

# OXFORD

## UNIVERSITY PRESS

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### **PREPARING A BOOK PROPOSAL FOR THE HISTORY LIST**

Your proposal will normally form the nucleus of the material seen by referees and will be the basis of any submission to the Delegates of the Press. In general, the more you can tell us about the book the better, and if your outline follows our suggestions the reviewing process is likely to be swifter and more helpful. (*For quick reference see the checklist at the foot of this document.*)

Please give us the working title of your book and your reasons for writing and tell us about the content of the book and the readership for which it is intended. We also need to know about you and any co-authors. If the book is to be edited by you, we appreciate any information you can give us about the contributors, or about those you intend to invite to join the project. (If an edited book, please enquire of the OUP editor whether it can be considered; the History list only rarely publishes edited works.)

#### **1. TITLE**

A good title is important. It is important in the marketing of the book. It also (at this early stage) helps to locate your book amongst others in the field and will help our assessors more readily appreciate your aims. It should be bold but also informative and descriptive. Usually it is best to convey the nuances of your approach in the description of the book printed on the cover rather than try to echo them in the title.

#### **2. REASONS FOR WRITING**

We may have asked you to write the book. But whether we have or not, it would be valuable to have your view of why such a book is timely, and to know of any particular experience and/or research that adds to your credentials for writing such a book.

### **3. READERSHIP**

Who is your book for? Please indicate the main readership for your book and (if it is primarily designed for student use) the course(s) that are relevant. At what level will the book find its largest audience? Please also tell us of any secondary readerships that may exist. For what parts of the world do you expect your approach, content, and level to be particularly appropriate. Please bear in mind the risks of trying to cater for too many diverse groups and in the end producing something that is not ideal for any of them.

### **4. CONTENT**

To evaluate your project confidently we need to know as much as possible about your writing plans. The subject area of the book and the way you will present the topics should be stated clearly. It is understood that any proposal is bound to be provisional in some respects but the more detailed your initial presentation the better. It may be useful to bear in mind the following questions as you prepare your outline:

- What themes, concepts, and ideas will you develop?
- How long do you expect it to be, measured in thousands of words or printed pages?
- Will the book be illustrated by line-drawing or photographs? If so, approximately how many?

Please give a list of chapters and a few paragraphs about the content of each, providing in the process a good indication how the book's argument(s) will be developed.

The material we ultimately need to see *in addition to* a proposal will vary depending upon the nature of the book, an author's experience, and the audience at which the book is primarily directed. Your editor will be able to offer guidance after reading your proposal.

### **5. COMPETITION**

Please give a description of your book in relation to competing titles. This should include:

- the author, title, publisher, publication date, price and page length of the main competing titles
- the strengths and weaknesses of these titles
- a brief summary of the ways in which your book will be distinctive and better suited for the intended readership than these titles

## **6. ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Please give a brief account of your present academic interests and position, with a list of any recent book publications and any other information you think might help us.

## **7. PROCEDURE**

Your proposal will be read by the appropriate subject editor at OUP, who is likely to discuss it with colleagues. If it is decided to investigate further, it will then usually be read by several 'outside', independent reviewers. Although we would normally expect to select our own assessors, if you would particularly value the views of a certain authority, or conversely would prefer we did not approach a particular individual, please let us know. You may indeed wish to show your proposal to close colleagues, and to consider their opinions, before we begin our reviewing process. All the comments we gather will be passed on to you (we can only divulge their authorship to you if we receive the readers' explicit permission) and you will be invited to respond to them. At this stage, the subject editor will evaluate the project in light of the results of this procedure and, if the evidence is supportive, will recommend the project to the Delegates of the Press. The Delegates are scholars of the University of Oxford and make the final decision on whether or not to accept a book. They meet four times each term and twice in the Long Vacation.

## **SUMMARY**

In deciding the amount and type of material to submit in your proposal, there is no surer guide than your own requirements should you be asked to review a proposal from another authority in your field.

It will help us, and speed the evaluation procedure, if you would ensure the following ingredients are part of your proposal:

- Title
- Reasons for writing
- Level of presentation
- Readership and market for the book
- Proposed length and amount of illustration
- Intended completion date
- Rationale for the book and a detailed chapter-by-chapter synopsis
- Assessment of the competition and an indication of the proposal's distinctiveness

## **PLEASE NOTE**

We will not usually consider for publication any book held in its entirety or in significant part in an institutional or commercial electronic depository.