

# Writing the Book You'll Teach

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## ABSTRACT

What “bridges the gap” between professional librarianship and the educational practice of LIS programs or iSchool curricula? Textbooks.

Library and information science students require learning materials that will help them enter a rapidly changing field. They need to blend theory with practice to be ready for the varied responsibilities that will accompany jobs in many different kinds of libraries—or jobs outside of libraries. How can a textbook help? Textbooks offer authority, structure, consistency, and reference materials. Authors have done the hard work of validating information. Textbooks are structured to provide an overview of the field of study. They offer consistency; in a class of many students, everyone has access to the same materials. And a good textbook becomes a valuable reference when courses are finished and students enter library practice.

As the field of LIS education changes, LIS textbooks must change with the times. Students need to learn both the practicalities of librarianship and the history, ethics, and pedagogies of their chosen career. It's increasingly important for textbook authors to be innovative thinkers while still being deeply grounded in the area of their expertise.

Textbooks are changing along with the field—professors require that books integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. Students may read a big foundations textbook or a number of smaller texts more specific to a particular track. Student demographics and interests are changing with the times. Archiving is of great interest. Data is important. Media literacy is critical. Many new literacies are entering course syllabi: health information literacy. Privacy literacy. Business information literacy.

So who writes these textbooks? You and your colleagues do. In this informative and entertaining discussion designed to introduce you to textbook authorship and publication, you'll learn from a senior acquisitions editor and published author how to propose, write, and market a textbook.

Senior acquisitions editor Jessica Gribble (Bloomsbury Libraries Unlimited) will offer information about coming up with and refining an idea, writing a proposal, signing a contract, working with an editor, and the challenges and joys of writing the book.

1. Coming up with and refining an idea: Professional development books do one of two things, and they're two sides of the same coin. Either a librarian has found a way to meet a challenge, or they've had an exciting new idea for a program or service. Ideas for textbooks are different; in some ways they're easier to come by, and in others they're far more difficult. Many textbooks come about because a professor has started teaching a new course and has cobbled together some reading materials, but wishes there were a textbook. That professor is a great potential author. Of course, we'll do some research together to learn if this class is being taught at other schools and if other professors would use a textbook. It can be more difficult to publish a textbook as an alternative to books that are already established in their courses, but sometimes it's warranted. This is when we (the potential author and publisher) need to determine what's missing or outdated in the current texts, what will make the new textbook different, and how we'll let professors know about it.
2. Writing a proposal: I'll share our proposal document and some things to think about when proposing a textbook. What courses will use the book? How many schools are teaching that course? What will the table of contents look like? If the textbook is a revision, which parts will be updated? How will the author take pains to keep the textbook relevant in the 5 or so years between editions? Are there any new theories or practices that need to be included? How does it compare to the competition? How long should the book be? How long does it take to write a book?
3. Signing a contract: Although most contracts are standard, what should potential authors understand? Areas for conversation include royalties, index preparation, the often-confusing "protection of the work from competing publications" clause, and registration of copyright vs. publication rights. Some important things aren't included in the contract, like title and cover decisions.
4. Working with an editor (from the editor's perspective): I'm available to work with authors in many ways, depending on how they work best. I'll talk about my role as a therapist of sorts (guilt/nudging/check-ins) and tell a funny story about an author encounter at a conference. I'll describe what authors can expect from an acquisitions editor and what will happen later in the process, when the book is in production.
5. Writing the book: Author Laura Saunders will share her experience. She's both authored and edited books, and she's worked alone and with co-authors and co-editors. She's written an open access textbook and is particularly interested in thinking about the benefits and challenges of open access publishing. She'll share the nitty-gritty of what it's like to write a textbook, what makes it different from an article or professional development book, how to overcome writer's block and fatigue, and how to use your published textbook as part of your professional development moving forward. She'll talk about time management, collaboration tools, responding to changing community needs, new technologies, learning approaches, professional standards, strategies for engaging readers (students and

- faculty), ideas for formative feedback, managing multiple authors and drafts, and dealing with the “too much to cover” problem.
6. Marketing the book: Jessica will give a brief overview of general marketing efforts, including catalogs, e-mail marketing, and conferences.

In our question-and-answer session, we'll encourage all participants to share their experiences with textbooks, both good and bad, and to ask questions about the publication process and the writing process. Our conversation will be open to discussion of the future of textbooks, open educational resources, and textbook affordability initiatives. Textbooks require experienced, knowledgeable authors who are excellent teachers; please join us no matter what stage of your career you're currently in.

## **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

curriculum; education programs/schools; pedagogy; teaching faculty

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

professional development; curriculum; textbook development; LIS education

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