

PUBLICATIONS WORKSHOP

The publications workshop, held on Friday morning, 8 June, consisted of four panelists (Denise Lardner Carmody, John Carmody, Joann Wolski Conn, and Kevin Lynch) and drew an audience of about sixty.

Denise Lardner Carmody explained how to prepare a prospectus to concretize a book proposal for a publisher. After contacting an editor at a likely firm, one will generally be expected to provide: (a) a description of the audience (market) that the book targets; (b) a brief survey of the competition, to show what one makes one's proposed book distinctive; (c) an outline, down to about five page units (generally it is advisable to plan books for approximately 150 to 200 manuscript pages or 37,500 to 62,500 words, and to write chapters of about thirty pages or 7,500 words each); (d) a narrative outline, to explain briefly what each chapter will cover; (e) sample chapters, to demonstrate an effective writing style; (f) a schedule, to suggest when one could deliver the completed manuscript; and (g) a curriculum vitae. Those with previous books might also suggest the terms they desire (royalty rate [consider ten percent median] and advance against royalties to cover expenses [\$500 to \$1,000 is reasonable]).

John Carmody offered tips on writing. Assuming that one's research is well under way, if not completely in hand, one should probably begin to write sooner rather than later, because the writing process itself tends to influence one's ideas. Also, one tends to be gratified by realizing that one knows more than what one had previously articulated (Polanyi's tacit dimension). Finally, many writers get blocked because they assume their products have to be polished, rectilinear expressions of clear insights. Getting into the writing process early can disabuse them of this assumption and bring the book down to earth as a practical project bound to go through several revisions. Second, it is usually helpful to have a precise writing schedule, geared to one's own biorhythm and other obligations, so that one can work with a realistic sense of how and when the project should unfold: so many pages a week resulting in so many weeks until the final product. Ideally, one's outline (produced for the prospectus) is a working outline, so one knows how long, at one's average rate of production, each unit should take. For example, averaging one page per working session means that a five-page unit will normally take five sessions. If one's schedule provides for five sessions in a typical week, then each five-page unit should require a week. For a manuscript of 250 pages, that is fifty units and fifty weeks. Prudently then, after verifying that such a schedule was feasible, one could promise a manuscript to a publisher in eighteen months.

Third, good writing involves rewriting, to eliminate unnecessary words, remove dangling phrases, create more accurate and apt language. Standard texts such as Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* remind us to use the active voice, and

make verbs and nouns the sinews of our sentences, rather than adjectives and adverbs. Effective writing establishes a rhythm of principles and examples, generally favoring clear exposition but occasionally adding a touch of poetry. It is helpful to write regularly, daily if possible, to keep one's style in shape, remain in touch with one's project psychologically, and discipline the production of one's project. It is also helpful to begin a session with an editing of the previous session's work, to generate momentum and courage (the editing usually makes the previous work seem less hopeless).

Finally, writers need to remember that writing is a lonely work, making them subject to melancholia and paranoia. Getting support from other writers, staying in touch with one's editor, nourishing the creative part of one's work (so that one can brave the pedestrian parts), and simply stroking one's determination help enormously. Writers should never accept the first rejections of any manuscript; it takes only postage to send it off for another try. With perseverance, openness to criticism, and the discovery that the creative parts of writing can be immensely gratifying, most people who want to publish the fruits of serious study will succeed.

Joann Wolski Conn described the procedures of a typical scholarly journal, using the one she knows best, *Horizons*, as an example. One may distinguish between refereed journals, which send articles out to relevant scholars for evaluation, and journals where the editor or the in-house staff makes decisions without outside reviews. It is useful to study the journals in one's area of research, to learn not only their review procedures but also whether they tend to publish thematic issues, what level and style they favor, how often they appear, and what dimension of one's area or ideological position they seem to favor. Articles do best when they are clearly written, follow the specifications listed by the journal, have an appropriate length, and show a fresh slant or new data. It is legitimate to seek personal contacts at journals, but one should never submit one's work to two or more journals (or book publishers) simultaneously, since they are investing time (and so money, in many cases) with the expectation that, if they find a good manuscript, they will have the right to publish it. *Horizons* tries to solicit book reviews from people who have themselves published books, although other evidence of competence may supply in special cases. Other journals are willing to entertain requests to review books, and, in many cases, reviewing books is the most logical way to start publishing.

Kevin Lynch discussed the state of book publishing nowadays and offered advice on publishing from his vantage point as publisher of Paulist Press. The first concern of the typical publisher is whether the proposed book, or received manuscript, has a market, so authors should begin by asking themselves, For whom am I writing this book? A second and related issue is the cost of publishing the prospective book. Long manuscripts are more difficult to publish, because more expensive. Dissertations rarely make good books for the general market, without wholesale revision. Publishers tend to separate submissions quickly and relatively easily, on the basis of whether there is likely to be a market, whether the writing is clear and interesting, how long the book is, whether the author has any reputation, and so forth. On average, Paulist receives ten to twelve manuscripts a day and can only publish 100 to 120 books a year, so weeding is essential. Therefore,

making one's book stand out, by establishing prior contact with an editor (for example, through a conversation at a convention), as well as by making it very clear what one is attempting, is necessary if one is to receive serious attention. Among the topics now desirable or in vogue, spirituality, Jungian psychology (especially feminist), sexual ethics, business ethics, and such pastoral matters as addiction and codependence come to mind. Writers should respect the expertise of marketing people regarding titles and promotion, should get involved in the promotion of their books, and can trust that more times than not the publisher-writer relationship will work out satisfactorily.

The second half of the session provided time for questions. Among the points clarified during this period were the increasing pressures on university presses and other publishers of scholarly books to consider economic factors, the usefulness of word processors and helpful software (for example, *Nota Bene*), the possibility of breaking into book publishing by editing a collection of essays, the legitimacy of contacting publishers after they have had one's work for a generous amount of time (for example, ten weeks) to inquire where it stands, and the paucity of help that most graduate programs, or first employers, offer regarding how to package and publish one's research.

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