Episode 34: David Brightman

**KL:** Katie Linder

**DB:** David Brightman

**KL:** You’re listening to *Research in Action*: episode thirty-four.

[intro music]

# Segment 1:

**KL:** Welcome to *Research in Action*, a weekly podcast where you can hear about topics and issues related to research in higher education from experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, director of research at Oregon State University Ecampus.

On this episode, I’m joined by David Brightman, a senior editor with Stylus Publishing LLC where he helps authors put research into practice. Previously, David was a lead editor with the Jossey-Bass Higher & Adult Education book series. David has a Bachelor’s in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of California, Berkeley and a Professional Certificate in Publishing from the UC Extension.

Thanks so much for joining me today, David.

**DB:** Thank you for having me. It’s a pleasure.

**KL:** So, I should tell our listeners that you and I do know each other, although I don’t think we’ve met in person. But I know you, David, because you are the editor of my forthcoming book that’s coming out in November. It’s called *The Blended Course Design Workbook: A Practical Guide*. And I know you because I’ve worked with Stylus on this book. And I thought it would be really helpful to have you come on the podcast and talk a little bit about just what book editors do. And I think this is something that is kind of mysterious for a lot of researchers and academics, especially folks who are newer to publishing, but even people who’ve published before may not have a good sense of this. So, I thought we could just start out, if you can talk a little bit about the difference between a book editor and a journal editor, which is something that maybe readers are more familiar with if they’ve been publishing in peer-reviewed journals. So, what are some of the differences between those two roles?

**DB:** Well, to begin with, I think the one thing to say is just that there’s a lot of different kinds of book editor. You know, we break that task down a lot. But my role is really to go out and find the right books to, you know, serve the needs of my audience. And I think that’s true for every, you know, for every book editor in a way. Even the ones who, you know, publish fiction and, you know, various other genres. You’re always thinking about, well, who’s the reader and, you know, what are they looking for? And so, that’s certainly, and of course that’s true of a journal editor too, right? They need to think about the audience for their journal and what’s going to be important to them. But there’s sort of a, I feel like there’s a way in which the journal editor, especially, you know, of the really research-oriented journal, they know, you know. They’ve got their, they kind of know their audience and, you know, that’s come through. And the book is a little more, I think, exploratory in the sense that we’re sort of out their scouting for what people might need. And of course we do the simple thing: we ask. Right? I go to conferences and look around and talk to people about, well, what’s important, what’s the gaps in the literature? But I guess that’s the difference really is that the journal editor has a constant feed of people doing their research and needing to publish it, right? Whereas the book thing is really about, well, what’s the gap in the literature for books that needs to be filled right now? You know, what do we not have? We didn’t have a blended course design workbook, and now we do, right? So, you know, it’s that kind of, it’s that kind of difference.

And there are of course similarities in the peer-review side of things. You know, we don’t need the double blind peer review that the, you know, research journals have. But, you know, we want your peers to review your work before it goes into print so that you’ll get the benefit of that input. So, anyway, that’s kind of, I would say, you know, that’s really the big difference is there’s sort of an understood pipeline with the journal. And the book thing is much more, you know, books are funny because they take longer, you know, they take a long time. And so, they have to be timeless, but they also need to be timely, right? They have to, and so you have this crazy balance that you’re working with with books.

**KL:** So, when you’re working on, so you mentioned that you’re an acquisitions editor – you’re bringing books in. Are there other kinds of editors or other kind of major members of the team that would work with an author to bring a book to fruition?

**DB:** Sure, I mean once the, so the, the sort of, my role is kind of to help make the best book, you know, possible. And so, that’s kind of where I come in and I’m sort of the ambassador between the publisher and the author. And then there’s the production folks, right? So, there’s the production editor who coordinates the turning your manuscript into a book, you know, into the expected form that people, you know, with page numbers and so on. I mean there’s much more to production editing than that, but basically they’re sort of managing the project of turning your book into a book. And then there’s specific people like copy editors who are really, you know, looking at the words in sort of the traditional editorial function of, you know, sharpening, tightening up that sentence and, you know, correcting for errors and that sort of thing. So, there’s a lot, a lot, a lot of different people who will, you know, work on your book at one stage or another.

**KL:** So, how many books are you typically juggling? I mean at various stages of the pipeline I can imagine, you know, there’s quite a few. Do you have a sense of what a typical number is for you to have on your plate at any given time?

**DB:** Well, there’s, you know, that really varies. But it is, you know, maybe I’ll be trying, working with say ten authors to try and sign their projects and another ten authors on developing their book and another ten authors, you know, on some other phase of the production. And then of course there’s working with the author after the book comes out because it doesn’t just stop when the book is done. So, there’s a lot, you know. So, at any given time I could be talking to a lot of people.

**KL:** Yeah, I can imagine. I mean that’s a lot of projects to juggle at one time.

**DB:** Yes, but, you know, it’s always interesting because I get to work with, you know, a lot of really fascinating people and interesting work.

**KL:** So, I know that your area that you kind of specialize in is professional books. Can you talk a little bit about what that means? What is kind of that genre?

**DB:** Yeah. That’s, I’m so glad you asked that question because it’s really, it is a very specific niche, the professional book, you know. It’s basically resources that help people do their jobs better, right? So, in what the, in the niche that I’ve been working in has been professional resources for higher education. So, that’s books about teaching and learning to help faculty with various aspects of their work. It’s books about administration and management and leadership, and you know. It’s books about assessment – that dreaded word. And, you know, it’s books about a lot of different things, including some books about research methods. And so, you know, you have a lot of different things. But the key to the professional thing, to the professional niche, is it’s resources to help people meet some need, right? So, it’s really it’s a book that you need to do your job better.

**KL:** So, what are some differences between, you know, professional books and other kinds of books in higher education? Are there certain kinds of components that set those books apart?

**DB:** I think so. I think, you know, even within the professional niche there are sort of shades of difference, but I think, and, you know, I can talk about those if that’s helpful. But I think that there’s a difference between sort of your typical academic, you know, publication of work sort of in your discipline that’s advancing the knowledge of your discipline that is really just for your fellow scholars on whatever topic. And then the sort of the book, the book that’s really trying to help you do something. So, that’s, so I think the way I look at it is it’s sort of research into practice, right? So, it’s sort of, you know, in a professional book you maybe explain what the research is that’s the foundation for what you are about to say. But then most of the book is devoted to describing the practice. What is it that you’re going to do differently now? You know, how is this book going to help you, you know, design a better blended course, you know, or whatever? You’re not going to just give me a long report about the research on blended learning. You’re going to tell me how do I design a good blended learning course. And it’s, I think that’s the key difference is is there a practical application for this book, or am I just reading the cutting-edge scholarship?

And actually I think one of the things that might be useful in making this distinction, and this may come up later too, which I think is Boyer’s four scholarships. You know, there’s the scholarship of discovery, that’s the traditional research; and the scholarship of application or engagement, you know; and scholarship of teaching and learning; and then there’s the scholarship of integration. And I think of this, I think of the professional book as sort of a combination of all of those, right? Is, you know, there can be a traditional research part to your book, but, you know, when you’re doing a professional book you’re really, you know, you’re engaging, applying, you know. There may be a teaching and learning component to it in the sense that you’re in effect teaching someone how to do something. And then there’s the integration part where you’re, you know, sort of bringing it all together. And so, those are all kind of ways that the professional book I think is a little different from, you know, the traditional collection of the latest scholarship or the, you know, some breakthrough.

And I, you know, just because that’s my area I hope I’m not, I don’t want to in anyway seem to be disparaging traditional research and traditional research publications. It’s only that my niche that I work in is a little different.

**KL:** Well I love the idea of how you described it as combining these things together and taking components of each and creating something that’s really, you know, useful and practical for people.

We’re going to take a brief break. When we come back, we’ll hear a little bit more from David about what book editors are looking for. Back in a moment.

[music]

# Segment 2:

**KL:** David, something that I think a lot of researchers might be wondering about is how can they know when they might have a research subject that warrants a book, or when their dissertation might be appropriate for a book? I mean certainly there are dissertations that don’t fit that criteria. But I think, you know, one of the things that you kind of struggle with is sometimes you’re working on these peer-reviewed articles and you’re just not quite sure when do you get to the stage where you’ve got something big enough that it needs to be a book. Can you speak to that a little bit?

**DB:** Sure. And I think that’s a really critical question, and it’s a hard one, right? Because, you know, as I said before, maybe most dissertations aren’t a book in waiting, but some will be, you know. And how do you know, right? And I think, there’s also like what kind of book. So, you know, if it’s really just, you know, a scholarly book about your topic, then yeah, sure you may, if somebody wants to publish that, good, you know. But like typically that’s not the path to a professional book. And I always remember my mentor was on a panel with editors at a conference and she was talking about sort of the path to a book and she said, you know, you get your dissertation and you get as many articles as you can. And then, you know, maybe then you start writing in regional journals about this topic. And then you start writing in the national journals about this topic. And pretty soon, you know, and you’re presenting at conferences about it, and pretty soon your name gets associated with this topic. And eventually people start inviting you because you’re known as the person on this topic. And eventually people will start saying, “When are you going to write a book?” You know, and, you know, “We really need a book on this. You need to write a book” you know “is there a book?” So that’s sort of, you know, the trajectory that can happen with a professional book. And I think when you’re, in terms of the research subject that warrants a book, it’s really about is there something really important in this research that needs to get out right now, so I should just publish a report on the research that needs longer treatment than the journal articles I’ve been putting out. So, that’s one kind of book.

The kind of book I work on I think it’s a much easier call because it’s do I know a lot of colleagues who have trouble with this and I’ve got some good advice to give? And one way to know that is when you give your session at a conference, do people come up to you afterwards and say, “Oh my goodness, you should write a book!” Or, “I wish there was a book about this.” Or, you know, you’re packing the room and people line up to talk to you afterwards. That probably means you’ve hit on something that people need. For the professional book it’s all about need. You know, who needs this, why? And, you know, is a book going to help them? And very often a book is going to help them, you know. You can hand out your, you know, slides and, you know, your tools that you bring to your workshops, but sometimes people really need you to put together a book so that they can, you know, so you can really guide them through it. You know, you can really be a resource that they can turn back to and ask for help.

**KL:** You know, one of the other things I’ve found kind of interesting thinking about if you have something that warrants a book. So my dissertation did get turned into my first book through a lot of revision. It was a significantly different document than what I originally wrote to get my Ph.D. But one of the things that helped me realize it needed to be a book is I actually had a really hard time publishing it as peer-reviewed journal articles. And one of the things I realized was it really needed to hang together as a book. Like it was having a hard time, you know, getting dissected into smaller pieces because there was just a larger argument to be made. And all the chapters needed to be present for that argument to be made. And once I realized that, it was like, oh, you know, I was trying to put it out as articles and it just wasn’t working. And that’s I think another sign. That, you know, you have a larger idea and it doesn’t fit in the space of a peer-reviewed article. Like it just literally doesn’t fit. It doesn’t hang together. You can’t get out the idea that you want to get out. And that is also maybe a sign.

**DB:** I think, I totally agree. I think that’s really, I’m so glad you provided that example because I think it’s a great one. I really do think that that’s true. Some things need a book, right? You just need that much space.

**KL:** So when you’re getting these proposals from potential authors, let’s talk a little bit about what’s in the proposal and are there certain components of a professional book that are maybe different from a typical book proposal? But what are some of those major kind of proposal components? What are you looking for when folks are pitching books to you?

**DB:** Well, so, the kind of main things I think are need and clarity, right? And those both apply to the audience. I think the audience is the first thing to think about. And I think that kind of gets at the whole difference between a professional book and an academic, scholarly book. That, you know, the academic scholarly book is well I need to share this important research. The professional book is I need to share this, you know, advice for, you know, I need to share this guidance to other practitioners who are, you know, struggling with the same issue and can benefit from what I’ve learned. And so I think that’s, you know, that’s a real. And so a lot of it comes back to audience, right? This really like who am I writing for? I think one of the things that goes wrong is that people think a publisher is going to want it more if they say it’s for everyone, right? Oh this book will appeal to faculty, but it will also appeal to, you know, high school students and their parents, you know, or whatever. And it’s like, well maybe, but, you know, some books, yes, would span those audiences. But typically you’re not going to span those audiences, right? And so you really need to think about, and I think that will actually help you when you’re writing the book too. You know, if you’re writing to the faculty, you can write the way, you know, you can write in the language that the faculty will understand and, you know, you don’t have to worry, you know, that the student or the parent won’t get that, you know. And, you know, obviously the same in reverse. But, so I think that’s really important.

So one of the things that I would say is. Alright, I’ll go back to the elements. So, you know, the typical elements are, you know, why am I writing this book, what is it about, you know, what’s the contribution it’s making to the literature, and so on. You know, what is the audience, what’s the competition, you know, why am I qualified to write it, and, you know, those are a lot of the elements that go into a book proposal. And I think that quite naturally academics get caught up in why did I write this book, what’s it about, you know. Making this really big, involved, solid argument for it that is too long for a book proposal, you know. You know, that really, because the book proposal has to be shared beyond the editor to, you know, publishers, marketing people. All sorts of people have to look at that and get a sense of the book very quickly. So, the thing is to, you know, think about your audience, think about the need, you know, be very clear about that. But keep it short and sweet. Every element is important in the proposal, but keep all of them short and sweet if you can. Now, you know, obviously it might, if you have a complicated story to tell, it might take longer. But, you know, the more you can boil it down. I really think it’s like an elevator pitch. You know, try to boil it down into what you could say to me while we’re riding an elevator. You know, if we are meeting for the first time at a conference and you want to tell me what your work’s about, can you do it quickly? Or are we going to have to sit down for half an hour? Because if you can do it quickly, that’s going to help, you know.

So, not overdoing the scholarly rationale, but really, you know, kind of condensing that as much as you can to why people need it. And being very clear about the audience and the competition. I think people sometimes want to say there’s no other book like this. Ok, tell me why. Tell me the closest thing to this and why your book is different. You know, don’t just say, “Well, there’s no other book like this.” Of course there’s no other book like this; you haven’t written it yet. But what is the, you know, we need some basis of comparison. We need to know, you know, if your book is going to be adopted for text use in the graduate program, we need to know what are they using for the graduate text program now. If it’s really something new that you’re doing, find the closest thing to it and say why yours is the newest development and why people will need your book. But I think those are the, the clarity about the need for the book and the audience for the book are the key things with the professional books. Is who needs it and why, you know. And that should be really clear from, you know, reading the blurb on the back of the book.

**KL:** So, have you found there are kind of common mistakes that you see in book proposals that you could kind of counsel researchers to look out for? Other than the length, which you just pointed out; it shouldn’t be too long. Are there other kind of common things that people are doing that they shouldn’t be?

**DB:** Well, let’s see. I think really the things that I just said, you know. Don’t overdo the scholarly rationale. You know that and we know that you know that, but we’re not scholars in your field. So you’re not trying to impress us in the same way that you’re trying to impress a journal editor or a peer reviewer. You’re trying to tell us what’s practical, you know. Why will someone buy your book rather than another? And, so, you know, that’s, I mean that’s really the thing to keep in mind. Because it’s all about audience, right? The audience for this is the people who need to know why they should publish your book instead of someone else’s book.

**KL:** So, along those lines, how important is the author’s reputation to your choice to acquire a book?

**DB:** Well, of course, you know, it can be important. You know, it’s very helpful if an author already has a following, naturally. But I think the key thing there is what I said before about an active author. You know, a lot of times I come across people because I go to their sessions and it’s packed and it’s clear that they’ve hit on something, right? And so that might be a first-time author, you know. And, you know, the important thing is their, you know, their work is going to help people, and so then that’s it. You don’t have to be, you know, everybody has to write their first book, right? You know, you’re not going to be a huge superstar, you know, before you write your first book probably. I mean at least a publishing superstar; you might be an academic superstar. But, you know, so that really, I think it’s so much about if you have something vital to say, you’re going to have a reputation, you know. And if you didn’t already, you will soon because you’ll have done something helpful.

**KL:** Alright, well thank you for that. We’ll be back in a moment to hear a little bit more from David about higher education and the public.

[music]

# Segment 3:

**KL:** David, one of the things that we’ve talked about previously is you think higher education does a pretty terrible job of representing itself to the public. Can you share a little bit more about this, especially from, you know, your perspective of working with people, writing these professional books, and engaging in higher education from kind of a niche area?

**DB:** Well, of course, I do have an unusual perspective because I spend all my days working with really hard-working, dedicated, I mean super hard-working, dedicated professionals. You know, people who are, you know, doing research that’s trying to make higher education better, spreading that word because they believe that they can make higher education better, and they’re talking to, you know, an audience of people who are really dedicated. And so that’s, it definitely skews my perspective because I spend all my time with the people who are working really hard to make it better. And so it’s hard for me to see the general and, you know, the slamming of higher education as just the easiest thing to get a headline, to get a, you know, whatever, to get attention. It’s very easy to slam higher ed. And that’s partly an intellectual streak in our culture. But I do think that, you know, higher education does a terrible job of representing itself to the public.

There are, however, some good reasons for that. One is that higher education in America is complex, I mean really complex, right? I mean there’s just, we have more different kinds of higher education going on here. We have all these different kinds of institutions, and, you know. So, anyway, so it’s complicated. And then there’s the insiders’ respect for complexity and, you know, fear of dumbing it down, and the fact that insiders also disagree with what’s happening and what’s the right thing to do about it, right? So these are all super smart people, and especially the faculty are trained to critique, right? And then after that they’re trained to critique some more, you know. And they’re not trained to, you know, focus on what’s the practical solution for anything. Their training is in, you know, critique. So, you know, unfortunately critiques sell, you know. So that gets a large audience, it’s easy to get a headline with the critique of higher education, and the solutions have a much more modest audience, you know. And so that’s, you know, that’s one of the interesting paradoxes of my work, right? Is that we’re these sort of, you know, compared to the headline-grabbers, we’re practically anonymous, you know, the people like you who are out there trying to make a difference day-to-day and, you know, writing books to share what they know and try to get that word out to as many people as possible. And it does, I mean there is an audience for this I am happy to report. And, you know, there are people who are going to these conferences, trying to learn more, trying to improve. But, you know, it is definitely a modest niche compared to people who just, you know, “Ahh, higher education’s a terrible failure” or whatever, you know. Or, you know, “Oh, it’s horrible because this.” You know, everyone has their different reason why it’s horrible, but I think that culturally higher education is not especially well-disposed to doing a good job defending itself and saying what it does right. And, so, yeah. I think that often, it’s frustrating because I know so much of what is going right, how people are trying to do better. And, you know, hopefully this work that we do does make a difference. I would just like to see some more champions getting a headline. And it’s just harder to do when you’re doing this kind of day-to-day, you know, day-to-day improvement.

**KL:** Well, and I think, you know, this kind of gets to, you know, researchers kind of thinking about the larger trajectory of their work and how they are representative of higher education in maybe broader ways than they thought. I think, you know, a lot of researchers get a little bit mired in their disciplines, and appropriately so, you know, at certain stages of their careers. But this also, you know, as you were kind of talking about this it makes me think that this is something researchers should be considering. Where do they fit? Where do they fit within this kind of larger picture of higher education? And maybe not just as researchers, maybe as teachers or administrators or practitioners in other ways. I’m wondering if you can talk about that a little bit. Do you see a connection between presenting higher education to the public and how researchers think about their work and what they’re publishing?

**DB:** Well, I do. And I guess what I think is that, you know, it’s not that all research needs to be immediately applicable to some public good like the day it’s done. But I think all research is going to contributing to the expansion of knowledge and eventually that’s good, you know, you hope that that’s a good thing for the public sooner or later. So, I think it really, you know. You hit on something really important, which is the academy is kind of a prestige culture that makes for an inward-looking discipline-specific priority, right? You’re trying to impress your colleagues with a contribution you’re making to your field, right? And that does not tend to make you look up or down and see what you’re doing for the world, you know. And I think because higher ed does so many important things, you know, some better than others, but they do a lot. You know, higher education is really important to our society in a lot of different ways. And I think, you know, that’s a good thing to remember. You know, maybe you’re doing some kind of basic research that doesn’t have an immediate application, but we all know that without that basic research none of the applied research is ever going to happen, right? And the other thing that I think that is hard is, you know, not everything that people do in higher education is going to be immediately understandable. And, you know, so, you know, there’s no way around that. I mean I had a really, I have a really good friend who’s an astrophysicist and I have no idea what he does, right? I can’t understand his field. I’m not mathematically-gifted shall we say. But I know it’s, I know that I love it when someone popularizes that work and I hear what the result of their research is, you know. So I think there’s value even if it’s not immediately applicable. Now I think the niche I work in in higher education, I think, you know, the kind of teaching and learning resources and so on, those do tend to be immediate. You are trying to do something better and that is supposed to improve the experience of the students, which should then leave them better prepared for their work in society, you know. So, that’s an example of where the research, no matter what it is, should eventually lead to some improvement in our public life, right? So, in that sense I think. And I think the other thing is, well, there’s a whole bunch of things here. One is, you know, the academic researcher may be someone who really doesn’t want to engage with the public, that’s why they went into academic research, you know. So, there’s that whole issue. And the other thing is public engagement is risky. People can take it the wrong way, you know. And so, you know, there is that. There is this sort of, you know, it’s safer to stay inside the walls of the academy and not try to go out. But, you know, I just think there’s so much, there’s so much good. And so I guess, I’m sorry I’ve really kind of wandered off from your question, which is should academic researchers be thinking about this? I would say it certainly doesn’t do any harm to think about it, you know. And maybe you conclude, “Well, mine’s a little bit far from that.” But, you know, but you’ll still see the value in it, you know. I think one thing that’s good about any of this, and it makes me think about the book proposal process, is it’s never bad to think about, “Well, why am I doing this? What’s the value?” You know.

**KL:** And we can lose sight of that I think. Sometimes we think, you know, the value becomes it’s a line on my CV or it’s my tenure or it’s, you know. It becomes less about the process and more about the outcome. And not always in a good way. I mean sometimes focusing on the outcome, as you’re pointing out, you know, the practicality of something or the audience, is very useful. But other times, it simplifies it too much, I think, and we end up in a space where we lose sight of why we originally started the project and what we were trying to do with it.

**DB:** Yes. So I think, you know, that’s one of those things where clarity is always, you know, it’s always a prime value. At least, you know, I work in communications, so I care about clarity. But I think inner-clarity is also helpful. If you know what you’re doing and why, you know, then you’re better able to see whether, oh, yeah there’s a practical side to this and it will help me make the case. And I think there’s a whole, you know, there are people who are good at defending the value of higher education, but I think part of the problem is they’re kind of on the defensive in our culture now. And people are much more up in arms about the ways things have gone wrong. And, you know, that’s hard, you know. So, I don’t know. I don’t have a happy conclusion for that sentence I’m afraid.

**KL:** Well, I think you’ve raised some really important, you know, tensions between thinking long-term and having short-term, you know, practical things. And how do you balance out, you know, some of these things that are, you know, more negative with the stories that are a little bit more optimistic about what’s going on in higher ed? I mean I think you’ve really painted a picture of the complexity of kind of the PR landscape of higher education. And it is a challenge.

**DB:** Yeah, and especially if you’re going to do something more thoughtful than just say, “Oh, everything’s terrible.” If you’re going to say, “Well, we, you know, here’s a core issue that we really need to do differently.” You know, that might not be welcome, you know, because I think part of that complexity is that we’re all twirling away in our little area and we don’t want to be disturbed, right? You know, whether that’s an academic specialty or some staff position on campus, you know. Your dean may just be concerned about, you know, X, Y, and Z. The president’s concerned about how to approach the legislature. Everyone has, we all have our own personal concern, you know. So, it’s easy to lose track of, I guess it’s easier to focus on what I need to do than, you know, how does that help the general population?

**KL:** Well, this is some excellent food for thought. I want to thank you, David, so much for your time and for sharing about your experience as a book editor with Stylus Publishing. Thanks for coming on the show.

**DB:** My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**KL:** And thanks also to our listeners for joining us for this week’s episode of *Research in Action*. I’m Katie Linder and we’ll be back next week with a new episode.

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Show notes with information regarding topics discussed in each episode, as well as the transcript for each episode, can be found at the *Research in Action* website at [ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast](http://www.ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast).

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# Bonus Clip:

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**KL:** In this bonus clip for episode thirty-four of the *Research in Action* podcast, David Brightman discusses common misconceptions about book editors and publishing. Take a listen.

I’m wondering, David, if you can talk a little bit about if you think, are there common kind of misconceptions about book editors and what they do, or about book publishing and higher education that you’re trying to kind of dispel through your work?

**DB:** I feel like I should turn that question around and ask you. But I do think there are some common misconceptions about book editors. Of course, that we’re forbidding gate keepers, right? You know, that like, “Oh, that’s an editor.” It’s like, “Really?” I need to talk to you, right? I want to talk to you. Please, talk to me, you know. Send me an email and just throw it at me, you know. I’m happy, you know, if you see me at a conference, that’s, you know, I’m there because I want to talk to you, you know. So it’s that sort of thing, you know, that I think is, there’s no reason to be intimidated.

And I think one other, well there’s several. So, you know, there’s sort of the typical misconception that your dissertation needs to become a book. Maybe, maybe not. You know, probably not. In all, you know, in reality most dissertations do not need to become a book. You should get as many articles out of that dissertation as you possibly can. But, you know, it probably doesn’t need to be a book. And that varies from discipline to discipline. But, you know, in general I think the age of the scholarly monograph has sort of passed. And I think even the notion that research equals a book is fine if you’re trying to, if you have important research that needs to be published in a scholarly context. And I think, you know, I think go contact those editors that publish that kind of book and they’ll be happy to hear from you. I think another misconception is that a book is really just several journal articles. And, of course, that can be true. There can be books that are collections of your journal articles, but I think, in general, a lot of first-time book authors are startled by how hard it is to write a book. Because they think, “Well, I’ve written that many words” right, “So, it will just be like that.” But it’s, you know, you suddenly realize there’s more to a book, you know. That it’s not just sort of a string of journal articles. It’s really, you know, how does it all hang together and how does it all come together? And that’s a lot of work. And, so I think that’s one important thing is to know, you know, that a book is a different animal.

And then the other thing, the other misconception that leaps to mind is that, you know, when the book’s done, the author’s finished, you know. As you are discovering, this is far from true.

**KL:** Yes, it is far from true.

**DB:** It’s really just the beginning because there is nothing like an active author to bring people’s attention to a book. I mean we can advertise and promote all we want, but if people hear you talk. If they go to your session at a conference and hear you, they’re going to look for that book, you know. Or if you mention some book that’s been really important to your work or to your practice, you know, people are going to go look for that book. You know, because they heard one of their colleagues talk about it and it, you know, sounded worthwhile. And that is huge. You cannot imagine the difference that that makes. If you are a super famous scholar, you can sit in your office and everyone will come to you. But if you’re just writing your first book, you need to be out there talking about it in front of any audience that you can get, because those people will respond to your enthusiasm for the topic and go looking for the book.

**KL:** I found it really interesting as I was working with another person from the Stylus team, thinking about promotion of this book that’s coming out, and this could be a whole different episode and probably should be because there’s a lot involved. But one of the things that she told was maybe one in four authors are really engaged in the promotion of their books. And that was shocking to me. I was really surprised by that. And I think you’ve made an excellent statement here that people think it’s just the writing of the book and then it’s done. And that’s just, it’s just the start. There’s so much in terms of revising the book and then thinking about how to promote the book and share the book that it really does, you know, there’s a lot to engage in there. And I think that’s something that first-time authors wouldn’t necessarily think about, or just wouldn’t know.

**DB:** Yeah. I think that’s right. And I think, you know, there was a time when it was enough just to write your book. But there are a lot of books out there, you know.

**KL:** Yeah.

**DB:** And people are inundated with information and so they need a reason to go. You know, you need to, and typically, of course, with the professional book there is an audience. You know, you’ve got an audience; there are people that are struggling with the same thing you struggle with and they want to know what you know about it. And so it’s good to go out and promote it. I think there’s a sort of, I hope this is going this way, but there’s sort of an academic prejudice, shall we say, that it’s sort of unseemly to promote your work, right? That the work should be good enough on your own. Well, the work is good enough on its own, but if nobody knows it’s there.

**KL:** Yeah.

**DB:** You know, then it doesn’t really help anyone. So, what you’re doing is helping your colleagues find out about a good resource. You’re not, you know, you’re not puffing yourself up, you’re not pushing a commercial thing, you’re not a salesman. You’re just letting people know about your work and people will want to know because you have something helpful to say.

**KL:** That’s an excellent point.

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You’ve just heard a bonus clip from episode thirty-four of the *Research in Action* podcast with David Brightman discussing common misconceptions about book editors and publishing. Thanks for listening.

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