

*Third Edition • Expanded & Updated*

# WRITING AND DEVELOPING YOUR COLLEGE TEXTBOOK

A Comprehensive Guide

# SAMPLE ONLY

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*Writing and Developing Your College Textbook: A Comprehensive Guide, 3rd edition*  
By Mary Ellen Lepionka, Sean W. Wakely, and Stephen E. Gillen  
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# Author Bios



**Mary Ellen Lepionka**

Mary Ellen Lepionka of Gloucester, MA is a retired publisher, author, editor, textbook developer, and college instructor with a Master's in anthropology from Boston University and Ph.D. work at the University of British Columbia. In 1990 she worked in higher education publishing as a developmental editor of college textbooks, principally for Houghton Mifflin and Pearson Education. Between 2002 and 2011 she established Atlantic Path Publishing as a retirement business and published two editions of *Writing and Developing Your College Textbook* and related titles. She presently is an independent scholar writing a history of Native Americans on Cape Ann.



**Sean W. Wakely**

Sean W. Wakely is Founder and Principal Adviser at Academic Author Advisers, a literary agency and consulting service with a primary focus on advising higher education authors and educational technology startups. He began his career as a sales representative for Allyn & Bacon and was a top-performing acquisitions editor and editorial manager at Pearson Education and Houghton Mifflin's college division. In several senior executive roles at Thomson Learning and Cengage Learning, including president of Wadsworth Publishing and manager of National Geographic Learning, Sean successfully guided editorial, product, marketing, production, and digital media teams to achieve industry-leading growth.



**Stephen E. Gillen**

Stephen E. Gillen teaches Electronic Media Law at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. He worked for nearly 20 years in publishing prior to entering private practice in the middle 1990's. He is presently a partner at Wood Herron & Evans (a 145-year-old Cincinnati law firm focused on intellectual property) where he concentrates his practice on publishing, media, and copyright matters. He is a long-time member of the TAA Council and a regular speaker at TAA conferences.



# Introduction

**W**elcome to the revised and expanded third edition of *Writing and Developing Your College Textbook*. If you're thinking about writing a college textbook or have already started, you most likely are a higher education faculty member or practitioner in your field. You have taught for many years, built a strong appreciation for what constitutes useful teaching materials, and developed a successful approach to teaching that you want to share with a wider audience. Perhaps you feel frustrated with textbook offerings in your discipline or want to write one for a course you teach. Perhaps you seek a broader influence on the way your course is taught or on people entering your field.

This book is divided into three parts: 1) Understanding the Higher Education Textbook Publishing Industry; 2) Negotiating Your Textbook Contract; and 3) Writing and Developing Your College Textbook. Part 1 (chapters 1-3) provides you with essential background information on the changing higher education publishing industry. Part 2 (chapter 4) shares insight into how to negotiate a textbook publishing contract and how you can establish good author-publisher relations. Part 3 (chapters 5-15) guides you through the nuts and bolts of the textbook development process. What are the steps in development and why are they needed? How do you identify your audience and establish a voice and style? How do you craft learning objectives and headings to express your instructional goals, organization, and content? How can you provide appropriate textbook apparatus and pedagogy? How can you best manage the business of authorship—drafting and revising, working to length and schedule, clearing permissions, keeping records, and so on? And how can you enhance the visual presentation of your material and adapt it for online applications?

**You are an expert in your field, but you are not an expert in textbook publishing, which is just as sophisticated, multifaceted, layered, and nuanced as your field.**

In a new feature called, “Author to Author”, you will get an inside look at how many of the concepts introduced in this book have been put into practice by successful textbook authors.

This book is not just for beginners but also aims to help experienced textbook authors enhance their products’ content and improve their working relationships with publishers. It is also a resource for editors and content developers in the field of higher education publishing, and is equally useful for self publishers. Whatever your reasons for consulting this book, our principal goal in writing it is to empower you to undertake textbook development on your own to improve your chances of success. Writing and crafting a textbook and attending to authoring tasks is a time-consuming, complex—some would say monumental—project, even harrowing at times. Publishers may contribute little to this process beyond assigning and paying advances. Most houses seldom employ more than a handful of staff development editors, who tend to be reserved for textbooks with the highest projections of sales. At the same time, outsourced development projects may lack the same commitment or quality control on the part of a freelancer or packager that in-house editors may bring. As the textbook author, therefore, you are your best bet.

Your greatest source of success is a truly good product. Minimally, a good textbook teaches, using good content and organization expressed in a good voice and style. This book aims to explain in each case what we think “good” means and how to achieve it. Even good textbooks sometimes fail because they missed their market or were somehow mismanaged, and mediocre books may initially succeed because of publisher hype and aggressive sales campaigns. Many textbooks fail simply because the author or publisher abandoned them. Textbooks that are both good and successful, however, become classics in their field, indispensable. They last into their tenth editions and beyond, sometimes outliving their original authors. And they consistently make good money for everyone involved.

What makes a textbook truly both good and successful is product development and authorship—and that’s what this guide is about. You are an expert in your field, but you are not an expert in textbook publishing, which is just as sophisticated, multifaceted, layered, and nuanced as your field. This book aims to share with you the knowledge and skills of college acquisitions and development editors, intellectual property rights experts, and successful textbook authors, which you can use to your advantage as an academic author, textbook writer, and/or content developer.

# Part 1

## **Understanding the Higher Education Textbook Publishing Industry**



**By Sean W. Wakely**

Sean W. Wakely is Founder and Principal Adviser at Academic Author Advisers, a literary agency and consulting service with a primary focus on advising higher education authors and educational technology startups. He began his career as a sales representative for Allyn & Bacon and was a top-performing acquisitions editor and editorial manager at Pearson Education and Houghton Mifflin's college division. In several senior executive roles at Thomson Learning and Cengage Learning, including president of Wadsworth Publishing and manager of National Geographic Learning, Sean successfully guided editorial, product, marketing, production, and digital media teams to achieve industry-leading growth.

# 1

## The Evolving Higher Education Textbook Publishing Industry

Sean W. Wakely

**W**hatever your background—a fledgling writer seeking your first contract, an experienced author with many books under your belt, an editor or product manager, or an academic with an itch to self-publish a textbook—you almost certainly picked up this book to learn more about the nuts and bolts of developing excellent college textbooks and online learning content. But do you understand how textbooks are constructed, produced, and sold through a series of publishing processes? Are you familiar with the extensive, ongoing changes taking place in the higher education publishing industry today? Are you confident navigating the evolving college publishing landscape, and do you clearly understand your place in it as an author, a publisher, or a consumer? We'll address these questions and more in the first few chapters, before focusing on content development strategies, because it's helpful first to understand the industry's basics before imagining yourself in today's ever-changing publishing picture.

### The Publishing Landscape

The higher education publishing ecosystem is complex, but its main components are distributors (college bookstores and online retailers), producers (authors or subject matter experts and publishers), and a customer base comprised of buyers (students) and decision makers (faculty or administrators). If you are a college-level faculty member, you probably are a decision maker—you select textbooks for your classes or participate in textbook selection committees—and certainly you were a buyer when you were a student. You interact with distributors when you order course materials for your students, and you experience firsthand whether and how students acquire and use those materials. However, even with all

## Acquisitions Editors' Revision Planning Activities



Figure 2.3

At the start of the revision phase, your acquisitions editor prepares a project proposal for approval, similar to what was done during the initial acquisition process. The process of preparing a revision is similar to what you experienced in preparing the first edition but is more compressed. The product team solicits reviews from adopters and those who considered your book for adoption but chose another product. You create a revision plan, and within six months to a year the revised manuscript is due. In the revision, you update your manuscript to reflect adopters' and your own experiences teaching from the book, respond to input gathered from adopters and near adopters, address new scholarship or discoveries, smooth out wrinkles, and weave in one or two new elements to enhance the pedagogical framework and add marketing sizzle. The key goal of preparing a revision is to enlarge the potential adopter pool through new or revised content while still retaining existing adoptions.

Another turn of the wheel represents the life of your second edition. Presuming it is successful, the preparation of the third edition begins following a brief pause in which you catch up on pertinent research and recharge your creative batteries. The cycle of revision comes to an end when you stop participating in revisions, although your product may continue on without you. Most publishers' contracts allow them to continue revising successful books after you retire from active participation. The life of your product ends when your last edition is declared **out of print** (OOP) due to lack of customer demand and is therefore no longer available for purchase.

## Getting Started

Ideally, your manuscript is developed well, published on schedule and within budget, marketed and sold effectively, distributed successfully to adopters and customers, and meets or exceeds its first-year rev-



## How I Met My First Acquisitions Editor

By Mike Kenamer,

author of *Math for Healthcare Professionals*

### **I was introduced to my first acquisitions editor through the recommendation of a colleague.**

At the time, our state had added a new course in infection control to our curriculum and none of the instructors had been able to find an acceptable book that included the necessary content for teaching infection control to health care providers. Since I had some experience in this area, I compiled my notes and handouts into a self-published forty-eight-page booklet, which I provided to my students at no cost. A colleague at another college asked if I would make this booklet available for his classes, so I contracted with a local printer to produce the booklets and sold them to the college bookstore.

One day I received a call from an acquisitions editor at a major publisher asking if I would be interested in using this booklet as a foundation and developing a book for this topic that could be used for a variety of allied health fields. Her call came about because my colleague who had ordered the booklets for his classes had told a publisher's sales representative that there was a market for this type of book and that they should talk to me about filling the need. The sales rep passed the information along to the acquisitions editor, and that led to my first publishing contract.

My experience is not a typical one, so I do wish to share other ideas for introducing yourself to acquisitions editors. In my view, one of the best ways to establish a relationship with a publisher is to volunteer to review books in your field of study. This strategy can help you in a number of ways. First, since publishers are always looking for qualified reviewers, this is a good way to get your foot in the door of that particular publisher. The publisher will typically pay a small fee for your review and will include your name and affiliation in the front matter. This leads to the second advantage, which is being able to indicate on your resume or vitae that you have reviewed textbooks. Take these reviews seriously; be sure to read the assigned sections carefully and provide clear feedback about how you would suggest improving the book. By finishing your reviews on time you are building a reputation of being someone who can meet a deadline.

You can also let these editors know if you are interested in doing work-for-hire projects. This is another way to establish a relationship with a publisher, and the work can be quite lucrative. I have written instructor manuals, online content, video scripts, test banks, slide sets, and workbooks for a number of publishers. This experience looks good on a resume and further builds a relationship with one or more editors. In fact, I have had editors in one business unit recommend me to editors in another business unit at the same publisher.

Many acquisitions editors are present at publisher booths at trade shows and conferences, so be sure to visit the booths of companies that publish in your field. Visit the booth when it is not crowded and introduce yourself. It is likely that the booth will be staffed with a combination of sales, marketing, and editorial staff, so let the people in the booth know that you would like information on submitting a proposal for a textbook. It is possible that the person to whom you will submit your proposal is at

*(continued on next page)*

AUTHOR to AUTHOR

*(continued from previous page)*

the conference. Be sure to visit with small publishers also. While their lists are not as long as those of the larger publishers, it is more likely that you will be able to meet higher level editorial staff at shows.

Publishers' websites are also a source for learning about proposal requirements. When one of my publishers dropped one of the product lines in which I had been working, I went to the websites of publishing leaders in that field of study and found the names and email addresses of acquisitions editors. I sent each a quick email address explaining that my current publisher had closed its Emergency Medical Services product line and that I was an experienced author who was looking to establish a relationship with another publisher in that space. Two of the editors I contacted responded and, within a few weeks, had offered me projects. I am still working with both of these editors today. ●

for writing successful sample materials is to understand how acquisitions editors go about evaluating proposals.

## Understanding How an Acquisitions Editor Evaluates a Proposal

When faced with the task of evaluating a new project proposal, acquisitions editors must quickly decide if it's worth their time to read it. They may quickly skim the proposal upon receipt, keeping in mind two key questions:

1. Is there likely to be demand for this product?
2. Is this the right author for the project?

If the acquisitions editor thinks there is sufficient demand, and if you seem to possess the knowledge and credibility to warrant the company's investment, you'll have passed the first set of hurdles in the evaluation process. The next step is for the acquisitions editor to confirm the potential market for your proposed project.

### Confirm the Market

In publishers' parlance, a textbook's **market** consists of potential adopters who teach and students who enroll in a specific higher education course (e.g., the "organic chemistry market" or the "English composition market"). Beyond simply identifying the course, the personified "market" refers to adopters' and

## Sample Competition Grid

	Competitor 1	Competitor 2	Competitor 3
<b>Book</b> Author, title, edition, publisher, year			
<b>Market</b> Authors' mission, text themes, unique features, special coverage			
<b>Organization and Content</b> Number of parts and chapters, number of pages per topic			
<b>Apparatus and Pedagogy</b> Chapter openers, chapter closers, pedagogical features			
<b>Presentation</b> Number of pages, number of colors, trim size, bind- ing, number of figures, tables, and photos			
<b>Supplements</b> For instructors For students			
<b>Digital Components</b> Ebook, website, links, apps, other software			

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**A priority (or AAA and A).** A high-investment, typically four-color print or very robust online product.

**Abridgement.** Changes to text by omitting words or paragraphs to shorten it.

**Academic press.** Smaller, usually for-profit, house that publishes upper tier course supplements and scholarly works with modest investment.

**Acceptable manuscript. (also publishable manuscript, satisfactory manuscript).** A completed draft that the publisher deems publishable by some standard.

**Acquisition.** The first phase in the publishing cycle in which a publisher identifies, cultivates, and brings an author under contract to write or originate a work.

**Acquisitions.** 1. Publishers' purchases of other companies. 2. Publishing phase that ends when you submit an acceptable manuscript for which you are under contract.

**Acquisitions editor (AE).** Publisher's staff member who is responsible for a publisher's list. Duties include product and financial planning, finding new authors and managing author relationships, and negotiating contracts. Many acquisitions editors also oversee or remain involved through all phases of a project's development, production, marketing, and sales.

**Active learning.** Self-directed learning through experience or through interaction with text or other information sources.

**Adaptation.** Changes to text by altering words or adding material to make it fit a new purpose.

**Adaptive learning systems (or online homework systems).** Online teaching environments that provide a guided learning path by delivering content tailored to the user's needs. Learning paths are based on the learner's responses to periodic, interim assessments.

**ADDIE.** A systems model for instructional design based on a process involving product analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation.

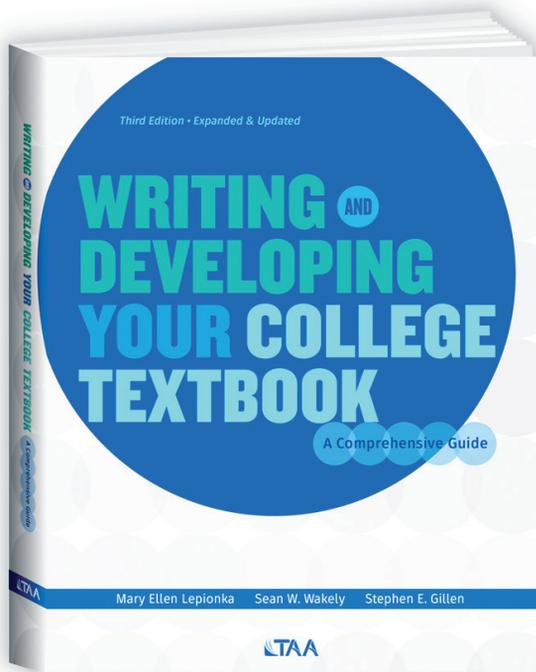
**Addressable market.** Portion of the overall pool of faculty who teach the course targeted by the product who are likely or possible adopters and the students they represent.

**Adopt (or Adoption).** Order a text or product for a course.

**Adoption window.** Time periods within which potential adopters consider products for use during the next term.

**Advance copies.** Product distributed immediately upon printing to a publisher's staff for quality checking, authors, and key adopters.

**Advance organizer.** A pedagogical device (graphical or textual) that prepares readers for learning chapter content by identifying the categories or framework in which the topics are related.



## New Release Available December 2016

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“TAA and the authors have done a wonderful service to us all—textbook, academic, and even trade authors—with this seminal, blood-and-guts guide to the art, craft, and work of authoring. Even though I signed my first contract in 1987, I read every word of this valuable new book and took pages of notes to guide me forward!” — *Robert Christopherson, author of Geosystems, 9e*

**Writing and crafting a textbook and attending to authoring tasks is a time-consuming, complex**—some would say monumental—project, even harrowing at times. This updated and expanded third edition (320 pages) will empower you to undertake textbook development by guiding you through the nuts and bolts of the development process, and providing essential background information on the changing higher education publishing industry, as well as how to choose a publisher, write a textbook proposal, negotiate a publishing contract, and establish good author-publisher relations.

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