

My Experiences Writing a Textbook and My Advice to Potential Authors

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Disclaimer

- ▶ None of this may apply to you or work for you.
- ▶ My preference is to use free, open source tools.

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... it is important to realize that any lock can be picked with a big enough hammer.

Sun System & Network Administration manual

Getting Started

- ▶ PASSHE Teaching Academy

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- ▶ Create a comprehensive set of lecture notes for a subject you are passionate about teaching. Use those notes to teach a class.
- ▶ Compose 3–4 written chapters from these notes, complete with figures, equations, tables, and exercises.

Getting Serious: The Book Proposal

- ▶ Author's(s') Contact Information
- ▶ Curriculum Vitae
- ▶ Book Information
- ▶ Marketing Information
- ▶ Single-page promotional writeup

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Maybe big-name authors (*e.g.*, Stephen King, Robert T. Smith, J.K. Rowling, *etc.*) have people to do the last two for them, but as a first-time, nobody – you will have to do it yourself.

Book Information

- ▶ Title/Subtitle
- ▶ 100-250 word description
- ▶ Advantages over the competition
- ▶ Subject classification
- ▶ Type of book (textbook, monograph, study guide, solutions manual, *etc.*)
- ▶ Readership
- ▶ Level of textbook
- ▶ Detailed comparison with at least 3 competing titles
- ▶ Names and contact information for at least 3 reviewers
- ▶ Estimated number of pages, figures, tables, *etc.*
- ▶ Manuscript format
- ▶ Estimated date of delivery
- ▶ Table of Contents
- ▶ Sample chapters

Marketing Information

- ▶ Domestic and international colleges and universities that would be especially interested in your textbook
- ▶ Professional societies that might distribute information about the book
- ▶ Newsgroups, forums, web sites
- ▶ Professional journals and reviews
- ▶ Professional events and conferences

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... and then you wait ...

Rejections and Acceptance

- ▶ It is natural to think that judging by the rejection letters, no one actually read your proposal.
- ▶ The acceptance letter will bring an extensive set of comments from reviewers.
- ▶ Contract
- ▶ Author's guide

Contract

- ▶ Legal document, **read it!**
- ▶ Definition of terms (“net sales receipts”, “all media”, *etc.*)
- ▶ Ask, ask, ask about anything you do not understand.
- ▶ Royalties (hard/soft bound editions, special sales, translations, *etc.*)

After Publication

- ▶ Create a web site for the book.
- ▶ Make it convenient for people to comment on the book and to ask questions about it.
- ▶ You will receive lots of helpful comments from readers and TONS of crazy comments (which you can politely ignore).
- ▶ Stand by helplessly as unknown entities steal your intellectual property.
- ▶ Create accompanying ancillary materials (lecture notes, homework exercise bank, test bank).
- ▶ Start working on the next edition (the one where you will fix all your mistakes).
- ▶ Add an entry to your CV.

Tips on Writing (worked for me)

- ▶ Write everyday.
- ▶ If you are blocked, edit what you have written.
- ▶ \LaTeX , *Mathematica*, bash, make, and perl are good to know.