

Preparing Your Book Proposal

August 5, 2020

0:10 Maura Cunningham

Hello, everyone, my name is Maura Cunningham. I'm the digital media manager at the Association for Asian Studies. And it's my pleasure to welcome you to our third AAS Digital Dialogue session tonight on preparing your proposal. We're really excited. This has been a wildly popular topic just judging from the number of registrations. We have over 400 people who are planning to join us tonight so we're thrilled to see that and I can already say, we are planning to do more AAS Digital Dialogue sessions on sort of the publishing process. So tonight we're going to focus on preparing your book proposal in the session on that, we do ask you to keep your questions in the Q&A box focused on that part of the process. And we'll do our best to answer all of your questions tonight. If you have questions about other parts of the publishing process, I'm starting to plan future AAS Digital Dialogue sessions on other other topics related to this one. So please understand that we might not get to all of your questions tonight, but we are definitely planning to do more sessions on related topics because this has clearly been such a topic of interest to the AAS member community. As always, we thank the Henry Luce foundation for generous support of the AAS Digital Dialogues program we're very thankful to have their, have their backing in this. And with that, I'll introduce tonight's speakers. So we have Stephanie Chun is an acquisitions editor at the University of Hawaii press. Sungyun Lim, a Historian of Korea at the University of Colorado in Boulder. He's joining us from Seoul where we're thankful that she got up early in the morning to do this. And Allison Alexy, a cultural anthropologist of Japan, who is at the University of Michigan. So Stephanie is going to start us off. And each- of the each of the speakers will give a short presentation about different parts of the book proposal preparation process, and then in the second half of the hour, we will take your questions, so please feel free to put them into the chat box. And with that, I will turn things over to Stephanie.

2:30 Stephanie Chun

Okay. Trying to share my screen.

2:51

Oh, there. Is that -Maura is that- can you see that okay?

2:52 Maura Cunningham

Yes, we're good.

2:57

Alright. So, hi, I'm Stephanie.

I'm going to try and cover a lot of ground. So I'll try and be quick. This is about first book proposals. And so but I should mention that, you know, essentially, if you have a second or third book proposal, you can include some of the same sorts of information. The main difference would be that the manuscripts would not be revised dissertations, obviously. And if you're already pitching to a press or editor who knows you or knows of your work, you can dispense with the introductory stuff and get right to the manuscript. I'd also like to say that all of the slides that I'm showing are first book, except for the last book, which is an edited volume. They were published pretty recently, and all are from the Asia Pop! series that Hawaii publishes. And my fellow panelist, Allison Alexy is the series editor of.

3:58

So to start, this first slide, it's identifying the publisher. And it's maybe not what you would think of as part of writing a proposal, but it's an essential first step. First time authors, you really should do a fair amount of research on what presses and eventually what acquisition editors at those presses you want to contact.

4:30

So one of the first things to think about is finding the right fit, finding publishers who are right for your manuscript. You would ask yourself, who publishes books I like or admire in my area? That's a good question to ask yourself in the beginning. You should identify several. And ask yourself, where would your books fit in this list of books? Or how would it fit? Take books off your shelf, put them in piles by publisher copyright date, subjects. Look at how recent they are. If you're pitching if you're going to pitch a manuscript that is on a subject that was very similar to something published, say in the last year or so by a publisher, you may want to think twice about how you approach that. And actually, when you look at a copyright page of a book, you should also note that there's sometimes interesting information that would be useful to you down the line on a copyright page, for example, a list of grant organizations that might have contributed a subsidy to the book. That's something you might want to think about down the road. This is a helpful resource. It's the Association of University Press's directory, it comes out every year. And not only is it a directory of publishers, but it also has a grid in the back, I hope they still do. And basically it will allow you to look visually at a lot of different areas that are published by University presses. And you can kind of see and triangulate, you know, well, this press does history, this pre- this press does Chinese studies, and it'll actually kind of help you identify publisher. And, of course, you should also go to the website for the publishers that you are planning to contact. Almost all of them have some kind of proposal guideline or information. This is a link to our web page for proposal guidelines. It's very general, but there's some presses that have pretty more detailed guidelines.

6:53

Timing? When should I contact publishers? I don't think first time authors should wait until they have a complete manuscript before they approach publishers. Because academic, the academic publishing process takes probably longer than you think. If you are revising your dissertation for first book, you need to think maybe a year and a half or two minimum to figure out if and how you can reshape what you have into a book. After you've determined that and you're confident that you have a broad, strong, compelling book that will give people you know a reason give them a reason to purchase and read it. When you have a good working title. When you've drafted a contents page and maybe a couple of chapters. You should have more than enough information to start emailing editors at presses you've identified with a few additional paragraphs and details. We could probably work on a full proposal at that stage, which I'll go into shortly. Um, sending a query, or what I would consider a pre-proposal. This is something that I kind of like to see. So rather than go ahead and send like a full blown proposal, that's, you know, pages long. I think it's a good idea to send us a query email first. So you would send copies of this query email to several acquisition editors. Maybe she should probably be looking at least, at least five different presses, maybe more. Send it to one editor per publisher. And if your work crosses the areas of two different editors, you should make a choice and send it to one of them and ask them to forward it to an appropriate editor. If that's necessary, you of course want to include the title, a concise description that highlights without standing about your manuscript. And a little bit about yourself. You want to tell the editor what stage you're at, when you anticipate having a few chapters, or maybe if you happen to know a finished manuscript. And if the manuscript is a revised dissertation, I like to know that ahead of time. I don't think at this point, you need to attach anything, you don't need to send a CV, but you want to let the editor know that you're ready to send the formal proposal or draft chapter or contents page or a CV, if they are interested. Make sure you proofread everything. And as I said, I- this is what I would prefer to see early. Other editors might want to see a full proposal and attachments in the query letter. But you should remember that editors and their assistants or their interns, they're looking at a lot of these kinds of emails. So shorter and to the point would probably be best and fine for most straightforward monographs.

10:05

Okay, writing a book proposal. Here are what you need: a description obviously, which, which would include a title and subtitle. And it really is kind of part of a description because even though it's a working title, if you're able to come up with something that really encapsulates what the book is about in the title, and what's essential about it, it's a big indication that you're already thinking about your revised dissertation as a book, and that you can see the bigger picture. Argument and audience. You should be able to say in two paragraphs, what your book is about your main thesis, why readers should care about it or be interested in it and be clear. You want to show the editor you know and understand who your audience is. That's a really important consideration. And you're writing with that readership in mind, highlight what's outstanding about it, and avoid using jargon because your proposal is not going to be read by a specialist. At this point anyway. Of course, include a table of contents. This can be a working table of contents. You don't want to include every single subsection. But you want to include enough to the editor

can follow the progress of the manuscript from beginning to end. Chapter summaries, these can be as short as a few sentences, to supplement the table of contents and flesh out the scope of the manuscript and the progression of the argument.

11:45

Dissertation revision. In a paragraph, tell the editor what you've done generally to reshape the dissertation into a book manuscript. There are a lot of really good resources out there about dissertation revision, William Germano, *From Dissertation to Book* on *Getting It Published*, either by, published by Chicago. And I also really like *Revisiting Your Dissertation* by Beth Luey. That's an edited volume.

12:21

Um, I saw a question earlier from one of you about previously published content, and should that be mentioned in the proposal? I think that's a really good question. And the answer is yes. Inside and added to the outline, I think editors understand that you need to publish in journals and edited volumes, but you want to be careful about recycling your work because that's what it looks like to the publisher. It also looks like you might be cannibalizing your own book which the publisher will be spending money and time peer reviewing, editing, typesetting, printing and marketing. So you should ask yourself, would you buy a book where a sizable portion of it has already appeared and pretty much the same form elsewhere? Probably not, especially if you're in journals that you're able to read for free in your library. So just you want to keep that in mind. A list of comparable books so three or four recently published books that are similar to yours and subjects. Where does your book fall within this group? You can go back to that stack of books that you took off your shelf earlier to identify publishers to approach. Ideally, you want to provide short sentence about how your work is similar and differ from these books.

Specifications; so these include an estimated word count, and estimated number of titles or illustrations. People often want to know what is a reasonable estimated word count. I would say for most first books, which are revised dissertations, you should strive for about 80 to 85,000 words around there. And if you must include illustrations go with the go in with the idea of no more than 10 black and white unless your book is in art history or visual culture or film studies. And if it is and you can't illustrate your arguments adequately with 10, black and white illustrations, then you need to let the editor know that you are at least aware that a subvention may be required down the line.

14:45

Oh, I should also mention the CV. So it could be part of the book proposal or it could be a separate document. Don't send anything too long. I think at this point, editors are interested, of course in your education history where you got your advanced degrees, your dissertation title, what, when and where you published your work or research. I think if you're an independent scholar, the editor really wants to see evidence of your expertise on the topic you're writing about. And that and know that you have recent experience or knowledge about the field you're writing about and your peers. The last one, estimated date of complete manuscript. So I think of this as the polished best shape possible carefully proofread a full manuscript with no missing

parts. Ideally, it's a peer review ready manuscript that in, in your estimation could go to external readers without embarrassment should the editor decided to take the manuscript to peer review. All told, I think this could be done in about three or four single spaced pages. I think that's a reasonable length. And that's it. If you have any questions that I can't answer later or we don't address, please feel free to contact me. That's it.

16:27 Maura Cunningham

Okay. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Stephanie.

So with that, we are going to move over to Sungyun. So Stephanie gave everyone a big overview of you know, what should go into a book proposal. What should that what should that document look like, and how do you prepare for it. Sungyun and Allison are going to talk about their own experiences in the book proposal portion of the publishing process and I think they're going to share some of the things that they did well and some of the things that they wish that they had done a little bit differently. So they're sharing some, some knowledge from experience with all of you.

17:12 Sungyun Lim

Should I start? Okay. Oh, hello, everybody. Um, nice to meet you all. Let's see. Oh, wait. I'm so sorry. What happened here? Hmm?

Wait, so sorry about that. Um, I'm trying to share my oh, here we go.

17:46

Share my screen here. So thank you, Stephanie for that. Um, there are lots of things that she just said that I was like, I wish I had known that. Before I did my whole book proposal process. When I heard that, so many of you signed up for this, I, I realized, you know, how much need there is out there about this process. And I imagined that everybody is sort of very, you know, anxious about this process. And when I was preparing for this, I just looked back on the whole process and remembered how much you know, anxiety I had myself and so I am very honored to participate in this panel. I'm very glad to be sharing some of the things that I learned through the process. So I titled this Lessons Learned, and hopefully you can benefit from, you know, some of the things that I did wrong and what I learned throughout the process. So I'm going to talk about, I'm going to frame this whole thing as what I did and what I should have done, and I'll talk about when to start, because that I remember was the most, you know, the most anxiety

19:03

causing thing in the process like when to start when do I start writing the proposal? And like we're in the process and the revision of the manuscript, and I write the proposal and so on and so forth. And then what I and then how do I get feedback on this, the whole manuscript versus the proposal, and then where to send and how I experienced that process.

So when to start, you should think about, you know how long it takes Stephanie did mention that you know, that it takes longer than you expect and and this is what everybody told me. I am going to share my experience of from the sort of a polished version of the proposal and when I was sending out my proposal to the presses to the finished product, it took me almost three years, actually, you could say like, depending on when you start counting, it could be more than three years. But you should always, you know, work in, you know, work in, consider that things take a long time, I would say, from finished manuscript like sending off to the reviewers to the finished product, it took me about 18 months, but people will tell you, oh, you know, about 18 months, 20 months, but then as you can see, from my experience, you add, you know, that's not, you know, counting all the time, from the proposal to the, to the book, so you should always think ahead because everybody's on a tight tenure clock. And so you should sit down at some point and really start thinking, okay, this is what I really should have a finished, you know, proposal to send out. This is when I should have the finished manuscript and so on and so forth. This is not to, you know, make you more nervous, because that was actually a lot of where my nervousness and anxiety was coming from. But you do, it's- it's better to know in advance than later. What I ended up doing is I was on a seven year tenure clock, which is longer than I think most schools. And I sent I started sending out my proposal to presses in the middle of year four. And that is not how, what I planned but that's how I ended up doing it. And what I should have done of course, is I should have sent it out earlier. Um, and,

21:36

and I do hope that you don't repeat my mistake. But you know, the good side of the story is that even when I sent it out in year four, it did work out the book came out in time. And nothing, you know, tragic happened. So that's that's sort of, you know, a comfort, comfortable side of the story. But then of course, you don't want to be so anxious like I have been. So do send it out early. But then the real question, of course, is content-wise, when I revising the manuscript, how when should I start sending out? And earlier I think is not always better. So there is something called too early, I think. Stephanie did also mention that you should have, you know, some idea of how your book would look like. And she also mentioned, they should at least spent a year and a half or two years, you know, reshaping your dissertation that I can't , I you know, I think that's really true. So you do need to be ready, but then definitely, as she mentioned, your book does not need to be done before you write the proposal or just send out the proposal. I think in real in reality, what I ended up doing I think most people are doing this as well, is that you are constantly writing your book proposal while while you're writing your manuscript, I think is sort of like a back and forth process where your book proposal informs you that okay, this is what you need to your need to add to your manuscript. And this is what you need to take out of your manuscript design, so forth. So both the proposal and the manuscript constantly changes. But then there is a point when you finally reach a point where your manuscript, you know, obviously needs more work, but then this is, you know, how it's going to look like at the end. And then your book proposal finally shapes up, and that's when you really need to be starting to send out your proposal. I think, you know, I waited a little bit too long before I sent out my proposal because I

23:47

was a little bit hesitant to, you know, send queries to the editor. Stephanie said that she likes to see early queries I had the- I just imagined, or maybe I was told, I don't know, there's so many different informations out there that editors don't like that. So I just waited until I felt confident enough. And that I think, in hindsight was a little bit too late. And I think as soon as you have, you know, finalized chapter layout, and you know what the book is going to look like, before you polish up your introduction and everything you should really start contacting the editors because my experience was, as some editors actually do like to shape like they have their own recommendations and ideas. And you don't want to wait too long until you feel like no but this is- this is my book and I, you know, there's a point where you reach where you think like you don't want to budge from from the contents that you have set up. So you don't want to wait till that long to send out your proposal, is, would be my recommendation. I don't know if Allison has a different idea. So getting feedback is super important. The book proposal is meant for non-specialists, as Stephanie said. So what I did was I workshoped it actually a couple of times with outside people outside of history departments outside of my field of Korean studies, or Korean history, or Asian history, and so on and so forth. And that was actually the best thing I did in the process, it really gives you, really pushes you to, to get out of your mode of thinking. And it really just gives you a different perspective about what your, what your book should be versus your dissertation. You're not, no longer speaking to your small group of people working on your topic, and so on and so forth. So I highly recommend that. Where to send. So definitely there was a question about like, can I send it to multiple publishers and yes, definitely. What I ended up doing was I was a little bit I don't know cannot recall why I did this when I ended up sending it to. I had a list of publishers that I wanted. And I ended up sending it to only two top choices. And then one of them luckily said she was interested, I had a meeting with this editor at AAS and everything seemed to work out fine. Except then there was an unexpected change of events and she ended up leaving the press and, and then she's sort of said, what your project is going to be okay, and so on, so forth. And she just passed me to one of her bosses. And that was fine, except that I was a little bit anxious to work with somebody that I didn't know very well. So I ended up going to another press to a series that obviously took up a lot of time because I had to work with a new person, and they had their own schedule. And so you do need to expect to be surprised and this is this is you know, part of the whole three-year. Why, why it took my book to appear in three years because there were these unexpected events happening. So do expect to be surprised. And then also, either do expect yourself to send out to, you know, a lot of presses at the same time or if you have colleagues or teachers or friends in the field that- that you have cultivated relationship with, do utilize all connections to get their recommendation or get their introductions to presses. You know, so just so that you don't end up you know, with surprises. And it's, that's, that's all I had. Thank you.

27:43 Maura Cunningham

Okay, thank you. Sungyun, could you stop sharing your screen please? Thanks.

27:55

Thank you so much. And now for more on the book proposal process. I'm going to turn things over to Allison Alexy.

28:11 Allison Alexy

To share my screen here.

28:17

Can you see my screen?

28:19 Maura Cunningham

Yes.

28:20 Allison Alexy

Okay, fantastic. Thanks. Hi, everyone. It's really an honor and privilege to be with you all today. I know we're all dealing with a lot, and it's a really difficult and challenging time. So I just want to acknowledge that I'm really grateful. We have panelists right now in Ann Arbor, and Honolulu and Seoul. And that feels really special to me as a perhaps a silver lining in this- in this pandemic moment. So I wanted to start by saying that. Um, thank you so much to the AAS, and to the- my fellow panelists. It's really wonderful. These webinars have been fantastic. I've really been enjoying them over the summer. So it's fantastic to be able to be part of one. And the last thing I want to say is an opening is, this whole event is really my attempt to honor all the people who helped me this process, all the people who gave me advice, and answered my really obvious and silly questions, and were really patient with me, and frankly, all the people who read many, many, many drafts of my book proposal. So I hope you know, it takes a village in a lot of different ways. So I am trained as a cultural anthropologist, I work in Japan, and I'm in two departments now at the University of Michigan, the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and Women and Gender Studies. And here's my contact information if you want to contact me when this is over, or anytime. So I wanted to just mention I have two publications that came out recently. This is an edited volume that I co edited with Emma Cook that came out of the University of Hawaii press. The reason I mentioned it is because it's open access availability- available through open access through a program called Knowledge Unlatched which I want to loop back to in a little bit. And then this is my monograph that just came out a couple months ago from the University of Chicago Press, *Intimate Disconnections: Divorce and the Romance of Independence in Contemporary Japan*. This is also open access through a different program. So almost not quite by accident. But my two most recent publications both came out through open access. And so I wanted to offer that, talk a little bit about my experiences with it, and also open the floor to questions about that, if anyone's thinking about it. As Stephanie mentioned, I'm also in the incredibly privileged position of being the series editor for this new series from the University of Hawaii press called Asia Pop! She already showed the covers which made me really happy. But I mentioned this to say that I've also started to have this experience from the other side as well. So both as an author and now as a series editor I

work on- I've worked on my own book proposals and seeing other people's book proposals. So this is where my very brief presentation is drawing on. What is drawing from.

So to go back to this excellent question what I did and what I've done differently. The first is what I did. I talked with my friends and my colleagues about editors and presses. And I asked for introductions. So you have friends and colleagues who have published books and had a positive experience as an editor, ask them, ask them who's nice to work with, ask them what the press was like. And then if they're willing, you can ask them to write an introduction when you're ready to go. So when the proposal is ready to go, maybe have them ask them if they'd be willing to email an editor and say, "hey, I have this young colleague who is has a really interesting book project, would you be willing to consider it?" So I want to frame this and say that I think it's a really nice way of figuring out the fit, the kind of fit that Stephanie was talking about earlier in the presentations. I also want to say it's sort of might sound like an old boys network, and that and by that, I mean people using connections to make connections with other people. I don't think that's it certainly could possibly be happening. I don't think that's exactly what's going on. Because we're trying to figure out who could be a good fit for your project, either in terms of a particular editor or in terms of a press, there also might be other situations like maybe you're in, maybe not necessarily a hurry, but you need to get your book out in a certain amount of time. And you really want to make sure you could work with a press that is able to do that for you. So this is the kind of really important information that you can get from talking with your friends and colleagues, and reaching out to people.

32:32

Maybe it sounds really basic, but pay attention to what the press requests in a proposal. Um, presses have this listed on their website. There are different sections in the proposal, in the same way that you do this, when you write a grant. Look at the subsections if they include in- in their list and make sure that it matches, right? So whatever you turn in as your proposal should reflect what the press is asking for, on their website, and most presses are asking for very similar things, but I did my best to make sure I was looking at the website, and then just changing the terminology, in the same way that you would do that in a grant application, right? So some grants asked for something like a hypothesis or research questions, and you just make sure in that subsection, that you're using those titles, you're using those terms. I also think that sometimes as authors, we forget about- or not forget exactly, but don't quite pay as much attention to the sort of technical details of the book. And by that, I mean, a book that is full of wonderful ideas and incredible research, but is say 200,000 words long, is really, really, really hard to publish, probably. So it matters how long your book is, it can be too short, it can be too long. It can have too many pictures. And by that I mean it would be too expensive to print this many images in a book, whether they're in black and white or maybe in color. So you want to think about what are the technical restrictions that your book has. And if you don't know, feel free, you can reach out, you can specifically ask these questions, maybe of a colleague or maybe of an editor. All right. We've already talked a little bit about this. But I did have a paragraph in my book proposal to make it clear how my book is different from my dissertation. They're both based on about 80% of the same field work. But the book is radically different. I

think in some ways, my experience is quite unusual in that I basically decided to pretty fundamentally rewrite the whole thing. So I use the same data but rewrote the dissertation, and the book are really different. I'm not suggesting that you do that, but do make the case that you have revised significantly from the dissertation. I want to pause here and just say there's nothing wrong with dissertations. Your dissertation I'm sure is fantastic. (PS: mine was not) But, um, your dissertation got you, the PhD, and you did what you needed to do. It probably got you a lot more than a PhD as well. But you really want to understand that a dissertation has it no matter how you tried to write it for a broad audience, you really wrote it for probably your committee. And some, there's some things in your dissertation that a committee member specifically told you to put in there. Maybe it's a section, maybe it's a certain kind of literature. And maybe you want to include that in the book as well. But the book is for a very different audience. It's hopefully for a much bigger and broader audience. So you really want to think about not insulting or condemning your dissertation, but understanding that this is a different writerly project.

35:38

You can also explore open access or subvention opportunities if you want if you have some available. So let me just talk briefly about the two that I've experienced. The first is this project called Tome, which stands for "toward an open monograph ecosystem". It is unfortunately a pretty small program. So it's only available at the schools that are on this slide right now. But if you're at one of those schools, or you have a friend at one of those schools, maybe think about it or tell them about it. The other program, so this is the book that just came out of Chicago was published through Tome. And this means that there is an- an open access PDF of the book online. And I'll just tell you one really quick story. So either the book took me like three years to write, or it took me 12 years to write, like, depending on how you measure these things. And I got the open access PDF on a Friday at like 6pm. And I tweeted it to my like, 400 Twitter followers. And by 9pm, that night, a stranger on the internet was like, "great book, I really enjoyed it." And I sat in that chair right there. And I was like, "did he just read the whole book in three hours? Like, what have I been doing with my life?" And then I thought, well, maybe that's what I wanted. He read it right. So read parts of it, so that's good. Anyway, so be prepared, maybe be more prepared than I was about what open access really means is that means someone will read the thing that took you years to write in approximately two hours and you should be really happy about that. Right? Okay, so Tome is one option for people who are at these institutions. Another more general option is a program called Knowledge Unlatched, which is run by, well, a consortium but you can you can get access to this through university presses. So my co edited volume *Intimate Japan* is published the Knowledge Unlatched and this means that that book is also available free as a PDF on the internet.

37:29

Alright, what I should have done differently. I recommend you try to really figure out what works best for you in terms of how you're writing on a daily basis. If you want to finish the book or mostly finished the book or if you feel like you can do the proposal before you finish the book. I think these are all fairly personal questions. Um, what feels good, as much as possible, I think

I'd like to recommend you be kind to yourself, and realize that you're doing what you're what you can do as hard and you're working as hard as you can. I think it can be really isolating and hard. And I think a lot of us feel a lot of shame about maybe being late or not figuring it out. And so as much as possible if you can, try to let that go. Or try to know that most of us feel that way. I don't know what would make you feel better. But figure out what works best for you and then do it to the best of your ability. When you're turning in a proposal and writing a proposal, try not to traffic and what I call "aspirational deadlines." So try to make a really realistic guess about how long things will take you. It doesn't help if you say that you're going to get a full manuscript to someone you know, in six months time and it takes you longer than that. It doesn't help you nobody is happy that you're you have a sooner like you've you've given yourself a sooner deadline. It doesn't work like that. It's not like turning in a paper. Um, try to really be realistic in the dates that you give Stephanie has helped me understand that academic publishing is kind of like air traffic control. And by that, I mean when you miss a deadline, like if you say, okay, I'll have this to you by June, and you don't, it's not- and you, say, you turn it in one month later, it doesn't mean that you just get kicked back a month, it could mean that you're sort of like at the back of the line. So you're two or three months back, even though you've only missed the deadline by one month. And so just realize that it really, your editors are dealing with a lot of moving pieces. And so, if you can most accurately predict when your materials are going to come in at any level in the process at any stage in the process. That would really help everyone so for the proposal, that means trying, thinking pretty hard about what it would take you to first finish the full draft, right, finish the full draft of the manuscript. And, and also try to roll with punches when structures are beyond your control. I also was was talking to an editor who ended up leaving, in this case she stayed with the press, but switched to different fields, so she was previously working on all anthropology. And then suddenly she was working on all anthropology except East Asia, which kind of sucked for me, because I work in East Asia. So you know, things- things happen and things change. It absolutely worked out for the best for me. I'm thrilled. I had a wonderful experience working with Priya Nelson in Chicago. But Priya has actually already left Chicago and is now at the Princeton University Press. So I'm thrilled for her. Sad that she's not at Chicago anymore. So expect that things things will happen that you're not expecting, right.

40:30

And this, this is the last slide I just want to show three of the books that we had been talking about recommending I found *From Dissertation to Book* pretty helpful for me, it says, it gives you pretty clear suggestions about- about changes to make and things to look for. Thank you so much.

40:55 Maura Cunningham

Okay, thank you, Allison. Thanks to all of you. And I just want to assure our viewers that we will be putting links to the different resources that our panelists have mentioned on the AAS website. And we post the recording and the transcript from this session will also have links to the different books and resources that they've mentioned. So we have a good number of questions that are coming in. And I'd like to see how many of them we can answer in the time

that are remaining. So I think a couple of people this is probably for Stephanie had questions about how old should comparable books be? So is it better to find a comparable book that is recent covers a similar topic but a different field or country? Or should you stick with comparable titles that are much older but within the field, when you're listing those in the book proposal?

41:53 Stephanie Chun

Much older, I don't think is that helpful. What you're trying to do is give the editor a good idea of the context of, of the types of books, that your, your manuscript would fit in. So I would look for more recent things between like nothing, maybe older than five or six years old. And like I said, you know, try and take a wide variety of books off your shelf, and try and reorganize them in different ways and just see where your book would fit. But I think an older book, you know, somebody's very senior, a very old book is probably not going to be that helpful, as comparable.

42:53 Maura Cunningham

Great. Thank you. So, Allison, you, you had referenced that authors should be aware of the cost of producing their book. So we had one audience member who asked how can you learn what those costs of producing your book will be? So, um, you know, for most authors, I think this is they're really not not aware of the different factors that presses take into consideration. So, so what are the what are the types of things that that authors should think about when they're putting that that section of the proposal together?

43:32 Allison Alexy

I'll answer and then maybe I'll ask Stephanie to jump in and and correct, whatever I say. I think that things like you, so think about things that are more expensive. So things that are expensive are color images. So a bunch of color images are going to cost you a lot of money. And by you, I mean the press or this subvention institution, then black and white images are also expensive. So a bunch of, I would imagine a bunch of graphs and charts and those kinds of things too. So I'm not saying it's prohibitively expensive, but just to think about it as something that actually has to be paid for, as it's birthed into the world. Probably longer books would be a little bit more expensive, but just- just sort of have a I don't remember this being mentioned in any of the guidebooks, but- but I could be wrong about that. Stephanie, I'll stop and see what you think, if you don't mind.

44:22 Stephanie Chun

Um, just quickly, all the things you mentioned, are are right, um, one of the things that is expensive, is not just illustrations, but length, because copy editing, which is an essential part of the process is not- is an expensive thing. It almost cost as much to typeset. Copy editing costs almost as much as typesetting. So length definitely is a factor. You want to think about that you want to ask the editor what recommendations they have for length, and number of illustrations. So, right, those are just really the basic things I think an author needs to know about. Illustrations and length.

45:17 Maura Cunningham

I have one follow up question that came in while you're answering are Chinese characters costly to print? So does having a lot of foreign- foreign characters in your texts affect that costs?

45:30 Stephanie Chun

Only if they're not Unicode compliant. When you submit the manuscript so you- you should ask your editor which Asian typefaces they prefer. So we have ones we prefer for Korean, Chinese and Japanese, and they're very standard. So I don't think that's a problem. No, because the way we publish now, it's not a factor before you would have to go to Asia to get characters dropped in. And that was expensive back, back then.

46:09 Maura Cunningham

Sungyun, I'm going to send this one your way. How much and what did you revise after your book proposal had been accepted?

46:18 Sungyun Lim

After my book proposal, um, after it has been accepted, it was mostly just style and context. I didn't revise very much, although it took me mysteriously a long time to revise, everything seems a mystery in hindsight, but because I waited so long, I think at that point, I knew what I wanted in the book and then mostly, I just revised for style and flow I took out the repeated stuff added in some explanation. After reviews, I needed to revise the one of the chapters pretty significantly. But that was just yeah, it was it was not too much. But yeah, I revise a lot before the proposal, I would say. And that had to do with, you know, adding two chapters getting rid of one chapter for my dissertation, and then thoroughly just rethinking the whole structure. But once that was done after the book proposal was not too much.

47:25 Maura Cunningham

Stephanie, I know we we have a bunch of questions asking about the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, on the proposal process, or I don't know is it tak[ing] longer to get viewers to be close and deeper reports or things like that?

47:45 Stephanie Chun

Just the proposal process, I don't think it's been affected much. I don't think I've received less proposals or have them come in less frequently since March. One thing that is taking quite a bit longer is peer review. And that's simply because, you know, people are so busy trying to take care of their own families, and they have extra duties at their jobs. They're trying to learn how to teach online and so that I would say that process that in the early publishing process is the most effected.

48:34 Maura Cunningham

Um, Allison or Sungyun, um, one of our audience members have written in their PhD cohort was quite small and they're at an R2, so they feel that their professional network is not that large, but

they value feedback on their manuscripts highly. How would you characterize the feedback you received from your editors and peer reviewers? And maybe how did you go about getting that?

49:02 Allison Alexy

So the feedback from the editors and peer reviewers was spectacular for me. It was really helpful. It sounds like the question might be about getting feedback before you submit the proposal from other colleagues. Okay. Um, I don't know, I understand that, well, maybe this is a kind of COVID moment, but I think it's okay to reach out to people who aren't right on your campus at any moment, but certainly now, and many of us have gone through this like, I feel like I will be forever paying back all the people who gave me good advice. And so I imagine if you ask five people, at least one of them would be willing to read your proposal and share their comments right? So you can reach out to colleagues to friends of friends to- to people with senior, people or more senior people within your field. I don't think it has to be a person at work per se. Because I think it can be a scholarly network.

50:03 Sungyun Lim

Yeah, I would agree. I mean, Allison and I were never at the same place but we, you know, you have to really reach out-and for we once you for one summer we did like a little group, you know, sharing our plans. And so- so this is how you build friends outside of your field outside of your campus. So do reach out. We're all introverts, most of us and so we are all very, you know, we're not comfortable but but this is one thing that that you should do. What I- although Stephanie did warn about you know, cannibalizing your dissertation, what I learned the most was through publishing one of my chapters in a journal and getting feedback that way, so it's not, you know, warm and fuzzy and personal connections, but then it really gives you a perspective of what you know, larger field of life. from you, and how you should really rethink your dissertation writing style. So I do really recommend doing that as soon as you can. And that can actually you can do revise your manuscript while you're revising your paper for that journal. So that's one thing.

51:13 Maura Cunningham

Stephanie, is it best to submit a book proposal once one has secured a tenure track position? Or is it okay to start the process during a postdoc, or perhaps a temporary position?

51:30 Stephanie Chun

Maybe that's a better question for Allison and Sungyun. If I'm getting something from someone who's not currently at a university, or I mean, in timing and that says, I actually can't answer I don't know where would be best in, in that line. Can you guys answer that? I don't...

52:02 Allison Alexy

I can, I'm sorry,

52:03 Stephanie Chun

Is it better when you're a postdoc?

52:05 Allison Alexy

I have an answer, that's not going to be helpful or satisfying, which is I think it really depends. So some schools, if you get a job, and you've already has-had a publication, they won't count that publication. Occasionally, like when I was at UVA, that was the case at UVA, they told me the publications I published before it wouldn't count. They were an edited volume and articles. Oh, no, no offense to UVA sorry, and the policy might have changed. But somehow I'm so worried about what they think of me. So, so I think it might depend. I think that for that reason, I would say, put it out when when you're ready when you think it's the strongest. And don't worry, there's not there's not like a single best answer. And so therefore, it's about the quality of the book and the proposal.

52:52 Stephanie Chun

That's a good answer. Yeah, yup.

52:58 Maura Cunningham

Stephanie, a very straightforward question. Does the word count that you mentioned include the bibliography? Or just chapters in the introduction?

53:10 Stephanie Chun

It includes everything. I know that's really hard to edit something down from 150 to 100,000 words. It almost might sound impossible. But yeah, so 80-85 is the bibliography. It's everything. But you know, you, you really have to think about what what, what you're writing about what you're doing with what you have. That's that number is not going to get you like, oh, that's way too long and then, you know, no one's going to look at it. That's, that's just an estimate that I feel comfortable saying that as a first book, a single author, revised dissertation. I don't know if other if Sungyun or Allison heard anything differently, but you know, 85,000 words definitely under 100,000 is kind of like accepted. An acceptable number.

54:23 Maura Cunningham

Allison, since you- since you have experienced publishing open access, does an open access book with the university or Academic Press weigh the same as a traditional book for the tenure evaluation? And what are the advantages or disadvantages for publishing your first book with an open access publisher?

54:46 Allison Alexy

So, I'm not tenured yet so I unfortunately like- please believe I would love to answer this question- I have been told

54:58 Maura Cunningham

Did you take that into consideration?

55:01 Allison Alexy

Yeah, if it would not get you tenure? Yes. I did consider it.

55:08

So, so I tried my best, this will be hilarious if I get denied tenure, and then we can all look back on this and laugh.

55:14 Sungyun Lim

I did get tenure on this.

55:16 Allison Alexy

Oh, yes. Okay, I'm gonna be quiet, go!

55:21 Sungyun Lim

Do not fear. I think, from my experience, I don't know if it's the same for all presses. But I think when do they do this set up these open access, they do think about us, like first time writers. And they do know that we need to get tenure on these things. And from my experience, up to the contract phase, so proposal acceptance manuscript reviews, and, you know, revisions and whatnot. I from my experience, as far as I know, was the same as paper books. But then it went to a different company that took care of the open access process. So, so copy editing, and all those things were done with us. That was a separate process, but it didn't feel very different. Not that I got published any differently, but.

56:14 Stephanie Chun

I can assure you that publishing with these people, with Tome and Knowledge Unlatched they are not open access publishers, they're a platform, the publisher is Chicago, you know, or Yale or somebody. It's, it's, it's not they are not the publisher. They're the platform. And Sungyun is correct up to the point of say, even maybe even just typesetting I don't know that's not necessarily copy editing, but if your the publisher is taking care of everything they're doing the peer review, there's no difference.

56:57 Maura Cunningham

Okay, and our time is growing short. So I'm just going to ask one final question. So Sungyun, and you had mentioned that you met with one, two editors at AAS. And someone has asked, can you elaborate on the role of meeting editors at conferences? So is that a must? Is it recommended? Do you have to do those meetings to submit a proposal?

57:21 Sungyun Lim

So, so I only ended up meeting one, I contacted two. And I just had a list of people. So lists of presses that I wanted, and those were my two top choices. I met with the editor. It didn't work out. So I don't I ended up publishing with a series that that I didn't have a meeting with at the AAS, so I wouldn't, I would say it's not necessary. I mean, Stephenie, you could have a better

answer for me, for us. I would think- some people have told me that's a good idea. So I did it. But then in hindsight, I don't think it was all that necessary.

58:03 Stephanie Chun

Yeah, I don't think it's necessary. Here, more-. Most proposals I get, I've never met a person, certainly not at a conference. I mean, well, for one thing, I'm in Hawaii makes it harder, but I don't think it's necessary. It's nice if you want to make a connection with, you know, faith, but it's not necessary, the manuscript is the thing, so.

58:36 Maura Cunningham

Okay, so I know we there are still a lot of questions. Unfortunately, we weren't able to get to. As I said, we are going to do more sessions on the publishing process, because we know that this is a topic of great interest to Association for Asian Studies members, I encourage you to take a look at our website, keep an eye out for future sessions of AAS Digital Dialogues. Also, if you click under the publications tab on our website, you'll see as publishes books, and I encourage you to take a look at our series. They're all accepting proposals. And for AAS members, we also have the first books subvention, that if you're a little bit farther along in the process, and you've submitted your proposal and gotten a contract on you can talk with your editor about applying for this subvention. So thanks again to all of all of you. We've had a huge audience for this, and I really appreciate it. Thank you to Allison, Stephanie, and Sungyun for sharing their time and expertise with us tonight. As I mentioned, there will be a recording and transcript of the session available on our website, and then within about two weeks. So thank you to everyone for attending and have a great night.

59:51 Stephanie Chun

Thank you.

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