

GUIDELINES FOR DISSERTATION REVISION

In writing your dissertation, you worked under strict guidelines regarding your style, tone, and methods of documentation. It is now time to remove those limitations and to write in a style that includes less jargon, is more appealing to a general audience, and, ultimately, better reflects the liveliness of your subject. Bear in mind that the potential book is intended for an audience of many readers while your dissertation was intended for your committee.

Consider specifically the ways in which the manuscript's scope can be broadened beyond the narrow focus of the dissertation. What specific areas of discussion need to be expanded upon? What areas need to be deleted? How does this work contribute to the broader cultural and scholarly debate?

Consider and address the ways in which the organizational structure and documentation can be condensed and streamlined.

Do not *tell* the structure of the book—*show* the structure in your writing. Chapter descriptions and abstracts should be deleted or rewritten to be a natural part of the larger narrative. The literature review and theory review should be deleted. Again, *use* appropriate theoretical approaches in the book, do not *tell* us about theory.

In the manuscript's main body the content of the work is the focus so fewer revisions may be necessary. You should still review the entire manuscript for simple revisions that can be made to make the book more appealing and less mechanical. For example, prose that is stiff and overly formal should be revised. Dissertations often contain many subheads, most or all of which should be deleted. Overt "signposts" in the text should be eliminated, i.e., remove phrases such as "in this chapter I have shown" or, "in the next chapter I will show." Trust the reader to follow your argument.

The Acknowledgments section should not include any references to dissertation, graduate school, thesis, mentors, advisors, or similar keywords. In recent years, we have discovered that libraries will not buy a book if they think it is closely related to a dissertation. They will assume that the book has the same content as the dissertation and that they can get that content through ProQuest or a similar source. You can still thank individuals but they must be listed as friends or colleagues rather than advisors or mentors. For similar reasons, your manuscript should have a different title than the dissertation. Do not waste a great title on a dissertation!

Footnotes should be switched to endnotes that occur at the end of each chapter or at the end of the book, and they should cite specific sources. Notes should not simply duplicate information from the bibliography. They should be substantive. Too many notes will make your book less appealing to the audience and more costly to produce. Long, explanatory notes should either be dropped or incorporated into the text. Such material is either important enough to be in the main body of the book or should not be included. Tables should be included only if they offer specific information above and beyond what is available in the text itself. Similarly, maps and photos should be included only if they serve a specific purpose and are tied to arguments being made in the scholarly analysis.

Two useful guides for revising the dissertation are Eleanor Harman and Ian Montagnes's *The Thesis and the Book* (University of Toronto Press) and William Germano's *From Dissertation to Book* (University of Chicago Press). Both serve as indispensable guides for revisers of dissertations and anyone who is not sure how writing for book publication is distinguished from other writing.

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