

higher education network

guardianprofessional

Advice, insight and best practice from the community

Previous

Blog home

Next

Getting published: what academics need to know

Peer-to-peer sharing helped Charlotte Frost land a book deal. She gives her top tips for going from PhD to getting published

Tweet 54

Recommend 67

reddit this

Comments (6)

Posted by
Charlotte Frost
Wednesday 27 April 2011
11.59 EDT
Guardian Professional
Article history



A larger | smaller

Higher Education Network
Career advice · Academics

More from Blog on

Higher Education Network
Career advice · Academics

More blogposts



10 ways to tell you are stuck in a research rut
Kicking off our new feature '10 ways to...' with suggestions from our twittersphere, we've compiled 10 ways to tell if you are stuck in a research rut
 2 comments



Why UK higher education institutions should invest in technology
It can seem expensive,



Publishing is an extremely competitive market but by sharing her experiences online Charlotte was able to interest from an academic publisher. Photograph: Martin Oeser/AFP/Getty Images

At heart, I'm a digital researcher, often overly evangelical about the benefits of freely sharing information online. In head, however, I recognise publishing books remains an integral part of academia. After my PhD, I realised I'd need to discover how on earth I might get a book published in an increasingly competitive market – not to mention find a way of reconciling these, the yin and yang of my academic being.

I wasn't alone in exhibiting this apparently split-academic-personality disorder. Much of academia has been in conflict since the arrival of the web. So I decided to find a way of learning about all aspects of the somewhat 'closed source' field of academic publishing (including: how to successfully pitch a book idea to a publisher; get through the peer-review process; write the book on time; co-market the final work; keep up to date on the impact of digital and internet technologies on academic publishing) while staying true to my 'open source' researcher roots.

In January 2010, I started writing my first book proposal. Meanwhile, I set up a website dedicated to sharing everything I was learning along the way about pitching books and managing an academic career.

Unsurprisingly, my initial book proposal was rejected. But by then something very important was happening. I'd realised just how little I'd actually known about academic publishing, while other people – in ever-increasing numbers – were reporting the exact same realisation. My rejected proposal was bigger than me: it spoke of an acutely felt gap in the collective knowledge of emerging academics everywhere.

The online resource was a tremendous success before it was year old. It was popular with a range of post-docs, I'd landed a book deal and had

Jobs of the week

FREE CAREER REVIEW

partners with
guardianjobs

Higher Education vacancies
click here>>
guardianjobs.co.uk

BRITISH COUNCIL
Learn, share, connect, contribute.
E-Learning Consultant, Maternity Cover
Click here >>

Join the Higher Education Network



Sign up now for email updates and much more

SAVE 50%
ON HOME DELIVERY OF THE WEEKENDER
+ FREE ALL DIGITAL ACCESS, ALL WEEK

The New York Times
E-SUBSCRIBE NOW

Job in higher education

Browse by role

- Lecturer jobs
- Research jobs
- Administration jobs
- Management jobs

Browse by location

- Jobs in England
- Jobs in Scotland
- Jobs in London
- Jobs in South East England

On Higher Education Network

Web2PDF

rapidly expanded my skill-set and professional network – not to mention I was off to Sweden on a post-doctoral fellowship (to research a new and intertwined project on publishing). At that stage I was able to take the site to the next level and turn [PhD2Published](#) into a peer-to-peer mentoring tool.

I had planned from the outset that if the site did get me a contract with an academic press, I'd hand over editorial control to someone else, so they could repeat my results. Much of what is needed in successfully writing and publishing a book is mirrored by successfully blogging about your research – it's even giving traditional publishing a run for its (metaphorical) money. If the site was going to reference open source culture – combining the freedoms of the internet with information on how to do something – it had to provide hands-on experience running a research resource as well. Indeed, if PhD2Published was going to unite the yin/yang of digital academia, it would expand the e-age researcher's abilities at every level.

And so, in the spirit of continued sharing, here are my own top five tips on getting published:

Think about your market

If you want to end up with a printed book published by a reputable academic press, you will need to make a case for its economic viability. This means market research. Don't just tell your publisher the book would appeal to course X, Y and Z, tell them *why*. What exactly does it do that other books in the field don't? How will it transform teaching in this area? Why will course managers make students read your book over the others on their list? Show the publisher there's a really good chance your book will sell – preferably in decent numbers.

Don't go in cold

Is there a way you can make publishers aware of you before you pitch to them? This doesn't mean an email introducing yourself, or saying "Hi" at a book fair (although these aren't entirely terrible ideas), it means finding a way onto their radar and – if at all possible – getting them to approach you. Partly, this can be achieved by speaking at high profile events and making your work appeal to as broad an audience as possible, but organising for them to speak at your institution or launch a book there are great ways too.

Don't tell publishers that your book will be the first of its kind – even if that's true

The publisher will need to understand which established markets your book will sell to. If you tell them it's like nothing else, you're actually telling them there's no established market. This is the last thing they want to hear because it takes a lot of time and money to create a market from scratch. If, however, you can describe your book as structured like Writer A's, or containing a discussion that counter-argues Writer B's, they know straight away who else they might sell it to.

What can you offer your publisher besides the book itself?

Publishing is a business so you'll be more appealing as a potential author if you can help sell your book. Have you got contacts at a high profile venue for the launch? What other events could your book be sold at? Who is well-known and can review it? Have you considered doing a virtual book tour or making a video trailer? Do you have other promotional ideas or institutional tie-ins? Are you good with social media and can you build interest now? All these and more can feature in your proposal if they are definite ways you can increase sales.

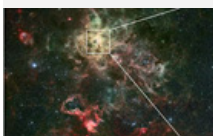
Think outside the book

Is your work better suited to becoming a set of journal articles? With many academic publishers now producing eBook versions of texts, consider the benefits of going digital. While it's lovely to have something physical to show for your work, it might be faster, cheaper and more attuned to your topic, career strategy and philosophy to publish an eBook. And if time is really of the essence, think about the benefits of the web – you might well reach a bigger audience, make a name for yourself internationally and land that job sooner.

Dr Charlotte Frost is broadcaster and academic focusing on art's

but even simple innovations can have a big impact on your institution, students and working life, argues JISC's Professor David Baker

2 comments



Going viral: Using social media to publicise academic research

From zombie ants to the music of the sun, Kyle Christie highlights the research stories that went viral and created a storm of publicity for their institutions

4 comments

Related

6 Dec 2011

Writing a CV for an academic post

19 Oct 2011

Job seeking in the United States: applications advice for academics

29 Jun 2011

Live chat: How to get ahead in academic publishing

13 Sep 2011

Working abroad - live chat best bits

Most viewed

Zeitgeist

Latest

Last 24 hours



1. A guide to self-publishing for academics and researchers: live chat

2. Top 100 QS World University Rankings for computer science and information systems 2011

3. Writing a CV for an academic post

4. Five predictions for the future of higher education marketing

5. The top 200 QS World University Rankings 2011

More most viewed

Higher Education on Twitter



GdnHigherEd: RT @JanieT56: @NCAD_Dublin @StaffsUni @udnews @UniofEdinburgh @covcampus @BPP @UniofAdelaide @PrisonersEd @AngliaRuskin bit.ly/u86pb8 about 12 hours, 14 minutes ago



GdnHigherEd: RT @NottsProfSteve: You mean there are currently more than 10 jobs going in HE? < Tis the season to be jolly about 12 hours, 15 minutes ago



GdnHigherEd: HE #Jobs top 10: @NCAD_Dublin @StaffsUni @udnews @UniofEdinburgh @covcampus @BPP @UniofAdelaide @PrisonersEd @AngliaRuskin bit.ly/u86pb8 about 12 hours, 20 minutes ago

• Read all tweets in our archive
• Follow us on Twitter @GdnHigherEd

Higher Education from the around web

7 Dec 2011

3 easy ways to beat PhD boredom

From The Three Month Thesis

7 Dec 2011

Aotearoa ... kei te aroha au ki a koe

From Learning with 'e's

6 Dec 2011

Revisiting Flashcards

From ProfHacker

About Guardian Professional

guardianprofessional

Guardian Professional Networks are our new community sites, where we bring together advice, best practice and insight from a wide range of professional communities. Click here for details of all our networks. Guardian Professional is a division of Guardian News & Media.

Web2PDF

converted by Web2PDFConvert.com

relationship with technology. A specialist in the impact of the internet on art history and criticism, she is currently writing her own first book, *Art History Online*; editing an experimental book series *Arts Future Book*; and overseeing *PhD2Published*.

This content is brought to you by **Guardian Professional**. To get more articles like this direct to your inbox, become a member of the **Higher Education Network**.

[Previous](#)

[Blog home](#)

[Next](#)

[Printable version](#) [Send to a friend](#) [Share](#) [Clip](#) [Contact us](#) [Article history](#)



Do you work for Target?

If so, you qualify for special pricing from Dell.

[Shop Now >](#)

Your PC, simplified.  **Windows 7**

Inspiron™ 17R
Featuring Windows® 7 Home Premium

Ads by Google

Are You Writing A Book?

Become A Published Author Today. Get Your Free Guide To Publishing.
www.iUniverse.com/Get-Published-Now



Publish Your Book

Research Publishing Companies Here. Follow Just 3 Easy Steps. Start Now
www.SearchForPublishers.com

Have You Written a Book?

Get published with an American publishing company in 30 days.
www.AuthorHouse.com

Comments in chronological order (Total 6 comments)

 Staff
 Contributor



StephenBMalcolm
27 April 2011 8:22PM

Dr Frost offers 5 excellent tips for successfully publishing new work and ideas and they make much sense in the rapidly changing world of publishing as more and more small publishers are swallowed by huge corporations. These changes argue for looming problems to me, especially as libraries and other organizations struggle to keep pace with the profit-making motives that drive all commercial publishers. Such profit-making can also stifle creativity and genuine contributions as well as possible paradigm shifts within one's own discipline. For me publishing should be about communicating something that is worth communicating and this worth can be either now or at some point in the future. So I would recommend a focus on true creativity and the rest should take care of itself if you choose the right publisher.

[Recommend \(0\)](#)
[Responses \(0\)](#)
[Report abuse](#)
[Clip| Link](#)



Trenchardcleats
28 April 2011 6:41AM

Well, this is interesting.

Charlotte's tips are useful, but she does perhaps ignore a couple of areas which I feel must have contributed to her success.

The first is about zeitgeist. Her area of expertise is very 'now', which never yet hindered anyone in the rush to get published.

The second is about the long haul. A quick scan of her CV and website shows quite clearly that she has been working towards this since her BA if not before. She hasn't simply breezed out of her PhD and bagged herself a publishing deal.

[Recommend \(0\)](#)
[Responses \(0\)](#)
[Report abuse](#)
[Clip| Link](#)

Her mode of dissemination is obligatory for her area - I wonder how this transfers into other academic realms.

More power to her E-Elbow.



Hittisleigh

28 April 2011 9:41AM

My advice is be realistic when picking publishers to approach. If OUP or CUP are your first choice - take a look at their list and see how many first books they are publishing in your area. If a publisher expresses an interest in putting it through the review process - press them to get a realistic idea of how long this process normally takes. The rule of thumb is - the bigger the press the longer it takes. Once it enters the review process - it is not OK to tout the proposal to other presses, so you need to know that you are going to get a decision within a timeframe that is not going to severely delay your career plans.

Some PhDs are better off as articles. Conclusions from minute case studies are OK in 10,000 words but are not going to be read when 100,000 words long. Publishers prefer bolder, more ambitious works to the perfectly worked micro study.

It is also important to acknowledge that the UK market for academic monographs is tiny (no money, 6 copyright libraries). You must get into your proposal how your book will sell in international markets. North America is the key - suggest US reviewers - underline any American conference papers or US Journals contributed to.

For a quicker decision, quicker publishing process and usually a better overall experience - I suggest smaller presses (but big enough to have a US distributor and agents and representatives in several other countries).

Recommend (2)

Responses (0)

[Report abuse](#)

[Clip| Link](#)



sarahlouq

28 April 2011 9:43AM

@Trenchardcleats

The transferable nature of this strategy is something we are now looking at. I have been running PhD2Published, as its Managing Editor, since January. I come from a completely different background, i am a Development Geographer, and as such most of my work relates to international institutions and their work in developing countries. We couldnt be more different. So PhD2Published now charts my approach to publishing and is currently focusing predominantly on journal articles.

This week we have a special feature on social media for research and researcher development as thats a passion of mine and is how i got involved with this project in the first place. I believe these skills and this way of doing things will be just as valuable to my academic realm as they were to Charlottes it also facilitates a wider debate about the changing nature of publishing and provides general advice and interaction with a community of researchers trying to do the same thing.

I think the way that academics view publishing is changing it is less about the pure advancement of knowledge but is being driven by impact factors and REFs and so now publishing what, where and when is the result of strategic planning. This is not necessarily a good thing but it is what i am starting to see happening.

Recommend (0)

Responses (0)

[Report abuse](#)

[Clip| Link](#)



seandodson

28 April 2011 12:49PM

Very useful information, thanks very much

Recommend (0)

Responses (0)

[Report abuse](#)

[Clip| Link](#)



nhjhe

28 April 2011 3:19PM

BSI are always looking for authors, which could be an avenue for some academics: <http://www.bsigroup.com/en/Standards-and-Publications/How-to-get-involved/Become-a-BSI-author/>

Also, if any academics are interested in researching standards (a very under-researched area, which is silly IMHO) I'm happy to provide support via BSI. Get in touch!

Recommend (0)

Responses (0)

[Report abuse](#)

[Clip| Link](#)

Comments on this page are now closed.

Related information

Higher Education Network

Career advice · Academics



What the experts said: Routes into medical research careers

14 Mar 2011

How essential is a PhD if you want to develop your career in medical research? And do you need a background in medicine? Industry insiders share their career tips

8 Aug 2011

LBG in HE: 'People perform better when they can be themselves'

31 Aug 2011

The measure of blogging: the use of different media in academic publishing

24 Aug 2011

Live chat: surviving your first academic post. Friday 26 August, 1pm GMT

13 Apr 2011

Live Q&A: Life after a PhD



Teach or perish: early career academics need course design experience

8 Nov 2011

At the start of her career, assistant professor Afshan Jafar was told publish or perish. But has realised while looking for jobs that it's teaching experience and evaluations that matter

On this site

[Academics](#)

[Career advice](#)

[Confessions of a...](#)

[Infrastructure](#)

[Management, admin and services](#)

[Student experience](#)

[Alumni](#)

[Communications/marketing](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Innovation](#)

[Professional development](#)

[Teaching](#)

[A-Z of this site](#)

[Fees](#)

[International](#)

[Research](#)

[Technology](#)

[License/buy our content](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Terms of service](#) | [US Advertising](#) | [A - Z index](#) | [About guardiannews.com](#)
© 2011 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.