

Guidelines for Creating an Edited Volume

(including volumes based on a conference, and Festschriften)

The pointers below are intended to help with the process of editing a volume, based on many peer review reports and conversations with Editorial Boards and series editors. We want to help prospective editors avoid some of the problems that we have encountered in the past, and to ensure the process runs as smoothly as possible.

The peer reviewer(s) and Editorial Board will focus not just on the individual articles in the volume, but also on the cohesiveness of the volume as a whole. It is quite common for reports to praise individual articles but criticise the volume as a whole for lacking coherence, lacking balance between the papers, and other general issues that are expected of an edited collection.

We sometimes receive proposals for conference proceedings or Festschriften; please note that we apply exactly the same criteria – we expect these volumes to be edited and coherent, and not a ‘loose’ collection of papers with little or no connection between them.

Therefore, please consider the following points.

CONTENT

- Start out with, and keep in mind, a clear goal for the volume – will it make a distinct contribution, and why does the book matter?
- Ensure the volume has a central theme or themes that all contributors are aware of and understand. It is important that the content of the volume is coherent and that the volume can stand on its own (rather than simply a set of articles with a loosely imposed structure and central thesis). Consider what the main contribution of the volume is and whether it provides an up-to-date approach to the field.
- In addition to the editors’ reading and commenting on all papers, it may be useful to send papers to other contributors to the book for evaluation, or in some cases to external reviewers (where the subject of a paper is very specialised and beyond the expertise of the editors, for instance)

COHERENCE

- Is the coverage of the volume sufficient and appropriate? Pay attention to any potential gaps in the volume that could be filled by inviting additional contributions. Equally (this often applies in the case of volumes formed from a conference, or festschriften), articles that do not relate directly to the subject and/or themes of the volume or that are weaker than the other papers will need to be excluded.
- Does the volume **introduction** adequately introduce the themes of the volume and tie together the collection? Does it frame the volume and the contributions? Note that the introduction should not merely provide summaries of the papers – we expect that it will identify the core themes of the volume and draw out various types of connection between

the papers. You might also consider providing an afterword or conclusion, and potentially include 'bridging' essays that tie together sections of the volume.

- Give all contributors a clear summary of the volume and their role in it (they should be sent the proposal, for instance) and provide assistance as they produce their chapters. It is often useful to draw up a list of questions that contributors need to address when they are writing their papers; in some cases editors could even compose all article abstracts for authors to then follow.
- Consider introducing a dialogue between authors early on to ensure coherence of chapters and meeting of deadlines throughout the process. It may also be worth providing all authors with drafts of other chapters in the volume and ask them to comment on the papers and to revise their papers accordingly, especially through cross references to other papers.
- Consider asking for response essays from scholars after the final chapter drafts have been submitted.

STYLE, PRACTICALITIES, AND DIPLOMACY

- While it is less critical during the peer review stage, be mindful of stylistic matters. If an article is written in a language other than the native language of the author, ensure that it is idiomatic and clear (peer reviewers will often reject an article if it is difficult to read).
- Check the style fits normal academic register. It is also important that the style and register is consistent and accurate throughout the volume, and does not differ significantly from chapter to chapter. Note that conference papers should have all evidence of the original oral presentation removed.
- Ensure references and bibliography are reasonably consistent in style and accuracy, and that they adhere reasonably to the series guidelines (available on request). Direct authors to the style sheet for guidance during production and revision of chapters for the volume.
- The publisher's style sheet can be made available upon request in case this helps with consistency of style. In some specialised volumes it may be useful and necessary to impose a volume-specific style as well, where many contributors are all using the same specialised terms.
- Create and stick to (wherever possible) deadlines for drafts, revisions, and submissions. Remind contributors regularly of deadlines and be willing to exclude authors that cannot produce work requested within appropriate time limits.
- Volume editors should be aware that they may need to criticise or even exclude contributions by colleagues or senior scholars.

Expect that the peer review may make a lot of suggestions about the individual papers and about the volume as a whole – remember that this process is in everyone's interests, to ensure that the final published volume is of high quality and that it has an impact on the scholarly community. We (publishing managers and Editorial Boards) will, of course, support and work with you along the way.