

# 30 ways academic book publishers add value to the process of research communication.

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/03/26/30-ways-academic-book-publishers-add-value/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/03/26/30-ways-academic-book-publishers-add-value/)

3/26/2014

*What exactly do book publishers bring to the table when academics look to reach wider audiences? Francine O'Sullivan reflects on the shifting priorities of academic book publishers in the digital age and the need to ensure added value to the overall process. She provides a list of things an author or editor should expect a high quality academic book publisher to do in order to help disseminate research, maximise citations and protect authors' interests.*



These are interesting times for academic book publishers in the social sciences. In the modern research environment, many national bodies do not recognise books as a research output.

Squeezed between various research assessment frameworks on the one hand and the opening up of the self-publishing market on the other, we must justify what value we add to scholarly research or else disappear entirely. What possible reason could an academic have to write a book and, even if they were to do so, why wouldn't they just publish it themselves?

As if this wasn't enough, fast-advancing technology means that the print book market is sharply declining and the emerging ebook market is far from just a straight swap in format. Publishers now have the opportunity to set up their own ebook platforms, sell bundles of books, segment markets but they also need to keep an eye on piracy and fast technology and distribution changes.

As a result of these pressures, academic publishers have become smarter, leaner, faster and more innovative in their products. Books have got better, are more stringently reviewed and live more at the cutting-edge of new research. Book publishers are more thankful and helpful to those authors and editors who do publish with us and we are keen to positively add to the research debate. Book review and production times are far shorter than those of quality journals so there is an opportunity to get a message out there in a quality, reviewed publication in a timely way.



My colleagues and I have produced a list of things an author or editor should expect a high quality academic book publisher to do to help disseminate good research, maximise citations and protect their authors' work and interests. It may well not be exhaustive but I hope it gives an idea of the kind of value you should expect your publisher to add and why books still have a place in academic research.

1. A Publisher wants your book to be read. They will weed out ideas that won't work and encourage those that will. An experienced Publisher guides the author in the scope and development of the book in order to maximise readership and will advise when an idea is not going to fly.
2. A Publisher should have a brand that reinforces the content and focus of the author's book. For example, our authors should immediately know that their book fits within a portfolio that indicates innovation and creative thought and the state of the art in their discipline.
3. A Publisher establishes and cultivates a good reputation. This will reassure potential readers that a book meets a

certain academic standard.

4. A Publisher also establishes focused book series in order to leverage the expertise, reputation and networks of their series editors.
5. A Publisher maintains an extensive network of trusted reviewers to assess each and every project for quality. A thorough blind peer review process ensures that the author gets anonymous feedback at an early stage and helps to ensure that your book sits alongside other high quality publications.
6. A Publisher is knowledgeable about the subject. They advise on key issues such as title and subtitle, length, level, the structure and flow of chapters and bringing out the most interesting and marketable material in your book. Subject to constructive peer review, a Publisher will allow their author a degree of freedom to showcase and develop their research far exceeding the length and presentation restrictions imposed by the journal article format. Books allow creativity and innovation to flourish.
7. A Publisher encourages, reassures and supports an Author through the writing process to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between producing a book of high quality and publishing it in a timely way. We want to help you get your research out there.
8. An experienced Publisher serves the broader academic community by identifying areas where a book is needed and finding someone to write or edit that book.
9. A Publisher will encourage collaboration across disciplines and countries and will provide a forum for researchers to communicate across different networks.
10. A Publisher makes a significant upfront investment and will assume the commercial risk for every book they publish. A Publisher builds and maintains a key network of experienced and trusted freelancers – copyeditors, typesetters, proof-readers, jacket designers and indexers – each of whom play an integral role in the production process.
11. A Publisher allocates a desk editor for the book, who will guide the author or editor through the production process and ensure that the book is produced professionally and efficiently. They will ensure that the final book is more readable and consistent than the raw manuscript files, maximising the potential for positive reviews of the book and improving the experience of the reader.
12. A Publisher advises on copyright permissions that need to be obtained prior to publication.
13. A Publisher designs, typesets and produces an attractive final product, in printed and various e-formats including ePub and XML where appropriate.
14. The Publisher negotiates and deals with a printer. They choose the appropriate paper, format and binding for the book. They will check the final product for printing errors.
15. A Publisher regularly surveys its authors, taking into account any suggestions, so that its service to authors is refined and improved over time.
16. A publisher engages in product development, such as ebook platforms, in response to technological advances and to ensure the continued widespread dissemination of authors work.
17. A Publisher seeks endorsement quotes from key thinkers and will present the marketing copy for the book in a way that is most likely to maximise readership and sales.
18. A Publisher maintains relationships with key periodicals, journals and trade publications and approaches book review editors, pressing the case for including a review of the book. A Publisher will also send details of your book to

bloggers and key commentators to influence and create word of mouth marketing for your book.

19. A Publisher is knowledgeable about the potential market for your book. The Publisher sells the book internationally, utilising its network of sales forces and agents. It will also negotiate commercial terms and manage ongoing relationships with these agents across the world. A Publisher engages and deals with multi-channel distributors for the book and will also make your book available through eBook aggregators such as ebrary, EBL, and EBSCO to academic libraries.

20. A Publisher markets the book using various channels and its own extensive mailing lists to those researchers, educators, book buyers and librarians who may be interested in buying the book. Where relevant, the Publisher will market across disciplines, over and above the author's own network and sphere of influence.

21. A Publisher meets with researchers and educators face to face at universities, institutions and academic conferences to discuss books that may interest them.

22. A Publisher negotiates and cultivates relationships with booksellers and libraries internationally. Titles from a publisher with an established academic reputation will be preselected for purchase by leading university libraries through their "approval plans" or standing orders allowing easy access to the work for scholars in the field.

23. A Publisher processes sales of the book across many different customer types and will deal with any queries on sales, distribution or content from customers around the world.

24. A Publisher attends, or promotes your book at, workshops, symposiums, academic conferences and book fairs relevant to the book as well as offering copies for sale at these events.

25. A publisher reports sales to the author and pay any royalties due periodically.

26. A Publisher ensures your book is discoverable by supplying metadata to search engines and major online retailers all over the world, ensuring information on your book is only a click away. A publisher will also work with discovery and link referral services to ensure academic researchers can quickly find, access and prioritise the most important books for their projects.

27. A Publisher will negotiate with Thomson Reuters and other agencies and submit books for inclusion in the Thomson Reuters Book Citation Index and the Scopus Book Index, maximising the potential for citations.

28. A Publisher engages in social network marketing to advertise your book.

29. A Publisher will respond appropriately to allegations of copyright infringement or plagiarism of an author's own work and by an author of others' work. A Publisher will also respond appropriately to reports of piracy and allegations of libel.

30. A Publisher negotiates to sell translation/subsidiary rights for a book.

*This piece is based on a more extensive list which first appeared on Edward Elgar Publishing's blog: [60 Things Academic Book Publishers Do – by Francine O'Sullivan](#)*

*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [Comments Policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.*

## **About the Author**

**Francine O'Sullivan** is the UK Publisher for the Management list at Edward Elgar Publishing, which has just been voted 'Frankfurt Book Fair Academic & Professional Publisher of the Year'. She has worked for the company,

initially on their economics list, for 17 years

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