

## CHAPTER SIX GETTING PUBLISHED

Scholarly publishing is one of the historian's greatest joys. It allows us to make meaningful contributions to people's understandings of the past and present and even to help transform the character of the discipline. Publishing is neither a luxury nor a burden for the professional historian, but a serious responsibility. It is one of the most important and demanding measures of our progress as research scholars. Getting published is not easy, so be prepared to write, listen, and re-write.

Some people do have more time, resources, and opportunity than others to get research and writing completed. But we all need to create time for our own scholarship. Fortunately, you really can be a responsible colleague, teacher, and friend, and preserve time for your work. But it takes an understanding of how to develop a scholarly research profile – and practise. Far from the “horror stories” spread about top-ranked US research universities that reject highly productive scholars for tenure, new scholars in Canadian (and most American) universities need only to publish a reasonable volume of peer-reviewed work.

Many graduate students and new PhDs understand the importance of scholarly publishing but are confused about when and where to publish, and how much. Too often, it appears that a few people have “figured it out” or are being closely guided by supervisors who “know how to get their students published,” while everyone else is “out of the loop” or somehow at a disadvantage. Many are not clear about the distinction between peer-reviewed and non-refereed articles; between journal articles and book chapters in edited volumes; between university and non-academic presses that publish books. Recently, this confusion has intensified as a result of the digital turn in scholarly publishing.

But you need not despair! Even amid the changes, some basic rules still apply. Remember that quality not quantity matters most. Especially for new scholars, “quality” (for hiring, tenure, and promotion purposes) is measured by publishing in “peer-reviewed” or “refereed” venues (they mean the same thing). This applies equally to publishing an article in a refereed journal or edited volume, or publishing a monograph (book). You also need to understand how journals are ranked. We provide some guidelines below, but also urge you to consult senior colleagues.

Scholarly publishing is in a midst of a major transition from a reliance on print publishing (e.g., paper journals and books) towards online publishing (e.g., online journals, e-journals, e-books) and an increasing use of other digital forms of scholarship (e.g., scholarly websites and blogs), and a growing emphasis on collaborative projects. The process has been an uneven and even contested one and some uncertainty remains. But the situation is quite clear with respect to scholarly journals which, given their importance in the academy, have received most of the attention. Today, the majority of “online journals” are peer-reviewed publications that were originally print publications and migrated, either partly or fully, to an electronic format. In most cases, the publisher, editors, staff, editorial boards, peer review process, and even layout have

remained the same. The only difference is that the articles are available as electronic documents instead of paper documents bound in a specific volume or issue. There is no objective difference between these electronic and paper journals save for the medium in which they appear. Articles submitted to these refereed online journals will be peer-reviewed (that is, assessed by established experts or specialists in the field) and thus subjected to the same rigorous academic standards as articles submitted to peer-reviewed, or refereed, paper journals. In many established paper journals, your article will be published in both paper and electronic form. This is currently the case with *American Historical Review (AHR)*, *Canadian Historical Review (CHR)*, *Left History*, and many other journals. Alternatively, some journals are publishing certain issues in paper and others in electronic form. For up-to-date information on journals that interest you, check their websites or contact the journal editor(s).

Given the enormous weight attached to peer-reviewed work in the university, graduate students and new scholars developing a professional research profile should aim to publish at least some of their work in refereed journals. This applies equally to e-journals as paper ones. Generally, take *Left History* co-editor and York University PhD candidate Jason Ellis' advice to heart: "preparing an article for publication is an enormous undertaking. Use your judgment and ask yourself, with any journal, electronic or paper: is this a journal that is worthwhile contributing to, given the time and effort required?"

You should also learn about a journal's reputation. There is a world of difference in how your university will evaluate refereed and non-refereed work, but refereed journals also differ with respect to status and prestige. Journals tend to fall into two types: general and more specialized. Thus, for example, the *CHR* is a highly ranked general Canadian historical journal that publishes a wide range of work in Canadian history, and the *AHR* is a highly-ranked international journal of history. More specialized journals with high rankings include, for Canada, *BC Studies*, and, for an international example, *Journal of Women's History*. The ranking system operates both formally and informally. In some universities, departments provide a formal ranking of the journals in their field. More commonly, there is a generally understood ranking, though not everyone may agree on its precise nature.

The academy's emphasis on peer-reviewed scholarship and its pre-occupation with ranking journals can be frustrating, especially for scholars working in newer fields where the new specialized journals reflect important scholarly trends but have not yet had time to prove themselves. We are not saying that you should never publish in these recently-launched journals, but understand how your university and profession will assess your scholarly productivity and make an informed decision. Many left and feminist historians, for example, publish simultaneously in scholarly and activist publications. You might play a leading role in shaping the mandate of a new journal. Still, at the start of your career, publishing a few articles in well-established, highly-ranked journals is the most effective way of establishing a research profile. There are also valid alternatives, particularly publishing an article in a refereed edited volume. Below, we offer a break-down of the different publishing venues and forms of scholarly publishing.

## Graduate Students and Publishing

At some point, you will want to submit something from your thesis research for publication. Or your PhD supervisor or other faculty will encourage you to turn your excellent MA research paper or outstanding course paper into an article for submission to a journal or edited scholarly volume. Or you might come across a Call For Papers in connection with a special theme issue of a journal or an edited volume that reflects your research interests. Alternatively, for some MA and junior PhD students, the first opportunity to publish emerges out of their position as a research assistant for a professor who offers to co-publish an article with them. In this case, the student can learn a great deal while enjoying the support and guidance of an experienced publisher. The publication will certainly help your cv and reputation, though keep in mind that the greater reputation of your professor will mean that s/he will be seen as the senior author. (This also applies to a book co-authored by supervisor and graduate student.) Still, as McGill University PhD student Caroline Durand points out, the experience can be a very enlightening and rewarding one. She co-published her first article in this fashion when she was a Master's student at the University of Montreal. In Quebec and across Canada, you may be invited to co-publish with one or more members of the faculty-headed research team with which you are linked.

Above all, the decision to publish should not be made lightly. Consult your supervisor but also other faculty who know your work, are active in publishing, or have graduate students who have successfully published. Check out relevant workshops, seminar series in your own and related departments, and conferences. But be forewarned that you may get differing advice. Active publishers may push their students to submit articles early on, but you may feel you are not yet ready. Other supervisors tell their students not to get "distracted" by publishing until after the thesis is defended. We disagree with the latter advice. Publishing one or two articles while you are writing your thesis is a way of introducing yourself to the wider profession.

However, as a graduate student, you need not publish a lot. It is quality *not* quantity that counts. Remember: your number one priority as a PhD candidate *is* to get the thesis done. One or two peer-reviewed articles (perhaps evolved from conference papers based on thesis research), along with a fine dissertation that has the potential to be an excellent book, will allow you to demonstrate the *promise* of excellence as a research scholar, a key consideration for many, perhaps most, entry-level tenure-track jobs.

You want to publish your best work, announce yourself to the wider community, and convince them that you are making a serious intellectual contribution to your field of study. Do not publish prematurely; poor articles, if they get published, will not help your career. This is especially true of small fields, such as Latin American history, and of the Canadian historical profession, which is a comparatively compact professional community. Follow the same steps suggested for the conference paper: deliver an oral version of your paper to your department, submit drafts to faculty and classmates, try out an earlier version at a graduate student conference, each time listening carefully to the feedback offered. Be prepared to revise your

work.

We advise against simply submitting a piece on your own, without having received feedback (and even some editing help) from your supervisor or other well-placed faculty or colleagues. Even if your professor says your MA or course paper is excellent and “you should send it off,” do not simply go ahead without revising the paper. Even the best graduate paper will need to be revised before it is ready for a rigorous review process. Some professors might encourage early submission on the grounds that the student can take advantage of the reviewers’ assessments to help make the paper better. Certainly, you should always make use of valuable feedback. But doing it this way comes with the risk, especially for the junior scholar, of having the paper severely critiqued or even rejected, which could be demoralizing. It is a lot easier for a well-established academic with a strong publication record to “use” the review process in this way.

### **Publishing in Scholarly Journals and Anthologies**

You should aim to publish an article or two in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. Know which journals in your field are considered the most scholarly and prestigious. Know the reputation of more specialized or regionally-based journals, and multidisciplinary journals in which historians publish. We advise that from the start you think seriously about submitting to highly reputable refereed journals with large subscriptions, as this is the fastest way of becoming known to a wide academic audience. But some people will prefer or be advised to begin with journals of more modest or specialized reputation: this is perfectly fine and you must still aim at producing your best work. But don't shy away from the "big" journals for too long.

Alternatively, you may be invited to contribute an article to a scholarly collection of essays in your field. Or you might respond to a Call for Papers on H-Net inviting interested scholars to submit a short cv and abstract outlining what they might contribute to a proposed collection. The editors of these edited scholarly volumes usually are of established reputation, so be flattered and seriously consider doing it. In this case, your article will be referred to as a “book chapter,” or a chapter in a book, but it is an independent article with roughly the same status as a journal article. The review and revision process involved is very similar to that for journal articles.

You should also learn how to present your work in different styles for different audiences. An article written for *The Beaver*, a Canadian historical magazine read by many educated but non-academic history enthusiasts, should differ from one submitted to the *Canadian Historical Review* or *American Historical Review*. In the latter case, you will want to communicate to colleagues in a more specialized language and within particular paradigms of interpretation and argument. A theoretical or review essay is not the same as one meant to demonstrate the value of a particular research method or showcase your empirical findings. When writing a scholarly article, you should generally aim at crafting a well-integrated essay that situates your work in relation to the existing scholarship and demonstrates a capacity for original research and perceptive interpretation. Be careful not to distort the work of other scholars, especially if you want to debate with them, and avoid creating false “straw people.” When drawing conclusions,

cast the findings of your case study as broadly as possible, but do not try to cover too much in a 25-35 page article. Articles written for a more general readership should also be based on careful research, written in excellent prose (not excessive jargon), and have a broad intellectual scope.

### *Review and Revision*

In most cases, and certainly with refereed journals, or refereed volumes of essays published by academic presses, your submitted essay will go through a confidential process of evaluation by recognized specialists in the field. Usually, the assessor is unknown to the author, but the author's name may or may not be known to the reviewer. Confidentiality is maintained in the spirit of encouraging honest but fair assessment, and maintaining rigorous standards. Each confidential assessor (the numbers vary) provides feedback and recommends publication or not. Then the journal editor(s) or equivalent will: a) reject your present paper, b) ask you to significantly revise and resubmit it for another round of review, or c) accept it for publication once certain revisions are completed. Most recommendations for publication require revisions (either minor or major) and a conscientious assessor (often also called reviewer or reader) will offer excellent suggestions. Use them to help you write a better paper even if you disagree with them. Sometimes, the assessors suggest contradictory advice. Sift through the suggestions carefully, taking the letter from the journal editor most seriously, but do not hesitate to defend your work. Again, learn to handle rejection. Do not take it personally, and do not let it become a measure of your self-worth. If your first effort is rejected outright, there is nothing to keep you from rewriting and resubmitting it again to the same or a different journal.

You must learn to be tough-skinned about accepting criticism. Professional historians spend much of their career commenting on colleagues' work or receiving commentary from them. Your first experience with the review process – that is, reading the assessments of experts who have scrutinized your paper and decided if it is worthy of publication in its present or a revised form – will be challenging, even emotionally draining. After all, you are a smart PhD student accustomed to doing well. But try not to be defensive: consider the criticism carefully, even if you disagree with it. Your supervisor can help you interpret the readers' reports and determine the nature and extent of the required revisions. You will also need to learn to handle rejection; few of us publish without having to revise our original submission. And if your first effort is rejected outright, there is nothing to keep you from substantially rewriting it and submitting to a different journal.

Getting published is an important accomplishment. You will probably work harder on those first few publications than anything else in your later career. So, when the article sees the light of day, take the time to feel very proud about it.

### **Publishing Book Reviews**

Writing book reviews or a review essay of several books is a part of scholarly life. Some

historians regularly write reviews, while others do so occasionally. For graduate students and junior PhDs, writing a few perceptive reviews will help your profile. But keep in mind that book reviews are not ranked as significant pieces of scholarship.

Once again, mystery surrounds this process. Many graduate students assume that they must wait to be asked to review a book or that only distinguished historians are invited to do so. This is not entirely true, though some journals do favour established historians. Your supervisor or other faculty may recommend you for the job. But you can also make yourself known to book review editors of journals. For the US, you can register with the *Journal of American History* and the *American Historical Review*. Canadian journals such as the *Canadian Historical Review* and the *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française*, also keep track of potential reviewers. Write to the journals, submit a cv, and ask to be considered for book review work. You can ask to review a particular book recently published in your field. Do not review books written by friends, your supervisor, or others who have trained you. Professional acquaintance, however, is no reason not to review a book unless you feel unable to provide a careful and fair-minded analysis of the book; no one cares to see you unduly promote or sabotage a work.

Most reviews combine a brief summary of the book's contents with some positive feedback and criticism or queries, but you can decide how to balance these components. A book review should not be a nasty attack on another scholar's work, even if you profoundly disagree with it. Avoid self-indulgent reviews. By all means, raise your criticisms, and intellectual and political differences, forcefully, but in a constructive manner. Junior historians who "trash" rather than "engage" scholarly work do not impress their senior colleagues. Some readers find vicious reviews by junior or senior historians mildly amusing, but most find them offensive, even if they agree with the overall perspective. Most of us have little respect for scholars whose publications contain gratuitous swipes at or distorted versions of other people's scholarship.

## **The Book**

Generally speaking, historians (including those who will hire and promote you) view the single-authored scholarly monograph as the most significant contribution to the profession. Not all disciplines share this view; in science and social science disciplines, for example, publishing many scholarly articles is the norm. If you are a historian hired in a social science or multi-disciplinary department, you should find out whose criteria of excellence you are expected to meet at tenure-time. The sociology or criminology department that hired you might tell you to prioritize peer-review journal articles over a book. But most historians and history departments place greatest value on the well-crafted monograph. This does not mean that a candidate applying for an entry-level position as an assistant history professor in a tenure-track job must have a book manuscript in hand, though you would do well to demonstrate to the search committee that your thesis provides the basis for a good book and to indicate your strategy for revision. This is a way of showing your potential for excellence in research and publication.

Junior faculty coming up for tenure, on the other hand, need to be aware that the book is still the

single most effective way of securing promotion and tenure, especially in research universities. Some departments may be content to see a manuscript that has not yet been submitted to a publisher. Others will accept the “copy-edited version” of a book that has passed the peer-review process and been accepted for publication. A historian without a book can get tenure, but it may be more difficult – and more nerve-wracking. It may involve efforts to prove you are an “outstanding” teacher who meets the highest levels of “excellence,” a difficult task in part because good teachers receive many “excellent” student evaluations. Some universities award excellence in teaching only to those who have published pedagogical materials. In the early days, creating computer-based interactive courses or websites might have been enough. It may no longer be so.

All of this means that you need to make progress on the book. But do not make yourself sick with worry. Many historians in Canadian universities do not go up for tenure until their fifth year, and they under-go a review process earlier, usually in their third year, which lets them know if they are on the right track for tenure. If the review is excellent, you may go up for tenure in the next (that is, fourth) year. Depending on the field, we suggest that a reasonable goal is to begin serious work on a book within a year or two of being hired, so that by three-year review time, you can demonstrate that you have made concrete progress towards the monograph. So, after submitting and publishing a few articles, prioritize the book above all other professional commitments. Do not avoid it by joining colleagues in collective projects that look like more intellectual fun. Do not let teaching and/or committee work take over your professional life so that there is never time to get to “the book.” It is perfectly acceptable to say “no” to additional requests for your time and energy on the basis that you must get the book done. So do so.

Do not forget that writing a book is hard work, but also that this is what you like to do. Many scholars, including published historians, find writing a book a demanding and exhausting task, but also a truly exhilarating one. Few people can “toss off” a book in a year. It is not true that most others find it “easy to write” while you alone are wracked by lack of self-confidence. It takes a lot of slogging and a lot of seemingly wasted days of work, but it is a cumulative process and, with persistence, the project will come together. There is no magic formula, though we all find tricks to help us get to work, to keep at it when we want to quit, and to reward ourselves for a hard day’s work. You probably have already built up your repertoire of tricks – after all, that’s half the battle in graduate school – but ask others for more tips. Some departments hold workshops on writing and related issues. Head to the AHA website ([www.historians.org](http://www.historians.org)) for additional assistance.

You should not publish a book that you do not consider a contribution to your field, but at the same time do not feel that your first book must be a “great book.” Make it as good as you can, send it into the world, and look forward to your next effort. We all would write our book differently, but few of us want to be writing the same book for twenty-five years! Think of your book as the culmination of a phase in your intellectual and academic career, and be ready to move on.

The guidelines provided below pertain most closely to publishing books in Canada but also are

more generally applicable. Those interested in publishing in the US can check out the AHA website ([www.historians.org](http://www.historians.org)) for helpful links.

These days, most historians plan to publish their dissertation – which also underscores the importance of choosing a dissertation that can *sustain* your interest over a long period. Even if you do get tenure without a book, remember that your stature within the professional historical community is affected by your ability to publish a book (whether it is based on your thesis or a new project). Many graduate students and junior faculty understand it is important to make that thesis “count” as the first monograph, but are unclear about the process.

You should know that even an excellent thesis will not be immediately acceptable to a press for publication. You will need to revise it. Most dissertations, even superb ones, suffer from arcane academic language, overly specialized or detailed historiographical discussion, excessive detail, and, yes, grammar problems. They need to be revised with several things in mind: trimming detail and repetition and a defensive tone in favour of confident statements, succinct prose, and carefully selected illustrations. Most authors need to rewrite rather than do further research. You will be asked to shift from the vantage point of the graduate student proving yourself worthy of attention, to an "expert" who can discuss the relevant historiography with broad strokes and reach bold generalizations without sacrificing the specificity and richness of your particular project. Some call it finding your authorial voice. But also keep in mind that more egalitarian or personalised forms of scholarship, in which scholars weave their personal history into their research and share their authority with their oral history subjects, and do not follow a linear chronology, have gained increasing acceptance in history. In any event, write the book with the readers in mind, and be as clear and engaging as possible. All of this will take some time and effort, and should be done before officially submitting a manuscript to a publisher. For more on transforming the thesis into a book, see *The Thesis and the Book* in the Resources section.

However, there is nothing to stop you from starting the publishing process before you have a book manuscript by informing publishers in the field about your dissertation work. (This also applies to any book manuscript you hope to write and publish.) To find a publisher for your work, check the press catalogues and stalls at conferences, click on publishers' websites, and talk to your supervisor, series editors, and other authors. For helpful information on US-based university presses, consult the AHA's *Guide to Book Publication for Historians* and other links at <http://www.historians.org>. Usually, you make the first contact. In some cases, an editor may contact you, usually because he or she has seen your papers on conference programs or heard about your work from an external examiner or other faculty whose judgement is respected, or seen your papers on conference program. Word-of-mouth operates effectively within the small Canadian history publishing circles. Know the difference between scholarly publishers, that is, university or academic presses, and trade (or commercial) publishers/presses. In Canada, most pre-tenure historians turn to university presses because their scholarly books are routinely subjected to the all important peer-review. There are trade presses that also publish scholarly books, but pre-tenure scholars should ensure that a trade publisher will conduct a full-scale peer-review process and that their university will respect it. Different publishers may have different timetables and different reputations for efficiency and treatment of authors but do not be easily

swayed by hearsay. Beware of any editor who promises to get your book out faster than anyone else. Check whether a theme series sponsored by a press provides a good "home" for your book. Examples include Sexuality Studies at UBC Press and Native and Northern Studies at McGill-Queen's University Press.

### **Working with a university press**

There are different kinds of editors. The press editor or acquisitions editor is employed by the press and handles many books and probably several series. The university professor(s) acting as editor(s) of a theme series will oversee that particular series. When you contact a publisher, you usually contact an acquisitions editor, but if you are considering a series you may want to communicate with both press and series editor(s). You may send a query and a proposal to more than one publisher, but once a press asks to read your manuscript, do not submit to anyone else for consideration until you know whether or not that publisher wants to publish your work.

Upon making initial contact, you will be asked to produce a proposal, or prospectus. It should be well written and contain at least some of the following:

1. A brief description of the scope of the book, the sources used, methodologies employed, and its significance to the literature in the field. Be bold about the larger importance or relevance of your case study or focused work.
2. Suggest a potential market, and do not simply state the obvious, e.g., that a history of homeless people can be used in urban poverty history courses. Explain how one could also use it in courses on politics or popular culture, or as a reading and writing assignment in the history of the body. Can it be used effectively in undergraduate courses? Marketing criteria alone do not decide the fate of most academic books published in Canada, especially by university presses who take advantage of federal subsidies (see below). But they are a consideration.
3. Provide a table of contents and indicate the length of the manuscript and its chapters. If the manuscript is a dissertation, clearly state your plans for revision. The publisher will assume that any dissertation will need work before it is ready for publication. Some editors and presses refuse to read the thesis but encourage you to submit the revised manuscript. This is *not* a rejection: get busy with the revisions and submit.
4. Include a writing sample. Choose one of the stronger chapters in the thesis or, alternatively, an excellent published article that draws on the dissertation. Do not send many chapters in the hopes that tremendously busy people will read everything that is thrown at them. It is okay to publish articles from your dissertation-based research, but a general rule is that at least two-thirds of the manuscript should be "original" work, that is, not previously published. This rule is not cast in stone.
5. Enclose a copy of your cv and any letters from senior historians, such as your external

examiner, who can speak in favour of the work. You may mention the names of other scholars competent to judge the manuscript, although the editor is not obliged to follow your suggestions.

Once a publisher has expressed a clear interest in your book – a process usually carried out by the press editor – it is *not appropriate* to continue or initiate negotiations with other publishers. If you have more than one positive response from publishers, send the manuscript to your first choice. If the publisher rejects it, go to your next choice. If the press suggests revisions that you are not prepared to make, you may cut off negotiations at that point and go elsewhere, though few first-time authors rarely do this. You will be flattered by the attention, hope for a contract, and be keen to get on with any additional revisions. You do not have to concede to revisions with which you do not agree.

Do not be overly secure about a book contract; first-time authors can rarely drive a hard bargain when it comes to royalties and other perks, and most publishers' contracts include clauses enabling them to bow out if the final manuscript is not favourably assessed. In carrying out revisions, conform to the press' style sheet, or rules of editing and style, and follow the guidelines about quotation marks, footnote or endnote formats, and so on. Don't use elaborate codes to indicate chapter titles, chart heads, and so on, since these will be reformatted to fit the publisher's design. The publisher will likely request a hard copy and electronic copy of your manuscript.

When your completed manuscript is officially submitted for to a university press, the editor(s) involved will read your manuscript and recruit outside "readers," that is, experts or specialists in the field, to assess the work. Press editors also prepare reports for their publications committee on the quality and commercial viability of the project. In Canada, where Canadian academic presses can apply for federal grants to subsidize their scholarly books (the ASPP or Aid-to-Scholarly-Publishing Program), the confidential peer review process is carried out by both publisher and the ASPP. In many but by no means all cases, the fate of the book depends upon the grant. A book manuscript designated as "revise and resubmit" can be re-submitted to the ASPP process only once before it is rendered ineligible for the grant. A press is not obliged to publish a book that receives an ASPP grant, but such rejections are rare. (For the ASPP Guide, go to <http://fedcan.ca/english/aspp/assessors/guide> or <http://fedcan.ca/french/aspp/assessors/guide>.) At any rate, authors who publish with Canadian academic presses (in *any* field) can therefore expect several readers' reports and the reports of the press' publications committee and the ASPP committee.

It will take longer than you think for the book to get published. While the publishing of electronic books – or e-books – may provide a faster form of publication in the future, the book production process today is inevitably slow. Most academic publishers still produce paper books in small "print runs" (number of copies), and some produce both a small run of print copies and an electronic version of the book. With printed books, it can take as long as three years, or more, from submission of your first manuscript to the finished product. With e-books, the process may eventually be faster. In either case, you will be excited, nervous, but also impatient the first time around. Do ask your publisher questions about the process but also remember that your press

editor is your professional colleague, not your servant, and be polite. Common questions include: how long will it take to find out if the manuscript is accepted for publication? How long will the production of book take once the final copy is received? How many copies will be printed? Will both hardcover and paperback editions be published?

Another big question concerns the publishers' plans for marketing. Be aware that most presses consult with authors as the book gets nearer completion. You will be asked to complete forms for the marketing department, and you should fill these out as carefully and thoroughly as possible. They will ask you to suggest faculty who might teach your book, journals that may review it, and potential course markets outside history. You will be asked to provide "catchy" summaries of your book that can be used by the publicity department. Once the book is out, keep your publisher informed of conferences you will be attending and other venues where copies could be put on sale or display.

What if a press offers to publish only an electronic version of your first scholarly book? We should acknowledge that print books are facing a serious challenge as university libraries, the major purchasers of often expensive scholarly books, shift their focus to scholarly portals and online resources. However, so far, there seems to be plenty of support for a mixed media approach to books and many history books continue to come out in paper. In the US, there have been some efforts to "publish" dissertations online on the grounds that new scholars can quickly move on to their second, and more important, book. If you do go this route, consider the reputation of the online press and who owns the copyright, and ask about peer review. Ask senior colleagues about how your tenure and promotion committee will assess such a book. Can you publish a paper version of the book at a later date? Ask yourself, will I be happy with an e-book?

Your book manuscript will undergo several stages towards publication, and you will be asked, usually on short notice, to perform certain tasks at each phase. Respond to these requests promptly, even if you are busy; otherwise it may delay the final production of your book. You will need to respond to your readers' reports, which usually involves agreeing to make some revisions. Then you will complete those revisions. Next, a copy-editor will pore over your final manuscript for grammar, organization, and style, and make many suggestions for editing revisions (e.g., to eliminate concluding paragraphs that are really introductions to the next chapter). You will need to review and approve these changes. You may be surprised at the amount of copy-editing done, but a copy editor usually helps your prose, so the advice to be tough-skinned applies here as well. Often the changes are not corrections to "bad" grammar but made to conform to the press' style sheet (for example, from World War II to the Second World War).

Read the changes carefully. It is okay to disagree with the copy-editor. For example, in breaking down a run-on sentence, the copy-editor may have changed the intended meaning of the original sentence. Once the copy-edited changes are inputted, you need to proofread the "page proofs," at which point you are to make only absolutely necessary changes.

First-time authors will be surprised by how much they are expected to do. In addition to reading the copy-edited version and “page proofs,” you will be asked to compile the index, provide the charts, tables, maps, or illustrations (which may be costly but for which you may be able to secure a grant from your department or university). Later, you will be asked to write a summary for the book jacket. Indexing software is available. If you can afford it, you might hire an experienced indexer, or perhaps a graduate student.

If a publishing house goes bankrupt or merges with another publisher, you may be faced with a suspended publishing program. A publisher may try to cancel or buy out your contract or publish but not market your book. Transitions at small or large commercial publishers can be difficult to weather. University presses may be more stable, but they too can be in difficult straits, and Canadian presses often face tough times. Also be aware that press editors move around. Your editor may move to another press and want to take you along, if you have not already signed a contract. Or, the new editor may be in a different field or have different interests and not recognize your contribution as quickly. In all these negotiations take seasoned press editor Laura Macleod's advice: recognize that you and your publisher are colleagues and should treat each other with mutual respect. Your editor may also have some graduate training as a scholar and a good editor will have plenty of experience at judging a "good" book no matter the subject. Try to develop a collegial relationship.

Once your book is out, take the time to enjoy it. Have a book launch – even a small and inexpensive one – to mark the happy occasion with friends, family, and colleagues. Agree to give talks to promote the book. You may well think you are "sick of it" after so many years, but it will be fresh to others. If your book is well received, you will also be invited as a guest speaker, so best to remember why the project had so engaged you in the first place. When talking about your book, keep your audience in mind; indeed, write at least two talks, one for a general audience, and one for an academic audience.

Finding the time to publish a monograph is a serious challenge for any beginning historian, whether employed or not. You may also find that it is years before you will be in a position to write your second book – so cherish this time, and feel proud of your accomplishment. It is no small feat. And it is an important intellectual event for you and your field and discipline.