

# Guidelines for Editors of Multicontributor Manuscripts

The editor of a manuscript made up of essays by multiple contributors bears several unique responsibilities. This guide describes what you will need to do and some challenges you may confront.

If you have questions not addressed here, please feel free always to check with our editorial staff by letter or email.

## Your Basic Responsibilities

- Identifying authors who will write the essays, and securing their commitments.
- Providing whatever editorial guidance the contributors may need, answering their questions, and conducting all necessary communication with them. McFarland needs to be in touch with *you only*; we just don't have sufficient staff to communicate with the contributors.
- Causing the contributors to deliver their essays to you by an agreed-upon date, in hard copy with a precisely matching disk and a signed release (see below). You may have to manage or replace an uncooperative author (keeps promising, continues to delay, but insists he's in to stay).
- Ensuring that the essays are in proper form before delivering the manuscript. It is the editor's job to assess and resolve such matters as quality, appropriateness, disharmony with the book, and disproportionate length. You must also determine to your satisfaction that the content and editorial/typographical style of each essay are consistent with a description you and the author have agreed on. The chapters must follow a uniform format on such matters as notes, bibliography, American spellings, use of subheadings, and so forth. You should proofread and correct each essay before sending the manuscript to us; this includes ensuring the citation styles match throughout the manuscript. Don't allow one contributor to use MLA, for instance, while another uses Chicago.
- Delivering to McFarland a manuscript complete in every way, including hard copy, disk(s), and contributor releases. (See below.) We cannot call a manuscript "received" until we have every component of it—and we need it ***all together in one mailing only***. The administrative burden of taking it piecemeal is awful for us.

- Answering any questions we may raise during the publication process.
- Reading proofs and creating an index. And, just as important, letting contributors know they will *not* be allowed to proofread their essays or to revise them after the manuscript has been delivered. They will beg; you must stand firm.

## Editorial Points to Consider

Work with your contributors to ensure that the essays fit comfortably together. Common problems include subject overlap (the reader will tolerate a little, if the book has a narrow topic, but more than a trace hurts); conflicting styles or formats (keep it simple and uniform, please!) and varying documentation systems (we strongly favor numbered chapter notes in standard style). Also watch for individual chapters whose voice is incompatible with the book—too personal, too slangy, etc. And guard against wildly unequal chapter lengths.

The manuscript needs to come in at an appropriate total length. In early discussions we will agree on an approximate length (usually in the form of a word count), and it will be your job to keep it in or near that range. Sometimes this means dropping chapters.

McFarland reserves the right to reject a chapter at any time should it prove unsuitable or its author troublesome or uncooperative. This is rare but the possibility exists.

Chapter titles can be a trouble area, especially in books with a narrow focus. Attack repetition: In a book of essays about Mark Twain, for example, you don't want Twain's name appearing in most chapter titles. Aim for economy: Discourage contributors from indulging in triple-decker titles (main title: subtitle: sub-subtitle), tricky locutions or excessive wordiness. Work out the titles with the contributors *before delivering the manuscript*, and make sure they know that you and the publisher have the final say.

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## Contributor Names and Bios

Most multicontributor books feature a section of biographical information on the authors, describing their background, qualifications, institutional affiliation if any, and other pertinent facts. If you plan to include such a section, be sure to provide an entry from *every* contributor, and edit each to a brief, fairly uniform length. No entry should be as much as twice as big as any other (nor any half of the size of any other).

Your contributors should provide factual information only; to ensure consistency it is best if you write or rewrite the bios yourself. Don't allow the bios to veer into the unprofessional; there's little need to mention pets, adolescent breakthroughs or unrelated hobbies, for instance. An easy-going tone is fine, but unrevealing discursiveness that tries to ingratiate is not.

You must regularize names so that each contributor's name is in exactly the same form everywhere it appears: in the table of contents, at the head of the essay, in the biographies, and (if applicable) in your preface or introduction. Don't have John Doe in one place, John M. Doe in another and J.M. Doe in a third. You might include a line on the release so a contributor can print exactly how she wants her name to appear.

## Contributor Releases

As noted above, signed releases from all contributors, *delivered with the manuscript*, are a necessity; without them we cannot publish the book. If a chapter has two or more coauthors, each must provide a release. In the usual scenario, that of an essay that has never been published, the release should grant you (not McFarland; the book will be copyrighted in your name) ownership of the essay. The author of the essay must state that he or she expects no remuneration from the publisher.

McFarland will control all rights to the essays while the book remains in print. This is vital to the success of your book; if the contributors retained

the right to republish their essays elsewhere, your potential buyers (especially libraries, the heart of our market) would have less need for your book.

Contributors often balk at giving over the rights to their essays; it is your job to convince them. Our policy is to ensure that the book is the only place the essays can be found while the book is young and earning most of its sales. Later, we will generally approve reprint requests for a modest fee. If a contributor wants to reuse her essay in a book of her own (after the initial period), we will almost certainly grant reprint rights gratis.

If you are including a previously published essay (not usually a good idea; they hurt a book's sales appeal), you will need a reprint permission from the author and the previous publisher, unless the publisher has returned the rights to the author. Reprint permissions won't grant you actual ownership of the essays; what you need is "nonexclusive world rights" or the equivalent, with no restrictions on term, territory or print run. Be sure to include in the manuscript a credit line detailing the original publication of any reprinted essay, including any special wording the permission grantor requires.

## Other Permission Issues

In examining the essays before manuscript delivery, look for elements that may present copyright issues. Sometimes two or more essays quote from the same original works, and thus the book in aggregate uses more than fair use permits. Beware of poetry or song lyrics, both of which are categorically very rights-sensitive while under copyright. (Works first published after 1922 may still be under copyright.) Contributors may include photographs or other illustrations that require permission from rights owners. It is your job to identify and, via the contributors, satisfy all permission needs before delivering the manuscript, whether by supplying permissions or by deleting the material in question.

The Authors section of our website has general guidelines on illustrations and on permissions which will give you a good start. If uncertain, email any member of our editorial staff for guidance. ***Please don't phone*** unless absolutely necessary, though; we're badly overtaxed with calls.

## Delivering the Manuscript

Your contract will have a delivery deadline, which helps us in a planning sense, but we are nearly always happy to grant an extension. More important to us than the date is the delivery of a manuscript ***complete in every way, in one mailing only***. That means a final double-spaced hard copy (with title page, table of contents, your preface or introduction, all the chapters, all notes and bibliography, with continuous page numbering), matching disk(s), all contributor releases, any other necessary permissions, and any photographs or other illustrations that are to be included. Please read our guidelines on Preparing a Manuscript for McFarland for more detailed information.

**The delivered manuscript represents a work fully edited and approved by you.**

## Royalties and Free Books

As editor you will receive all royalties. (If there are two or more editors, your contract will specify whatever division of royalties you settle upon together.) There will be ten free copies of the published book for you (to be divided if there are two or more editors).

Ordinarily we also provide one free copy for each contributor. Discuss this with us early, though, if you are going to have a high number of contributors; the typical range is roughly 10–25. We send these copies to you to distribute.