

## REVISING DISSERTATIONS FOR BOOK PUBLICATION

**Eliminate or pare down the review of literature.** Although such a review was necessary for your dissertation committee, it is not necessary in books in most fields. The book's readers will do you the courtesy of assuming that you have done your homework. Do take appropriate care to place your work within the context of other work in your field, however.

**Outlining.** You might have divided each chapter into sections and each section into subsections. For most books the outline should disappear into the flow of the narrative. Sections are acceptable though not always necessary in a book; subsections are best avoided.

**Repetition.** Does the beginning of each chapter and major section announce what you are going to say—and then, at the end, do you announce that you have said it? Minimize such repetition. Does the introduction give readers necessary background information, or does it try to present the book in condensed form ("Chapter 1 discusses X. . . . Chapter 2 covers Y")? If the latter, consider omitting the introduction.

**Notes.** Dissertation writers, afraid that their judgment carries no weight, are apt to attach a note to almost every statement, but the author of a book must accept responsibility. Aim to delete roughly half of your notes. Also, if your work has a comprehensive bibliography listing all works cited, the notes should contain short citations only—enough information to point the reader to the appropriate entry in the bibliography and the appropriate page in the work cited. Finally, the notes will appear grouped together in a section at the very end of the book, so any discursive information that is provided in the notes is likely to be overlooked by any but the most diligent, page-turning reader. For this reason, any material that is important to your argument should be worked into the text if at all possible so that all your readers are sure to see it. Information that is only peripheral could justifiably be saved for another context.

**Bibliography.** We generally advise against excessive division in comprehensive bibliographies. Many readers won't have easy access to unpublished sources, so it may be sufficient to list those in the notes as relevant. Different types of works are easy to distinguish from one another by their different styling, so a list integrating different types does not confuse the reader, and it has the benefit of showing the reader at a glance all the cited works by one author. Finally, the task of locating information on a particular work is made more difficult by the necessity of searching through several alphabetical lists.

**Too much?** When beginning writers don't know quite how to make their points, the result is often a lack of concision. Reexamine your dissertation critically—others will. Ruthlessly cut out the flab. Don't depend on the editor to do this.

**Up to date?** "If my manuscript is accepted for publication, I plan to update." Better do it before the material is submitted. The reviewer has no way of gauging the effectiveness of work yet to be done.

**Is it readable?** The strictures surrounding dissertation writing seldom produce readable writing. Stuffy phrases, passive voice, attribution, and polysyllabic jargon are roadblocks in the path of readership. Read questionable passages aloud. If they sound stilted or obscure, they probably are.

**Research.** A scholarly publication must include original research performed by the author. Moreover, this research should be consistently organized according to a sound theoretical perspective.