Publishing at the BCS – the book publishing process

An overview

The journey from idea to published book starts with a formal pitch from an author in the form of an Author's Proposal Form. Once the BCS accepts the proposal, a contract is drawn up with the author(s) and a date set for the delivery of the manuscript. On receiving the complete manuscript a peer-review is carried out by other experts in the field. Once the manuscript has been edited, a team of artists and typesetters design and layout the text and graphics. An index is created, and the printers and binders turn the edited typescript into a published book.

Preparing an author's proposal

Most books published by the BCS originate from the BCS Specialist Groups, or individuals from them. Others are ideas sent to us by members of the public. Either way, authors are asked to fill out an Author's Proposal Form. This is the author's opportunity to pitch the idea to us, the publishers, and provide us with an insight into the quality of the material, its potential for further development, and market possibilities.

The commissioning editor reviews the book proposal and assesses its appropriateness for BCS's audience. If the commissioning editor considers the book to be suitable, they will work with the author(s) to refine and more directly target the proposal if needed. The commissioning editor then takes the revised author's proposal to an internal BCS committee and pitches to pursue the book idea. As proposal reviews and development often include opinions from both internal and external subject matter experts, this process can last for several months.

The creative process

Upon acceptance of this final book proposal, the commissioning editor contracts the author to write the book. Once the signed contract is received, we send out an Author's Marketing Form. This is a key opportunity for the author to suggest places where the book might usefully be reviewed or promoted, preferences for the look and feel of the finished product, and useful information about themselves that can be used for marketing purposes. We can then start planning the marketing activities while the author is busy writing.

Once the manuscript has been completed and submitted, it normally takes 6 months from here until the book is printed. The manuscript is evaluated to ensure that it reflects the original book proposal. Is the manuscript of the right length, quality and content? Additional internal and external subject matter experts are asked to comment on the manuscript's accuracy, usefulness and general fit to the topic. The author(s) are asked to consider the comments made, and make final changes to the manuscript.

The revised proposal is taken to an internal BCS committee. If it is deemed complete and satisfactory the manuscript enters the production process.

The production process

A copyeditor works with the author to further develop and copyedit the manuscript. Development and copyediting of the manuscript usually takes 1-2 months and often requires further work by the author to fine-tune sections of the book or to provide more information if needed. During this time we also

finalise, with the authors' input, the book cover and preliminary marketing material. Sending books to selected industry opinion-leaders, especially those known personally by the authors, helps book sales. We look to our authors to suggest such contacts and media relevant to the book.

Prepress work and printing/binding the book takes around 3 months. Prepress work constitutes typesetting (laying out the text and graphics), proofreading, and indexing the book. During the prepress stage, the author will be called on to verify information, answer content questions, to ensure complete accuracy of the manuscript and sign off the final proofs. The book is then sent to be printed and bound.

After a book is published

Once the book is published, authors have a new marketing role to play in partnership with us. Speaking at conferences, writing articles for journals and magazines and participating in PR activities have the potential to boost sales significantly.

We encourage authors to use their own websites, businesses and other contacts to market their book. Interested parties can be directed back to the BCS to purchase copies of the book.