Gutenberg Elegies* is my favorite title.