Writing A College Textbook Proposal

By

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If your query letter peaks our interest, we will request a formal proposal. Your proposal and manuscript material should look like it's worth a substantial advance. Use at least 20-pound paper avoiding erasable bond paper. Use a spellchecker, but more importantly have two or three readers review your prospectus before sending it out. Typographical errors, grammatical errors, missing pages or other sloppy mistakes can be fatal flaws. Use a letter-quality printer using at least 10-pt. type, double-spacing each line with approximately 250 words to a page. Do not justify the right margin.

At the left margin of the page, half an inch from the top, include your last name/keywords from the title. On the same line, flush right, type the number of the page. Number pages consecutively from 1 to the end of your prospectus. Package your material carefully. Submit your prospectus unbound, without staples or paper clips. Use a Tyvex envelope and include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

A college textbook prospectus is approximately 30 to 70 double-spaced pages long. Its purpose is to convince an editor and/or editorial board to approve an investment in developing your prospectus into a college textbook. Because this investment is usually substantial, it is important for a prospective author to be as thorough and persuasive as possible in this document. Your colleagues during the blind review process will also evaluate this material.

Cover Sheet
Include the title, your name as it will be represented on the cover, your college affiliation, a one-line description (i.e., A prospectus and three sample chapters), your mailing address, your home and work phone numbers, fax number and e-mail address.

Prospectus Table of Contents
Include a Table of Contents for your prospectus outlining the major sections and subsections with page references.

Textbook Description
Provide a brief description of your book in the context of an already established market. Who is the student audience for your textbook? Who is the teaching audience for your textbook? Outline the compelling reasons for writing your textbook specifically mentioning two or three needs in the market and benefits provided by your textbook. What are the outstanding features of your textbook? How is your approach different from what has already been published? What are the key pedagogical features in your plan (quotes, headnotes, boxed material,
marginal notes, glossaries, etc.)? What supplements are vital to your textbook's success? Describe the art program including an estimation of the number of line drawings, photographs, maps, etc. Of these supplements, which will you write and what support can you provide for the others? Have you used any or all of this material in your classroom? Have others used this material in their classrooms? What is the length of your textbook in manuscript pages and in words using double-spaced, 8½ x 11 sheets? What system are you using to prepare your manuscript? What is your schedule for completing the textbook once you receive the first advance payment?

**Market Description**
Define the course and curriculum appropriate for your textbook. Are there specific elements of a standard syllabus for this course that would help match the course with your textbook? Are there any subsidiary markets for your textbook (other courses, other academic or business markets, international markets, trade markets)? Do you have a sense of how large the market is for your textbook? Have you done any market research to help define the size of the market? Are there any new trends developing?

**Competitive Environment**
List the textbooks that have been published during the last five years that are direct competitors for the intended market of your textbook. List the three or four best sellers with one or two paragraphs devoted to each one. Describe each book's physical characteristics (page count, design (use of color), use of photographs, line drawings and other art (quantity and quality), appendices, or other special elements. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of each book. Are you aware of any new titles due to be published in the next two years?

**About the Author**
How often have you taught the course for your textbook? How varied is your experience in the classroom. How often have you been involved in large textbook adoptions? How influential are you within your department and within your field? Are you willing to involve yourself in the marketing and selling of your textbook? How? What conferences do you regularly attend and participate in during the year? Are you interested in writing other textbooks? What technologies have you used in your courses? Include an updated Curriculum Vitae including any information, which will help convince an editor that your background will help contribute to the success of your textbook.

**Half-Title Page**
Separate your prospectus from your sample materials with a Half-Title Page listing the proposed title, author and college affiliation.

**Textbook Table of Contents**
List the complete Table of Contents including chapter headings and subheadings outlining the organization of each chapter or by including a paragraph describing the contents of each chapter. Include any front matter or back matter in your Table of Contents.

**Sample Chapters**
Include two or three chapters that help define the unique characteristics of your textbook. These chapters should help reviewers visualize your textbook.
Illustrations should be indicated for location on the manuscript with a separate sheet attached describing the illustration (rough pencil sketches or copies of illustrations may be used at this stage).

**List of Reviewers**

Include a list of reviewers (at least ten names) including high profile scholars in your field, directors or coordinators of large introductory courses appropriate for your textbook and other instructors who regularly teach the course appropriate for your textbook.