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Photo credit: The cover photo of Okinawan festival banner poles is © Ann Christine Eek / Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, and appears by kind permission.

According to the records of the JAWS Treasurer, you, *William W. Kelly*
have paid the JAWS membership subscription effective until April 09

テーマ: *MAKING YOUR PH.D INTO A BOOK*

(blurbs in 50 word and 200 word versions – academics are not good at these!) as well as suggestions for where to have the book reviewed and sold. This can be tedious but to be fair it is probably the author who knows these details best and it is not an unreasonable request. Much more tedious is making an index. Most publishers these days offer the option of either the author doing the index themselves or else the publisher doing it for a fee or for a reduction in royalties. I would always advise the former, if at all possible, not for financial but academic reasons. Indexes are a guide to how you want the book read. The choice of categories to index is a very subjective one and a mechanical index of the type produced by most publishers will not capture this nearly as well as the author can.

Perhaps the strangest part of the publication process occurs long after the book has appeared. Most academics have already started on a new project sometime before the book is published and many turn to this new project full-time once it is out. There tends however to be a long lag between publication and the appearance of academic reviews, often as long as two years, and it is often only at this point that many academics in the field become aware of your work and invite you to come and talk about it. Suddenly, therefore, years after you have moved on from the project of the book, you suddenly find yourself in demand to talk about it when very often what you really want to talk about is something quite different!

Writing your PhD, Writing your Book? Not the Same Thing!

William W. Kelly
Yale University

For most of us anthropologists working in the American academy, the nature of American doctoral education and the structure of the university tenure system in the United States have created a necessary and anxious relationship between a doctoral dissertation and a first book. In the US academic world, the doctoral dissertation is our primary credential for the PhD and often for our first job; our first book, almost always based on the dissertation, is our primary credential for tenure.

How long this will remain the convention in US academics is an open question. Increasingly, new Ph.D.'s are taking up postdoctoral fellowships for a

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year or two, during which they are expected to finish "revisions" to their dissertations and initiate a new project. Thus, they may well begin their first tenure-track job with the "dissertation book" already under review or even accepted, with the perverse effect of raising the stakes for their tenure decision six or so years after that. With rising expectations, the first book may not be sufficient, but it is certainly necessary in a monograph discipline like sociocultural anthropology, and the dissertation-first book relationship remains critical for most current doctoral students.

Another feature of the contemporary American Academy raises the stakes higher, and that is the perceived monograph crisis in university publishing. Over and over, we are told by university press editors that they are no longer interested in straightforward and narrow gauged monographs. Even for university presses, we must provide them with short books addressed to broad readerships across several fields, attractive for course adoption, and written in accessible, "jargon-free" style, with apt illustration but not numbing detail. As an object of press interest, the old-fashioned dissertation, weighty with data and encrusted with baroque academic prose, would appear to be an endangered species.

So what should students do, arriving back from the field and confronted with "writing up"? If the dissertation is the first draft of your first book, and that first book must be broadly appealing, shouldn't you thus write your dissertation from the start as a "publishable book" and not as a "dissertation monograph"? Shouldn't you put the latest and trendiest slim book by a current academic star next to your computer and emulate that?

Perhaps, but my own advice to dissertation writers is rather more old school. I don't think much is to be gained and in fact much may be lost in time and effort if you dwell too much on the eventual published book. Being too anxious about connecting the dissertation to the subsequent book risks undermining the dissertation writing process itself.

For most of us, the dissertation is something at least two or three times longer than anything we've ever written before. The problem here is not length per se; although students often worry that they will never be able to write 300 pages, this is seldom difficult if they have done a decent job in the research itself. Rather, the real challenge is structure: how to bring organization to all that field work material and how to formulate an argument that follows from a central animating question with that many topics and that much data.

Press editors have told me that the problem with dissertations is that they are written for three professor-readers. I think instead that is their strength, and I

urge my students to keep us three in mind. For most of us, it is very hard to write the first draft of our first book for a broad and imagined audience; it is much easier to write for a couple of people we know—and whom we know to be interested but critical supporters.

To me, the major pitfall in dissertation writing is trying to accomplish too much simultaneously. The standard writing guide wisdom is correct but too often overlooked. Write a first draft as fast as possible. It will be ugly and messy, and you will be embarrassed to show it to your best friend let alone faculty supervisor. But it will also be satisfying and useful. A first draft is an exercise in recovery and discovery – recovering the materials and memories of field research from your boxes of notes or computer files and from the recesses of your mind and discovering their potential substantive and analytical importance. Everything is preliminary and provisional and tentative. Put aside style, put aside coherence, put aside conclusions.

Quality only comes after quantity, and that is why a second draft is such a very different act of thinking and composition than a first draft. Your first draft is an effort to find an argument, while your second draft is an effort to articulate and defend it—and only are third and subsequent drafts efforts to style it and tighten it up. I have never met a graduate student Zeus, producing a fully-formed Athenaic dissertation from the forehead (and I as supervisor have never cleaved an axe like Hephaestus).

Dissertation writing is a difficult but rewarding gestation, and I think its success comes from fully appreciating how much it is a step-by-step process and from having a small set of individuals as primary audience (or Lamaze partners?). Imagining your dissertation as a book on the tables of the presses in the book exhibits of the AAA annual meetings is a motivational fantasy but it is not a useful guideline for such a writing project itself.

In closing, I admit that my old-fashioned advice has two implications, one of which is to emphasize the distance rather than the connection between the dissertation and the first book. You write the dissertation for your supervisor and two or three other professor-readers; you write the book for a press editor and a tenure committee who are seldom fellow specialists. The dissertation is a scholarly monograph; the book may or may not be. The dissertation is a document of record that demonstrates that research has been done competently and thoroughly; the book is an appeal for an audience and an argument for tenure.

Dissertation supervisors think about problem, argument, and evidence. Press editors think about market appeal and cost containment. Tenure

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committees think about, well, what? Their judgments of your scholarship will hopefully rest on competence and reputation, but how that is applied in your case will depend on the configurations of committees, the criteria of the university or college, and the vicissitudes of the moment. How can you predict these six years in advance? [Or one might say, do you write for the devil you know or that which lurks unknown?]

The second implication is my skepticism that the specialized monograph is as dead as press editors claim it to be. Is the "the monograph crisis" fact or fiction? I think it has elements of both, which is to say it is socially constructed and instrumentally motivated by presses to formulate and justify publishing decisions in these terms. It would exaggerate the import of academic publishing to call it a moral panic, but it troubles me that monograph crisis-mongering does tend to stigmatize those who are usually the youngest and most vulnerable authors. There are surely very real constraints and challenges to American university presses that impinge especially on young academics—but when was there not such a time? Beneath the snazzy titles and colorful covers of the books that now decorate the AAS and AAA exhibits is some very serious scholarship that began years before as dissertations and still retains its valuable monographic qualities.

**Turning your Thesis into a Book:
Should Anthropology be Comprehensible to People without Ph.D.s?**

Gordon Mathews
Chinese University of Hong Kong

Ph.D. theses are written with a very tiny audience in mind – your supervisor and other professors on your thesis committee – and are meant to ascertain your academic qualifications for entering the anthropological profession. As such, most Ph.D. theses are unreadable. Unless it is a professional obligation, few in their right mind would want to read the convoluted argumentation of most Ph.D. theses, bristling with citations and crammed with footnotes. Indeed, the Ph.D. thesis is designed to be unreadable. It is proof that you have mastered the academic complexities of a particular area of anthropology, and engaged in original research that adds to that area; it is a testament that you are no longer a layperson but a professional anthropologist, able to write in professional