

The Publisher-in-Residence Program

The Premise

For decades the "publish or perish" mantra has been an integral part of college and university life, inasmuch as most faculty members' tenure, promotion, and merit pay are tied directly to the accomplishments a faculty member achieves in the publishing world. Yet few universities or colleges provide any professional help to their faculty regarding the publishing process, whether for books, portfolios, or journal articles. This is the equivalent of having a hospital without surgeons.

As a result, faculty members are left adrift as to what publishers are looking for, how to prepare a manuscript ready for external peer review and eventual publication, how to consider and integrate illustrations into materials, and how to navigate the process and work with a publisher. The lack of such professional advice usually results in under-developed and poorly prepared manuscripts and book proposals.

The Publisher-in-Residence program is designed to help remedy this situation in a friendly, helpful, and financially responsible way. Each program is customized to meet respective faculty, departmental, and institutional needs. Recent clients include:

CENTER, Photo Review Santa Fe

Towson University, Office of the Provost

University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, College of Arts and Sciences

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Geography

University of Mississippi in Oxford, Center for the Study of Southern Culture

University of Georgia in Athens, College of Environment and Design, and the Graduate School

University of Colorado in Boulder, Department of Geography

University of Baltimore, Office of the Provost and Langsdale Library

University of Texas at Austin, School of Architecture

George's visit with the faculty was a memorable experience for all—and a real help to both seasoned and prospective authors. He was both inspirational and practical. George is wonderful in illustrating how ideas can be transformed into books. He also helps demystify the book publication process by breaking it down to step-by-step actions. His visit planted the seeds for several subsequent publications.

—Frederick R. Steiner

Henry M. Rockwell Chair and Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin and Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects



George F. Thompson (pictured, fourth from the right, front row) participated in the Tenth Geography Faculty Department Alliance Project at the University of Colorado in Boulder as the publishing and writing expert. The week-long conference is co-sponsored every year by the Association of American Geographers and the National Science Foundation. (Photograph: Isobel Stevenson.)

The Purpose

Publishers, in a declining marketplace, are reluctant to take on projects by any author or institution that require unnecessarily heavy lifting. To receive a manuscript (whether a book, portfolio, essay, or journal article) that is first-rate in its conception and execution is increasingly rare, but the Publisher-in-Residence program aspires to reach such goals and high standards. From what we hear during “post-mortems” at the conclusion of a visit, the program has been extremely well received by all. Not only is there an immediate beneficial influence on the publishing goals of faculty members, but their productivity and accomplishments in turn reflect well on their respective department, school, and institution.

We are always honored to host George F. Thompson as one of our esteemed publishing experts at the premier juried event in the United States: Photo Review Santa Fe. Many photographers have gleaned invaluable advice on how to move their projects forward toward book form. George is a trusted and supportive professional, providing invaluable feedback and support for gifted and committed photographers.

—Laura Pressley, Director, CENTER

The Process

Each visit ideally opens with a group session about publishing that George F. Thompson runs like a seminar. Usually, these are presented as special events that are open to a department or larger group and held either late in the day or early evening or at regularly scheduled colloquia or “brown bag” lunches/seminars. In 1.5 hours, George is able to offer a fairly comprehensive overview of the publishing process and even incorporate time into the discussion for individual faculty members to share their specific projects with the group. This provides context for an individual’s publishing project and leads to a greater sense of academic community.

The group session also sets up nicely the follow-up, one-on-one sessions with George that are available through a sign-up sheet in advance of his arrival. In meeting privately with a faculty member, George can ensure confidentially at the same time he applies the general principles, practices, and techniques of the publishing world to that faculty member’s research and publishing project. Very often specific changes to the manuscript, a schedule for completion, publishing goals and expectations, and even contractual matters are discussed. The individual sessions run hourly, with fifty minutes devoted to the faculty member and ten minutes for a break in between the sessions. Thus, George can, on average, meet with six to eight faculty members in a full day.



(Left to right) George Thompson, Valarie Trapp, Executive Administrative Coordinator for the Graduate School, and two Presidential Fellows at the University of South Carolina review publishing materials during George's visit to campus. George also gave a university address on current and future trends in publishing. Photograph: Hannah Spicher.

Follow-up Visits

Although much can be achieved in the Publisher-In-Residence program on a single visit, the best results are achieved through regularly scheduled visits over a period of time. Multiple visits to a department or college allow George to meet not only with new faculty members, but also provide ongoing advice to those he mentored on an earlier visit.

This follow-up process holds true for the seasoned and published author as well as for the young scholar entering the publishing world for the first, second, or third time. Rarely does any previously published author submit a work that does not require minimum, modest, or even severe revision before it is deemed worthy of publication, and most young faculty members are clueless about how to submit a polished manuscript or proposal of any kind or on any subject. The Publisher-in-Residence program addresses this need.

George's visit to our department as Publisher-in-Residence was wonderfully effective. Personalized consultations with individual faculty quickly honed in on what would best serve the faculty member's project and goals. This was true for each regardless of career stage or the status of a writing project. The consultations were simultaneously critical and supportive. We look forward to his next visit.

—Stephen Birdsall

Professor of Geography and former Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

George usually has a post-mortem meeting with the head of a department, dean of a school or college, or even the provost at the end of each visit. This allows him the chance to share information about specific faculty projects and the paths and prospects for their respective success, in his view. For example, George might suggest that a faculty member consider certain presses for her or his work, how and when one might contact a press or a journal, and the like.

Having now worked with more than two dozen publishing partners, from serious trade publishers such as W. W. Norton and Harry N. Abrams to professional publishers such as John Wiley and Routledge, to university presses such as Yale, Johns Hopkins, Georgia, and Chicago, George's contacts with these and other presses can benefit faculty members in many ways. As we all know, "cold calls" will rarely get one inside a publisher's door.

The Pitch

At a time when faculty members at most institutions are receiving little or no merit pay increases, a perk such as the Publisher-in-Residence program is much appreciated by a faculty starved for professional counsel and advice. Furthermore, when the publishing record of a department's faculty improves, the brand recognition of the entire department and school within the college or university also improves. That has been the case to date.



The University of Baltimore has brought George to its campus every semester since 2011 to advise faculty members on their publishing projects. Left to right: George; Margarita Cardona, Director of Sponsored Research and Faculty Development; Alicia Campbell, Executive Administrative Assistant to the Associate Provost; and Joe Wood, Provost. Photograph: Marc Lennon.

Contact Information and Fees

For more information about the Publisher-in-Residence program and fees for a custom-designed residency, please use the following contact information to set up an appointment:

GEORGE F. THOMPSON PUBLISHING
217 Oak Ridge Circle
Staunton, VA 24401-3511
U.S.A

helpdesk@gftbooks.com

George led publishing workshops as part of the Geography Faculty Department Alliance Project at the University of Colorado, an effort intended to improve professional support for early career faculty. George's advice and coaching were of tremendous value to all the participants. In addition to the group sessions he led, George was always available to meet with participants informally over lunch and dinner to discuss writing strategies and plans. For many, these informal, one-on-one discussions with George were a highlight of their week in Boulder. It will be great to have George return next year for the Eleventh GFDA Project.

—Kenneth E. Foote

Professor of Geography at the University of Colorado in Boulder and President of the Association of American Geographers (2010–2011)