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INSTRUCTIONS ON CONVERTING A PHD THESIS INTO A BOOK¹

1. From PhD to First Book

We know that everyone who has earned a PhD must have worked hard and consistently on their thesis. But a thesis is a requirement for a degree and is a part of an examination system. As a result, there are fundamental differences between a thesis and a book. Therefore, turning your doctoral thesis into a publishable book will require some significant adjustments and adaptation of the content, structure and style. Although there is no single set of rules that can guide you in the process of getting a publishable book out of your PhD thesis, some elements usually distinguish a typical doctoral thesis from a monograph. This document is meant to offer some useful hints in this direction.

2. The Four Qualities of a Book

Turning your doctoral thesis into a book will require you to re-edit the text of your thesis and revise its style. In this journey, your book will probably need to be more:

- Personal
- Focused
- Essential
- Readable

3. The Main Differences between a PhD Thesis and a Book

It would be useful to be clear about the basic differences between a thesis and a book. These can be summarised as follows:

Thesis

- Fulfils an academic requirement
- Audience: one's thesis committee
- Often depends on quotations, mostly presented in blocks

1. Please note this text draws from the following book: Germano, William. 2005. *From Dissertation to Book*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

- Often hides the authorial voice
- Structure demonstrates analytical skills
- Examples are numerous, and can be repetitive
- Few, long chapters
- Stops

Book

- Fulfils a desire to speak broadly
- Audience: thousands of people you don't know
- Quotes others judiciously, and often not in blocks, but as parts of an argument
- Creates and sustains an authorial voice
- Structure demonstrates a sensible and necessary flow of your argument
- Examples are well-chosen and move the story forward
- Several chapters of readable length
- Concludes

4. Title

The title is the first thing a potential reader or buyer will get to know about your book. It will have to address in a direct and essential way the main content of your work within a specific discipline. For this reason, the title of your book will normally be shorter than your dissertation. It should also be creative. It can have a main title and a sub-title as well if this helps.

5. Blurb

The abstract of your thesis needs to become the blurb of a commercially available book. The blurb usually ends up on the back-cover or the front or back flap of the dust cover. It is important that you present your work in a catchy way to capture your potential reader's attention. Along with the blurb, you need to include a brief biographical note. As far as TAP is concerned, you should consider the following when writing your blurb:

- Write the blurb in 300 words or less
- Your biographical data should be up-to-date and drafted in two or three sentences
- Please note that TAP has the right to amend these prior to final publication

6. Preface / Foreword

In general, a 'preface' or 'foreword' should simply help situate your work in a specific context, which will give it meaning. Given this, think about what a 'preface' or 'foreword' might add to your book, and ask yourself if you need one. If you think you do, then consider an appropriate person to write it, such as your supervisor, a member of the jury that examined your PhD thesis, a well-known scholar in your field etc. In the case of a preface, it can also be you. It would make sense to read a few prefaces and forewords in some good published works before you begin.

7. Chapters

How many chapters your book will have and what they do, will depend on what you have to say. But in general it would help if your chapters were similar in length. Make sure they flow logically and sensibly, in a way that will make your book easier to read and will help advance your argument. The first chapter in many theses often deals with theory and methodology. If this is the model adopted by your thesis, you may need to radically rethink your first chapter in a published book. Your theoretical considerations and conceptual clarifications should not be confined in a single chapter. The first chapter is supposed to help contextualize and situate your work, and in doing so some explanation of theoretical considerations will certainly help. But it is preferable to bring this material into the chapters where you actually deal with these issues on the basis of your own research and ensure that there is an engagement between your information and theory.

A thesis generally allocates considerable space to discuss matters of methodology in the first or second chapters. This is something that needs to be carefully thought through in a book. There is no unequivocal solution to the place that methodology occupies in a book. It will often depend on the discipline in which you are writing and how sensitive your potential audience is to methodological questions. Our general suggestion is, that your discussion on methodology should be brief, and only what is essential to make sense of your approach should be part of your book. This discussion can come in your first chapter.

There are things that one finds at the beginning or end of chapters in PhD theses that do not look good, or are not needed in, a book. As a rule:

- Keep 'sign-posting' as limited as possible, and instead present a clear table of contents
- Avoid explaining and apologizing for what the research is not about
- Put detailed references and names of authors in the bibliography rather than the main text
- Give a sense of the proportion of your work and its importance

8. Notes

Notes are an essential part of most books. These consist of additional information that would be useful to readers but need not be in the main text of your work. Before working on the notes, please consult the *Tambapanni Style Guide* as our requirements might be different from other publishers. As you edit notes, keep the following in mind:

- Check whether you need to keep the same system as in the thesis or you need to change (e.g. TAP prefers footnotes as opposed to endnotes)
- Remember that too many footnotes compromise readability, and therefore you should only refer to the most crucial and useful information in footnotes.
- Do not place your references in footnotes. These should be in the bibliography.
- You can refer to books and articles for additional reading in footnotes, which need not be brought into the bibliography.

9. Bibliography

The bibliography should be at the end of the book. But the bibliography that was initially developed for your thesis might be too long, and there can be mistakes in it. So, at the outset, consider getting rid of references that are not strictly necessary and also ensure your references are complete and correct. All references should be alphabetized (English alphabet) against the surname of authors. Before working on the bibliography, please consult the *Tambapanni Style Guide* for exact referencing and stylistic considerations, as our requirements might be different from other publishers.

10. Quality of Prose and Style

Language and style are very important when a manuscript is considered for publication. As such, making self-confident, fluid and clear statements is crucial to meeting standards for publication. In general, you may pay attention to the following:

- When you are making a point, go for 'first-person-indicative' statements (I have shown) and do not hide yourself behind 'neutral-third-person-conditional' periphrasis (It would appear)
- Use the active and avoid the passive form. The passive form is heavy and can be confusing, especially when you do not specify the agent of the action
- Don't go around concepts or dilute a statement that could be put down in a simple and direct way

Here are some examples of sentences you should try to avoid:

- Although I do not actually conclude that...
- I am basically more concerned with...
- But even though I will generalize in this area, I will not devote myself to...

11. Standards of Peer Review

Keep in mind that your manuscript will be peer reviewed by an expert in the relevant field. It would be useful for you to know what a peer reviewer will look for in any manuscript:

- The main argument of the book and how it differs with respect to what it is already known in the field. There should be clarity in this
- An understandable and grammatically correct text
- A minimal use of adjectives and adverbs: try to use as little evaluative and judgemental language as possible. This is often a problem of many theses.
- Fluent arguments, which are usually channelled through direct noun-verb sentences
- Evidence for statements and cogent reasoning
- Correct referencing and clarity that you are sure of your sources and information

12. Useful Resources

We have simply given you some basic advice in this document. The following links will take you to websites or documents that will give you much more detailed advice on how to transform your thesis into a book. We suggest that you take some time to visit these sites and familiarise yourself with the advice offered:

- **Melbourne University Publishing**
- **Ashgate**
- **Ibidem**
- **Chicago University Press**

