

Should You Write a Book? Suggestions from an Acquisitions Editor

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A clinical psychologist client was thinking about writing a book. Since he knew about my background in book acquisitions, he asked for advice about how to proceed. I told him that if I were at an early stage of writing a book, I would:

- Define the audience for this book; will the reader be a layperson (self-help), academic, professional, etc.?
- Think about the scope, topical coverage, and level of rigor of the book
- Draft a table of contents to help organize the flow of the book; it can always be revised
- Answer these questions: Why would someone want to buy this book? What are the benefits to the reader? Are there similar books out there? How are they similar? How would my book be different? What is my motivation for writing this book? Professional advancement? Make a contribution to my field? Earn royalties and make money? Other?
- Research competitive titles from the following sources:
 - Amazon Books <https://www.amazon.com/>
 - Library of Congress US Copyright Office A key word search is available here for free. <http://tinyurl.com/bddbm6zj>
 - Books in Print: Available to subscribers only. A librarian could research the competition for you. <https://proquest.libguides.com/dataproducts/booksinprint>

If, after taking these steps, I felt that writing the book is a “go,” I would write a proposal and send it to book publishers who publish books in my field. The goal is to land a contract before you write the book.

Your chances are enhanced if you write an accurate and succinct proposal for your book. By writing a book proposal, you will force yourself to think through all aspects of your book.

If you would like a free copy of my book proposal template email me at jack@johnbmchugh.com and write “Book Proposal” on your request. Also include in your email any questions you have about this article.

I also advise patience. Publishers receive many proposals, so getting yours accepted can be a long shot. It helps to have thick skin, as you can expect some rejection letters.

Writing a book is a major commitment. The questions you ask yourself will help you think through whether you want to write this book.

Thanks to Liz Novak and Bev Kolz for their edits to this article.

Other free articles of interest:

B-27, *Finding and Vetting a Publisher: Tips for Authors*, 2022, 2 pages
<http://tinyurl.com/46dcdv2a>

B-55, *Commercial Publishing vs. Self-Publishing: Advantages/Disadvantages*, 2019, 2 pages
<http://tinyurl.com/2sv4bhzb>

Let McHugh Help You Find a Book Publisher

Many professionals, particularly those in STEM fields, think, “Should I write a book?” They may have extensive subject matter expertise in their field(s), but generally do not know much about the book publishing business. Some aspiring authors dive in and spend copious amounts of time writing and editing their masterpiece(s), only to find out further along in the process that they should have learned more about the publishing process first. They may not have asked important questions such as:

- How do I find a publisher?
- Is it important to find one in my field?
- How can I find a publisher in my field...and get them interested in my book?
- What kind of income can I expect if my book is successful?
- Who do I contact at a book publisher?
- How do I write a book proposal?
- How much material should I send to the publisher?
- What do all the provisions in a book contract mean?
- Should I have an attorney review the book contract before I sign?
- Should I self-publish?
- How can I maximize my financial return?

If you have asked yourself any of these questions, drop everything and contact McHugh. Why? McHugh is an experienced book acquisitions editor who understands every step of the process. He knows how book acquisitions work from the perspective of the author as well as the book publisher.

Let McHugh:

- Identify the top book publishers in your field.
- Coach you on writing a proposal that will attract the interest of a publisher.
- Research who to contact at the best publishers for your book.
- Provide guidance on how to optimize your financial return.
- Explain in layman’s terms what each contract provision means.
- Recommend an experienced and reliable publishing rights attorney if needed.

McHugh will provide these services for a reasonable hourly fee. Call McHugh today to discuss your potential book.

John B. McHugh

John B. “Jack” McHugh is a 40-year veteran of the publishing business. Jack has worked as an executive for Houghton Mifflin, Wadsworth, and Saint Mary’s Press. Jack is also an experienced association publishing executive. He is a member of the ASAE Advisory Board for Publishing, Communications, and Media Issues and Practices.

Jack's specialties include association/nonprofit publishing, book publishing, career management, executive recruiting, journal publishing, rights and permissions, new ventures, organizational design, and social media strategy and policy. McHugh is also the manager of the LinkedIn™ group, **Association** and **Nonprofit Publishing**.

McHugh recruits for association and society executives. He also does career counseling and mentoring. At McHugh's website, you will find 26 free articles on career management and networking.

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