
Susan MacDougall
Oxford University

Certainly many graduate students wish they had a mentor who would entertain endless questions on how, precisely, one goes about publishing and presenting. Co-editors Jason Miller and Oona Schmid’s manual How to Get Published in Anthropology: A Guide for Students and Young Professionals is a replacement, or supplement, for this kind of mentor. The edited volume offers direct, uncomplicated advice for those unsure about the process of getting their research “out there,” and is a key resource for answering questions about professionalism in academia.

Indeed, Miller and Schmid compiled the volume specifically to address the perceived lack of accurate information about publishing offered to graduate students. The book is meant to “reduce stress and uncertainty and increase practical knowledge about how to publish, why to publish, and which publishing efforts will mean the most in the long run” (2011: v). The book is not a general discussion of publishing as a field and experienced scholars seeking reflections on the state of the publishing may not find this volume useful. Rather, it is meant to provide a starting point for those making first attempts at career milestones, and for those seeking a strategic approach to pursuing a career in anthropology. The expansive definition of publishing that the editors adopt makes the book a valuable addition to literature on this topic. Others have dealt with the publication of a monograph (Germano, 2008) or a journal article (Boellstorff, 2008, 2010; Vora & Boellstorff, 2012), but the wide range of avenues Oona and Schmidt’s volume presents for disseminating one’s ideas emphasizes the book’s message that publishing is a means of long-term engagement with a scholarly community.

The book is divided into three sections. The first walks readers through five different ways of sharing their work, including conference attendance, presenting a poster or paper, submitting to a journal and publishing a dissertation as a monograph. The second addresses concerns shared by professionals in subfields archaeology, applied and public anthropology, biological and physical anthropology, cultural/social anthropology and ethnography, linguistic anthropology, medical anthropology and visual anthropology. The third addresses issues shared across subfields, including author agreements, copyright, collaboration and navigating the world of online publication.

The chapters stand independently, in the manner of a reference volume. Read as a unit, however, they send the broader message that publishing, conference attendance and perhaps even blogging are all parts of building a career, where one’s contributions will eventually be evaluated as a collective. Early-career anthropologists’ first forays into publishing are important efforts that ideally will be repeated more or less continuously as one’s career progresses. This message has the broader value of encouraging graduate students to think of themselves as professionals, which their PhD programs may or may not do.

One of the text’s strengths is that its contributors do not shy away from making forceful statements about publication and its significance for anthropologists and academia generally.
One imagines that it is precisely this sort of guidance that many graduate students are hoping for from their mentors; while lofty discussions of theory are important for intellectual development, the unvarnished imperatives delivered here are a useful reminder that there are other things to consider.

Tom Boellstorff begins his chapter without wafting, advising that, “No matter how good your ideas may be and regardless of the quality of your research, your work will not have the influence it deserves unless you ensure it is published in appropriate journals” (2011: 38). He goes on to offer other, equally un-misunderstandable, advice, including avoiding publishing in edited volumes until tenure and refraining from emailing journal editors and support staff for assistance with online submission systems.

Catherine Besteman’s chapter on Cultural/Social Anthropology and Ethnography is similarly incisive in its outline of how to plan a publication trajectory for early-career scholars on a sociocultural track. Besteman offers advice on all aspects of academic writing for ethnographers, from the stylistic “… avoid filling your narrative with equivocating statements … even if you are struggling with assuming the voice of authority,” (2011: 91) to the future-oriented proper approach to publishing peer-reviewed articles on material included in the dissertation.

Another strength of the book is the comforting authority that the contributors do not shy away from adopting. By framing the material specifically for student use, Schmidt and Miller have given the writers license to speak with the knowledge of experience, and without the reserve that an advisor might adopt to avoid stifling a student. The result is an invaluable field guide to navigating anthropology as a professional. At times, though, it appears that the contributors assume all graduate students are insecure, anxious and in need of firm guidance. Readers should not be put off by this tone, as a closer read indicates that the advice offered is based on contributors’ personal career trajectories as much as on their experience as mentors. Those experiencing insecurity, anxiety and a need for guidance will likely find How to Get Published in Anthropology soothing, but even the most self-assured students will find it useful. Later career professionals may wish to recommend it for their own students’ use.

Author Biography: Susan MacDougall is a DPhil candidate in Social Anthropology at Oxford University and former Fulbright fellow. She is currently doing fieldwork in Amman, Jordan.

References
Boellstorff, T.

Germano, W.
2008 Getting it Published. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vora, N., & Boellstorff, T.