Dissertations into Books?

You have done a real service for the junior scholars in the profession by providing "A Guide to Publishing Your First Book" in the October 2005 issue (745–748). There is much excellent advice here, and I agree with practically all of it.

However, a number of the contributors may be leading authors astray by suggesting that it is wise to write their dissertations from the start as books, not needing revision to publish. In the pre-electronic age, that would indeed have been good advice. But ever since ProQuest has been making dissertations readily available to libraries in electronic form, many libraries feel no inclination at all to purchase books that are just dissertations, or only lightly revised dissertations, because they rightly believe that they already have the basic works in their collection via ProQuest's service.

Nowadays it is crucial for junior scholars to demonstrate that their first books they are offering to publishers have real and substantial "value added" beyond the dissertations from which they originate. Otherwise, publishers will have a difficult time selling those books to libraries, still a primary market for scholarly monographs. Some libraries instruct their "approval plan" vendors to inspect the front matter for signs that books have been based on dissertations—and then exclude those books from their purchases! One major wholesale library supplier estimates that sales of books so identified are 40% less than books not obviously connected with dissertations.

Thus, counterintuitive (and wasteful) though it may seem to be, aiming to write a book to begin with, rather than a dissertation, may well backfire, compared with writing a dissertation as a dissertation and then subsequently (and substantially) revising it for publication as a book. I regret being the bearer of such bad tidings, but that is the reality of the marketplace today.

Sanford G. Thatcher
Director, Penn State University Press

Editors' Correction

Richard M. Valelly's author bio for his piece on Ira Katznelson (October 2005 *PS*, 797–800) should have read as follows: **Richard M. Valelly** is professor of political science at Swarthmore College. He is the author of *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement* (Chicago University Press, 2004), which won the 2005 Ralph J. Bunche Award of the American Political Science Association and the 2005 J. David Greenstone Award of the Politics and History Section. He is also the author of *Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the American Political Economy* (University of Chicago Press, 1989). The editors of *PS* apologize for running the incomplete bio in the October issue.

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