

Academic book promotion is increasingly a partnership. So while your publisher is thinking how to pitch your book from the most relevant angle, so should you.

1. Is yours a COVID book?

How much should you change your 'pitch' – to your preferred publisher, your colleagues, the media and, primarily, your readers – based on the world-changing events of 2020?

If you are writing a scholarly tome about Odo of Cluny's love of eggs, it is possible that you won't have to consider the enduring legacy of COVID on the global consciousness. If you are writing a book of scholarship aimed at a broad audience in any of the many disciplines for which recent events are highly relevant, you probably will.

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Many rushed to publish books about COVID. The philosopher Slavoj Žižek may have won the race with *Pandemic!* but he was quickly followed by others: trade houses cashing in on [keyword searches](#); [faith-based publishers](#) helping people find sense and comfort in tragedy; [current affairs imprints](#) trying to predict an uncertain future. I was part of the planning team for MIT Press's rapid response by economist Joshua Gans, whose open-access exploration *Economics in the age of COVID-19* will be followed by an updated hardback in November.

If your book is about the pandemic itself, you won't have to work hard to prove its relevance, but you should allow for an ever-changing information landscape. Talk to your editor about publication timelines and put in place a contingency plan that will allow for last-minute corrections, additions and amendments.

If your book has only a tangential relevance to COVID then don't try and shoehorn your monograph into the conversation – your audience, and any potential reviewers, will feel misled. Instead, explain why your subject is not something we can afford to ignore until we reach 'normality'. Climate change, political aggression by China, the global fight for human rights: all these things still crucially require our attention.

If your book has nothing to do with Coronavirus – if it's rooted in events of the past, or literature, or an area of life so obscure that even this pervasive virus can't touch it – then you have nothing to prove. Indeed, some of the books that did well at the peak of the pandemic thrived because they supplied a distraction from it. *The Alchemy of Us* was one of these, since its engaging history of human innovation was precisely the sort of non-fiction book you might read before bed, or gift a bored highschooler.

2. Pitching and promoting your book

Journalists are now more understanding of shifting release dates, PDFs and late review copies than ever before. Since many of the outlets that review academic books are more concerned with content than publication dates, it may still be possible to pitch your book to journals and even some mainstream media such as the *TLS* or *Paris Review*. If your book has a publicist, they have likely moved onto a new season, so think about ways to make their pitch easy, such as suggesting journalists or colleagues who have reviewed books like yours in the past. If you don't have a publicist, there is no harm in asking colleagues yourself or sending a potentially interested journalist a DM on Twitter.

If you need a new hook, look for a fun way to make your book relevant through social media. One author I worked with received interest from *The Atlantic* after her Twitter thread about the stresses of homeschooling went viral. Her book was not about education but that was her main research area, so it allowed us to pitch the book from a fresh angle.

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Think about audiences who will still care about your topic when they have little energy left. Your expose on farming emissions might not get the mention in *The Guardian* it would have in 2019 when that was concern #1, but it may still be of interest to readers of *Unearthed*, the Greenpeace magazine.

And think about who can help advertise it. Colleagues and corporate connections who are dealing with the ongoing stresses of working from home might not be as vigilant as they once were, so ask your department head or society secretary to send out an announcement email. This kind of grassroots effort will be particularly welcome right now when we feel inundated by soulless, impersonal media.

Remaining relevant in a pandemic

I hope it goes without saying that if your research *is* relevant to COVID – use that. Be clear on what the link is and ready to communicate it in a sentence. Another of my authors had a book on technology and death which made no mention of plagues, but recent research of his related to civic cemeteries shed light on the problem cities like New York faced when COVID corpses started to pile up. That was an easy pitch for his publicists and highlighted an aspect of the pandemic few thought of.

Approach your book's success as you should any area of life at the moment: stay calm, work one day at a time and try not to put too much pressure on ourselves or your colleagues. If you feel the success of your book has suffered, it is not the only one – and it is possible that the ever-changing newscape will make it relevant again. If not, it will likely not be your last, and you now have a new way of thinking about your writing which should prove more pandemic-proof!

Note: This article gives the views of the authors, and not the position of the LSE Impact Blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [comments policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

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