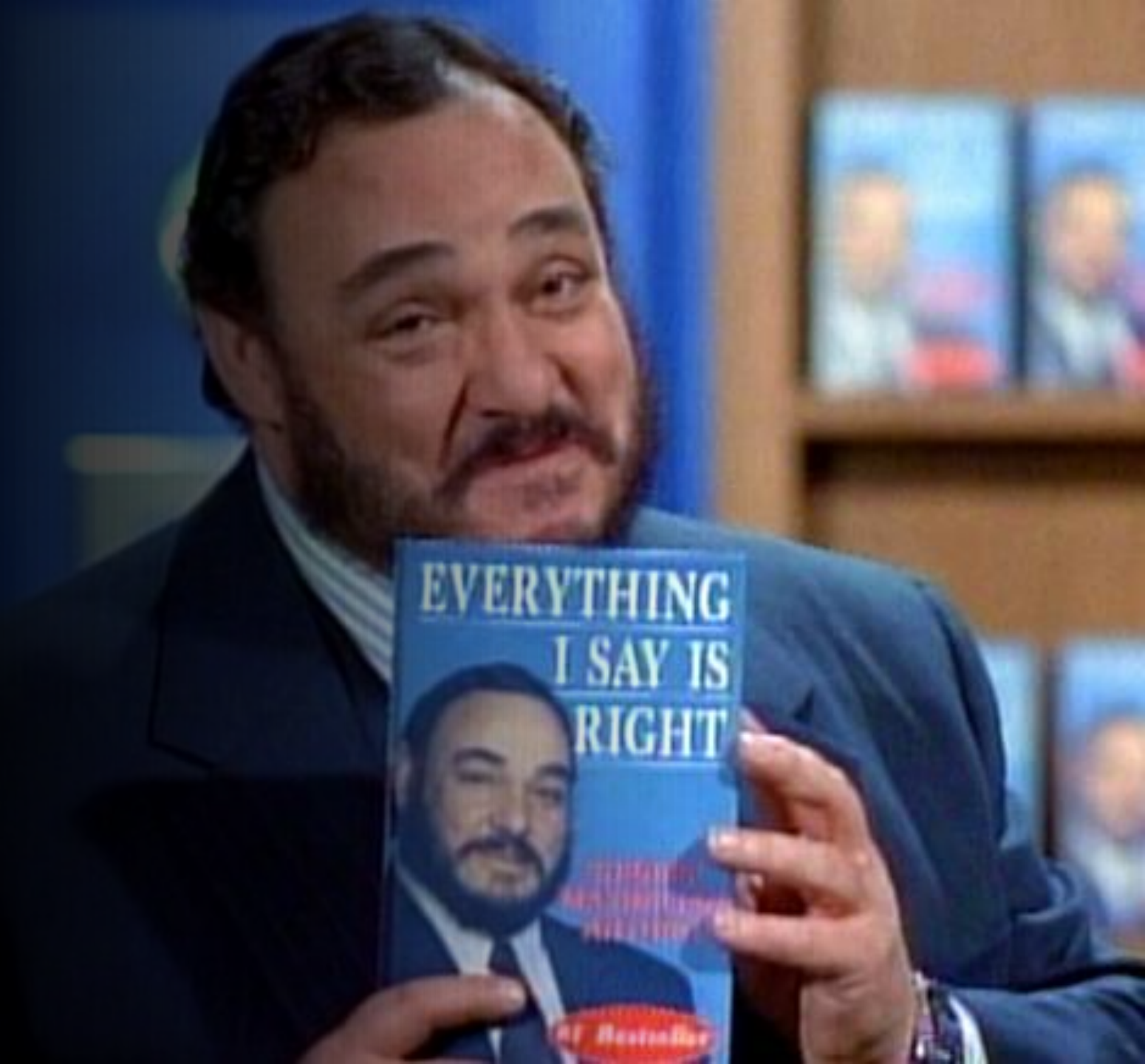




Book Publishing and Proposals

Bleddyn Bowen

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Session plan

- Existential matters: why write a book, and what kind of publishers are there?
- Advice based on my experience in writing book proposals
- We're a small group – please jump in with questions/comments as we go.

Where are we with plans?

Who is planning to write a book?

Who is writing a book right now?

Who is writing a book proposal?

Who has already approached a publisher?

Who already has a book contract?

A close-up photograph of a woman with red hair pulled back, looking out of a window. She has a serious, slightly worried expression on her face. She is wearing a blue and white patterned jacket over a dark top. The background is a window with a view of a building.

But first...

What would you like to get out of this session?

Do you have particular questions in mind already?

Why write a book?

- You have a lot to say! A statement that will likely make more of a lasting impact than articles.
- Larger research projects or arguments can't be captured in articles or chapters
- Monographs give you more intellectual and creative freedom than articles
- More rewarding than articles?
- Books make a statement to wider audiences, academic and non-academic
- More likely that your book will become a touchstone in your (sub)field than articles, and will be read for years to come.
- Institutions and wider audiences pay more attention to books
- A perceived (!) marker as an accomplished researcher
- Best way to communicate academic research to non-academic audiences
- Books stand out on CVs, grant and promotion applications

Limitations of writing books

- As large projects they take more time than articles
 - But – PhD books are an ‘easy win’ – your research is more or less done, just needs polish, edits, maybe 1-2 new chapters and revamped intro/conclusion to be a great University Press monograph
- REF: maximum double weighting for monographs that can be many times longer than a single-weighted article
- Your book needs to be a major contribution to knowledge and relevant fields if targeting most prestigious UPs
- Books need a hook that will sell and make ends meet for the publisher, or make a profit if they are a trade press.
- Production time can take a while, but often they are faster than many journals today from submission to online publishing!

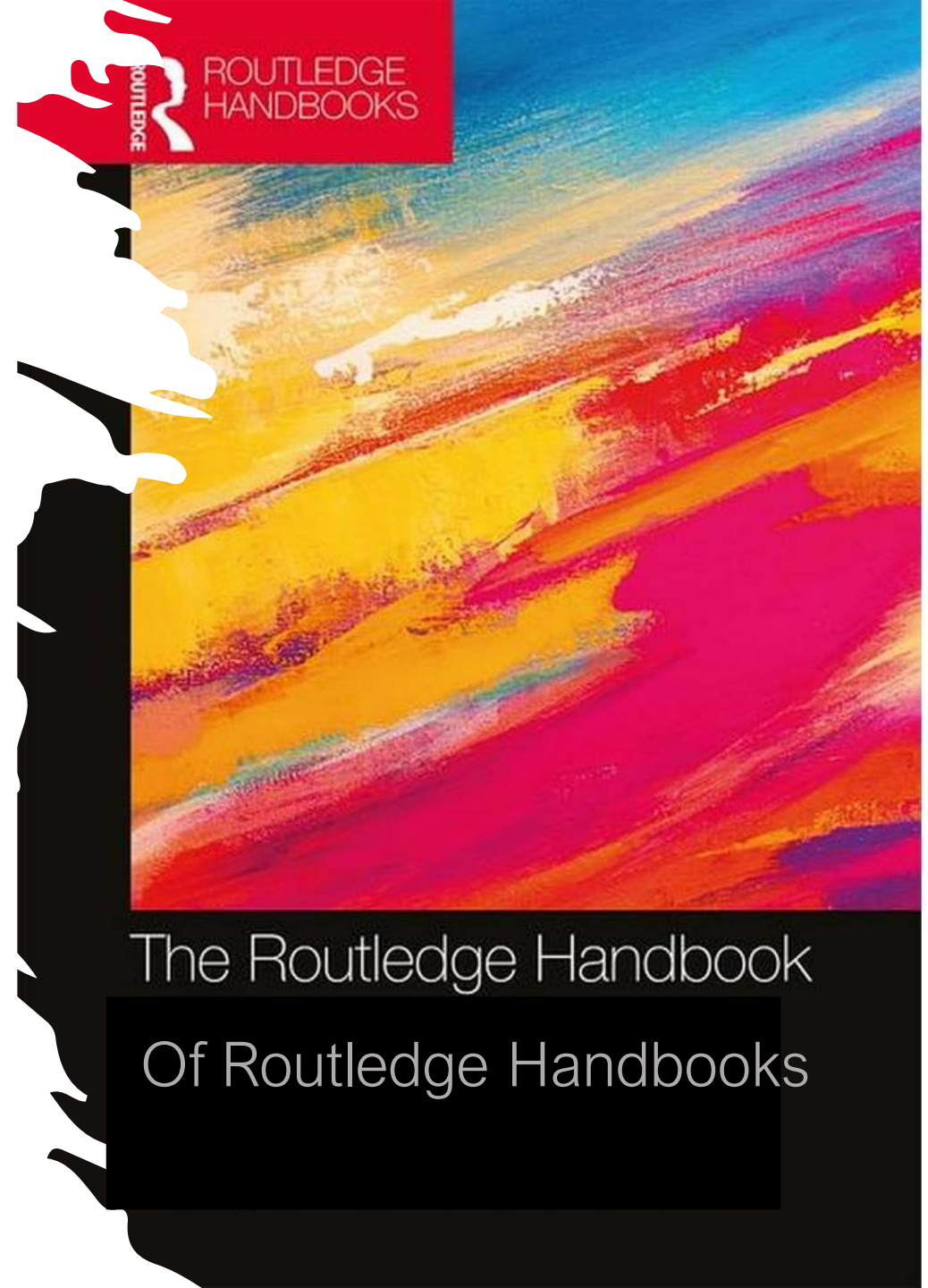
What kind of publisher?

- Ask colleagues in your fields as some publishers like some subjects more than others.
- University Presses
 - Oxford, Cambridge, MIT, Princeton, Stanford, Edinburgh, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, University of Wales Press...
 - Interested in a significant contribution to knowledge. UP council instil greater rigour to published research. Less emphasis on sales. Will not market your book.
 - A book series is a good 'in' with a publisher, but not always necessary. Don't be deterred if there's no series that fits you.
 - Often unaffordable at release. Some UPs have affordable paperback release options 1-2 years after hardback release. Get clear wording in your contract.
- Trade Press
 - Allen Lane, Polity Bloomsbury Academic, Hurst, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, Georgetown UP (?), Yale (?), Oxford UP USA.
 - Interested in rigorous research, but more interest in 'hot topics', narrative structures, and sales than UPs. Will more aggressively market and sell your book.
 - Affordable at release – students, academics, policymakers, think tankers would be able to buy it!
- Some presses are a hybrids (OUP USA, Hurst, Yale). Some are not UPs, but have particular standards or political leanings, and will want to market/push your book.
- Please share any major publishers our groups should target!



Routledge and Palgrave/Springer

- They publish good research – but think about visibility, publicity, prestige and marketing considerations
- Prestige and boosting your CV/promotion efforts
- Academic review and production values
- Marketing and media communications
- Accessibility of their webpages
- Terms and conditions for paperback release
- Remember that UPs are not a guarantee 4* outputs. Routledge/Palgrave are not a block to achieving a 4* rating in REF.



Got a book in progress, but not a publisher?

- If you have a publisher in mind already:
 - Contact the commissioning editor with a brief email and ask if in principle they'd be interested in a proposal on your book and topic
 - Seek them out at conferences and meet them in person
 - It's ok to send your proposal to more than one publisher at a time. Mention in your proposal that this book is being pitched to other publishers at the same time.
- Chasing publishers
 - Some commissioning editors/presses are bad when it comes to communications
 - Do not let a book proposal sit with a commissioning editor for more than 3 months without any response
 - Move on if you are getting no response – even if you previously had a good meeting with an editor
- Most publishers will give you 9-18 months to deliver on the manuscript – so send your proposal in even if you think you need 12 months to finish it.
- Publishers can often be delayed, but not expedited. Publishers have strict production timetables and getting a book out sooner than agreed is rarely heard of.

Book Proposals

- This is a sales pitch! Even for UPs, in a way.
- Why does your research need to be published? Why is it important? What will your book transform or enlighten us about?
- Why is it timely?
- How is your work rigorous?
- What are your credentials?
- What are the target audiences? Groups of people and institutions. Level of comprehension/prior expertise needed?
- Is it a timely subject? A zeitgeist? A rare subject, or entering a crowded field?
- Your writing needs to be clear, simple, impactful – if the commissioning editor can't understand your proposal, they have no reason to expect anyone to understand your book.
- Depending on publisher, the editor may need to 'champion' your book in a committee meeting. Given them the ammunition they need for that meeting.



Proposal Structure

- Get the templates from your selected publisher. Most have these elements:
- Pitch (1 para) and Keywords
- Book summary/synopsis (a couple of pages, your book's top line argument, why your book will stand out, advance knowledge, sell)
- Book structure
- Chapter descriptions (a paragraph each)
- Complementary books
- Competing books
- Fit with publisher
- Target audiences, list
- State of completion and proposed timeline for completion of manuscript
- List of potential reviewers and luminaries for advance praise
- Sample chapter(s)

General advice

- Proposals will need to refer to surrounding literature and the literature you use – it's a time consuming piece of work that needs to show your mastery of the field
- Know your publisher: if it's a trade press, you need to have a good idea of lucrative markets for individual buyers (\$30). UPs, often charities or subsidised by a University, will just want to sell to Libraries and break even (\$120).
- Make sure you look at the price on release. Harass a UP into making written promises in the contract on when they will bring out the affordable paperback.
- Don't take rejections personally or as an attack your work. Many bestsellers got rejected before landing somewhere!
- There's always another publisher – try again!
- Like jobs and research grants: right time, right people, right panels matter a lot.
- If a commissioning editor has given you a good impression, go with your gut.
- For promotions and jobs/grant applications: a book doesn't exist if you don't have a signed contract (then you can say 'forthcoming').
- Royalties are rubbish everywhere – sorry! Most UPs give 2-3% royalties.
- Think of a catchy title and put the effort into a cover later on



You still haven't given up on me?

Never

Good luck!

Final
questions,
thoughts,
comments,
advice?

