

PROPOSAL THOUGHTS!

BY Harriet Earle

So, monographs. This is my 'thought dump' about the proposal. I've reviewed quite a few monograph proposals so this is based on that... I pre-empt this by saying that other people might look for different things and this is entirely my take on it. I'm in Comics Studies, which is a small and interdisciplinary field that is still quite new and finding its feet/conventions/'norms'.

The main two things I look for are:

- coherence
- 'ground-breaking-ness'

If it's a tentative proposal (i.e. no MS yet), I'll also look at the feasibility of scope and timescale.

But the big things are:

- Does the book add something new/different to the current conversation?
- Does it do so in a way that is sensibly and reasonably presented?

1. Coherence: This is not to say that the structure can't be a little way out but overall it should hang together in a cohesive whole. Chapters should make sense in relation to each other and the thesis should form a clear thread throughout the whole MS. If these things are weak, then the chapters may work better as individual chapters in edited collections or as journal articles. The point of the book proposal is not only to make the points of the book clear but to show why it should be a book and not a series of articles. My friend, who works

for T&F, suggests a book should make one bold point in a number of different ways. It's a good way to look at it.

Coherence also means 'coherence in relation to the wider conversation'. Who is going to read your book and why? Demonstrating that you know your place in the wider scheme of things is super-important because, let's face it, publishers have their eye firmly on the numbers.

2. 'Ground-breaking-ness': Kind of self-explanatory but... you've got to have a good point to bother with the book in the first place. I would expect to see a clear engagement with all the big stuff in your area and by that I don't just mean a footnote. Why are you not the same as Dr X or Dr Z? They are your competition and you're different because 'blah blah'. The other thing is DO NOT BE WISHY-WASHY. This is a book. Make your points and make them boldly. If an argument is too tentative, it's not for a book. This isn't to say you have to staunchly hold all the beliefs in your book for the rest of your days (I don't) but it's also not a place for 'working through' stuff/works in progress/developing ideas for future use.

Additionally - and this is because I'm a Grammar Nazi (or 'alt-write' if you prefer) - use the formatting of the press. Show that you're prepared to work with them and not someone who will be damn pest when it comes to the MS prep stage.