Proposal Guidelines: General-Interest (Trade) Books

Every book begins as a proposal that makes a case not only for why an idea should become a book, but also why our Press should publish it. The more clearly written the proposal, the better able we are to evaluate it in a timely manner.

The University Press of Kansas welcomes proposals via email. Proposal emails should be addressed to the relevant editor (see “Acquisitions Editors” on our “Submission Guidelines” page). You may attach proposals as a Word document or PDF.

Your proposal should contain the following elements:

1. **Proposed Title and Subtitle**
   The title and subtitle are provisional and open to change, but a thoughtful title will help make a good first impression.

2. **Brief Description**
   This is often known as the “elevator pitch.” Summarize your project in a brief paragraph or two in a way that clearly explains what your book is about and what makes it distinctive.

3. **Full Description**
   In a page or two (or more if necessary), provide an overview of your book. How did you get interested in the topic? What makes your project unique? What is exciting about this project? Why will readers want to engage with your work?

4. **Intended Audience**
   A successful book will have a specific audience in view. Authors who try to write for everyone often write for no one. Who are the people who are going to read this book? Examples:
   - People interested in Black history, especially in Kansas
   - Fans of Wild West history and lore
   - People who read celebrity biographies and memoirs
   - People who want to engage more with nature and the outdoors

5. **Annotated Table of Contents**
   Provide a chapter-by-chapter summary of the book, including proposed chapter titles and a paragraph or two summarizing each chapter. Do not provide an outline of the book.

6. **Comparable Books**
   List at least 3 to 5 books that are similar to your own. Tell us how yours is different and/or better. Please provide title, author, publisher, and year of publication. Including the length in pages and list price is also appreciated. Comparable titles should be relatively recent (i.e., within the last ten years). They do not need to be on your exact topic. It is enough that they speak to a similar audience and/or contribute to the same area of interest.
7. Author Information
Please provide a brief biography that highlights why you are qualified to write this book. List your most recent and/or relevant publications. It’s fine to send a résumé as well, but it should not substitute for your biography.

8. Marketing and Publicity
Successful books have authors who are prepared to promote their work to their networks. Discuss how you plan to help us market and publicize your book. List your previous media experience (e.g., newspapers, magazines, podcasts, radio shows, television interviews, connections to organizations and influencers).

9. Manuscript Details
Provide the length of the work in a rough word count, along with information about the number and type of illustrations. If using images, give any details about file type and the status of permissions. What is the status of the work? Provide a tentative schedule for completion and when you expect to submit the full manuscript.

10. Additional Materials
If you have sample chapters ready for review, attach those as well (no more than three). Do not send the entire manuscript unless specifically invited to do so.

Due to the number of submissions we receive, please allow at least 4-6 weeks before following up with the editor. It is our policy not to return proposals or manuscripts, including those submitted with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

We look forward to considering your project for publication with the University Press of Kansas.