McFarland's Guidelines for Editors of Multicontributor Manuscripts

The editor of a manuscript made up of essays by multiple contributors bears several unique responsibilities. This guide describes what you will need to do and some challenges you may confront. If you have questions not addressed here, please feel free to check with our editorial staff by email.

Your Basic Responsibilities

- Identifying authors who will write the essays, and securing their commitments.
- Providing whatever editorial guidance the contributors may need, answering their questions, and conducting all necessary communication with them. McFarland needs to be in touch with *you only*; we just don't have sufficient staff to communicate with the contributors.
- Causing the contributors to deliver their essays to you by an agreed-upon date with a signed release. You may have to manage or replace an uncooperative author (keeps promising, continues to delay, but insists he's in to stay).
- Ensuring that the essays are in proper form before delivering the manuscript. It is your job to assess and resolve such matters as quality, appropriateness, disharmony, and disproportionate length. You must also determine to your satisfaction that the content and style of each essay are consistent with a description you and the author have agreed on. The essays must follow a uniform format on such matters as notes, bibliography, use of subheadings, and so forth. **Proofread and correct each essay before sending the manuscript to us**; this includes ensuring the citation styles match throughout. Don't allow one contributor to use MLA, for instance, while another uses Chicago.
- Delivering to McFarland a manuscript complete in every way, including all contributor releases. (More information follows.) We cannot call a manuscript "received" until we have every component of it. The administrative burden of taking it piecemeal is awful for us.
- Answering any questions we may raise during the publication process.
- Reading proofs and creating an index. And, just as important, letting contributors know they *will not* be allowed to proofread their essays or to revise them after the manuscript has been delivered. They will beg; you must stand firm.

Editorial Points to Consider

Work with your contributors to ensure that the essays fit comfortably together. Common problems include subject overlap (the reader will tolerate a little, if the book has a narrow topic, but more than a trace hurts); conflicting styles or formats (keep it simple and uniform, please!) and varying documentation systems (each essay must use the same standard style). Also watch for individual essays whose voice is incompatible with the book—too personal, too slangy, etc. And guard against wildly unequal lengths.

All essays must conform to American English conventions of style and spelling.

The manuscript needs to come in at an appropriate total length. In early discussions we will agree on an approximate length (usually in the form of a word count), and it will be your job to keep it in or near that range. Sometimes this means dropping essays.

McFarland reserves the right to reject an essay at any time should it prove unsuitable or its author troublesome or uncooperative. This is rare but the possibility exists.

Essay titles can be a trouble area, especially in books with a narrow focus. Attack repetition: In a book of essays about Mark Twain, for example, you don't want Twain's name appearing in all, or even most, essay titles. Aim for economy: Discourage contributors from indulging in triple-decker titles (main title: subtitle: sub-subtitle), tricky locutions or excessive wordiness. Work out the titles with the contributors *before delivering the manuscript*, and make sure they know that you and the publisher have the final say.

Contributor Releases

As noted previously, signed releases from all contributors, **delivered with the manuscript**, are a necessity; without them we cannot publish the book. If an essay has two or more coauthors, each must sign a release. In the usual scenario, that of an essay that has never been published, the release should grant you (not McFarland; the book will be copyrighted in your name) ownership of the essay. The author of the essay must state that he or she expects no remuneration from the publisher. We will provide a release for your use.

McFarland will control all rights to the essays while the book remains in print. This is vital to the success of your

book; if the contributors retained the right to republish their essays elsewhere, your potential buyers would have less need for your book.

Contributors often balk at giving over the rights to their essays; it is your job to convince them. Our policy is to ensure that the book is the only place the essays can be found while the book is young and earning most of its sales. Later, we will generally approve reprint requests for a modest fee. If a contributor wants to reuse her essay in a book of her own (after the initial period), we will almost certainly grant reprint rights gratis. Once we are no longer causing the book to be sold, rights revert to you by common law; at that point you can decide whether to return copyright to the contributors.

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Contributor Names and Biographical Information

You must regularize names so that each contributor's name is the same everywhere it appears: in the table of contents, at the head of the essay, in the biographies, and (if applicable) in your preface or introduction. Don't have Jane Doe in one place, Jane M. Doe in another and J.M. Doe in a third.

Most multicontributor books feature a section of biographical information on the authors, describing their background, qualifications, institutional affiliation if any, and other pertinent facts. They should be no shorter than 50 words and no longer than 80. The identifying biographies should provide factual information only; to ensure consistency it is best if you write or rewrite these yourself. Don't allow them to veer into the unprofessional; delete mention of pets, adolescent breakthroughs or unrelated hobbies, for instance. An easy-going tone is fine, but unrevealing discursiveness that tries to ingratiate is not. Be sure to provide a separate entry for *every* contributor.

Other Permission Issues

In examining the essays before manuscript delivery, look for elements that may present copyright issues. Sometimes two or more essays quote from the same original works, and thus the book in aggregate uses more than fair use permits. Beware of poetry or song lyrics, both of which are categorically very rights-sensitive while under copyright. (Works first published after 1924 may still be under copyright.) Contributors may want to include photographs or other illustrations, conduct interviews, or quote from unpublished works; some may require permission from rights owners. It is your job to identify and, via the contributors, satisfy all permission needs before delivering the manuscript, whether by supplying permissions or by deleting the material in question.

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Delivering the Manuscript

Your contract will have a delivery deadline, which helps us in a planning sense, but we are nearly always happy to grant an extension. More important to us than the date is the delivery of a manuscript **complete in every way, sent all at once.** That includes a final double-spaced copy with continuous page numbers (including title page, table of contents, your preface or introduction, all the essays, all notes and bibliographies, all contributor bios), and any photographs or other illustrations, not embedded in the manuscript. You should retain the original copies of all permissions, including releases from all contributors, and provide McFarland with a digital copy of every permission and release. Read our guidelines on Preparing a Manuscript for McFarland for more detailed information.

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