

# 100 questions to ask before you publish a textbook

Kim Bradford-Watts

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The paper outlines options for publishing a textbook in Japan and provides a list of 100 questions that writers should answer or seek answers to prior to committing to any publishing endeavour. These questions arose while the presenter was co-authoring her first textbook with a colleague.

この論文は日本で語学テキストブックを出版する際の様々な道筋の概略を述べ、また、出版に漕ぎ着けるための労をとる前に執筆者自身が答えなければならぬ100の疑問をリスト化しました。これらの疑問は、プレゼンター自身が共著者と一緒にはじめて語学テキストを作成する作業の中で見つけたものです。

**T**here is an extensive market for foreign language textbooks in Japan. Experienced teachers who have developed their own materials may consider publishing them as a textbook. Others may notice a need for a certain type of text in the market and develop unique materials with a view to publication, as discussed by Heffernan (2004). Still others may be approached to prepare a certain kind of textbook for publication.

This paper outlines a number of options for publication and provides a list of 100 questions that writers should answer, or seek answers to, prior to committing to any publishing endeavour. These questions arose while the presenter was authoring her first textbook with a colleague.

The questions cover a range of issues, such as targeting the audience, length and scope of the textbook, organization of the material, use of illustrations and photographs, balancing representations of people in the text, inclusion of translations or L1 notes, the teacher's manual, preparation of CDs or tapes, webpage support, deadlines, and copyright.

Reference to the list of 100 questions prior to committing to publication will:

1. Ensure that authors are able to prepare an effective proposal for publication
2. Allow authors to gauge the extent of commitment necessary to complete their project as envisioned.
3. Allow authors to consider the issues that are most important to them in negotiations with publishers.

### Publication options

There are a number of options if you decide you would like to author a textbook. There are particular advantages and disadvantages associated with each. Authors should carefully reflect upon each option and decide based upon the best fit for their purposes.

#### Approach a publisher

Publishers are always looking for the next book. Submit an outline including the aim of the materials and target group, a sample chapter or two, your Curriculum Vitae, and a cover letter. Don't forget that Japanese publishers may also be interested. Look through the list of JALT sponsors at <jalt.org/main/sponsors>.

#### Publish it yourself

If you have a really good idea of how you would like your materials to be organised and you do not want to conform to any requirements that a major EFL publishing

house may impose upon you, you can self-publish. The advantage of this is that you have total editorial control. The disadvantages include having to pay up front for the copies that you print, needing to store copies until they are bought, having to do all the promotion yourself, and having to worry about taxes related to the production and sale of the book. Silverman (2004) offers excellent advice for those who choose to self-publish. An Internet search will reveal many companies able to assist you in the production of your book, but why not contact the people who lay out *The Language Teacher* first? The URL is: <pukeko.ws/>.

#### Publish it online

We are living in the age of the Internet. One option is to publish online. You may wish to give your work away, or you may decide to charge for the work. Both options are viable. A quick search will lead you to appropriate advice for either possibility. Don't forget to copyright your online materials.

#### Wait to be asked

This is probably the least successful way. Nevertheless, it is how I made my start. Please read the story below about how it all happened.

#### Sharing the story of the book

Once upon a time, two authors were approached to write a textbook. Neither of them had ever published textbooks before, but both were excited by the project, so they agreed.

It seemed like a simple task: 20,000 words for a reading and writing book about Australia.

I am one of those authors. Jacoba Akazawa is the other. This is the story of how we published our book, *Talking about the Australian Mosaic* (2005, Hokuseido).

We got together and planned the project, then started writing. We had been asked to submit four sample units for approval. The units that we submitted were rejected. In the rejection note, it was explained that the book would not be a reading and writing text after all. The publisher had decided instead that the text would be a four skills book. This meant that the reading passages had to be 200 words shorter than the ones that we had prepared, and that we would also need to write listening passages and exercises to support each of the four skills.

We started writing again. One day, we received an email from the publisher informing us that the photographs for the text were required as soon as possible. Unfortunately, this was the first time that we had heard that we should supply photographs. We looked at some of the other books produced by the publisher and discovered that the grey-scale photographs appeared quite grainy. Neither of us knew any photographers, and we were not in the position to go to Australia to take photographs. We asked if there was a budget for the photographs and were told that there was, but that it was only 100,000 yen, including the cover page design, which we also needed to prepare. We asked whether, instead of photographs, illustrations would be acceptable. This would be useful, because we could also design activities with visual elements. The publisher was a little hesitant at first, but we knew an award-winning illustrator, Lucinda

Hunnam, who agreed to do all the illustrations necessary plus the cover design for 100,000 yen. The publisher asked her to submit a sample cover design. They loved it, so our book has illustrations instead of photographs.

Our manuscript was accepted. A listening CD was to be produced to support the book. The listening passages were to be read by two actors based in Tokyo. Fortunately, we thought to ask about the actors. The publisher usually uses two North American actors, and was planning to use them for this recording. However, we pointed out that North American accents are quite different from Australian accents. The publisher was not convinced until we found an Internet site contrasting the accents. They arranged for two Australian actors to record the listening passages instead.

The book includes an interview with a young didgeridoo player, so we thought we might also include a recording of one of our friends playing some music. The friend gave us a recording that he had made, along with permission to use it. At first the publisher did not wish to include it, but we argued that most Japanese learners have little opportunity to hear the didgeridoo being played. There are, therefore, two short passages of didgeridoo music included on the listening CD.

In the middle of August 2004, we celebrated finishing the text. The book was with the translator and the CD had been recorded. Then came the email giving a deadline for the teacher's book. Perhaps we had been naïve, but we were surprised. This was the first time anyone had mentioned publishing a teacher's book. We started writing (very quickly) again. *Talking about the Australian Mosaic* is a four-skills content-based course. We wrote instructions for

reading, writing, listening, and speaking teachers. Teachers of the four skills are able to pick and choose activities that suit their classes. When we submitted it, the editor, Keiko Eizawa, was surprised by the length and detail in the book. She discussed the teacher's book with her supervisor who suggested that it should be released as a word file on a floppy disk. We raised the point that many teachers, including ourselves, do not have access to a floppy disk drive these days. Fortunately the file was too big to be released as a floppy disk, so the publishers released it on CD-Rom instead.

During the process of writing and publication, there were many other twists and turns. Reflecting on the ups and downs of the experience, I wrote a list of 100 questions to ask a publisher before committing to a publishing project. I would like to share this list with you today. 100 questions may seem to be a lot, but if all parties involved in the project are aware of the answers prior to beginning work, the process will be less stressful and more successful.

### What you should ask

1. What maturity level will the book be targeting?
2. What language level will the book be targeting?
3. What skills will be the focus of the book?
4. Will it be a language-based text, or a content-based book?
5. How many units will there be in the book?
6. For how many hours of instruction or classes should the book provide material?
7. Is the book for use in one semester or a full year?
8. How many pages will the book be in total?
9. How many words should the book be in total?
10. How many pages will be allocated to each unit?
11. How many words (range) should you write for each unit?
12. To what format will each unit conform, if any?
13. What kind of grammar support should the book provide?
14. What kind of vocabulary support should the book provide?
15. What kind of genre support should the book provide?
16. Will there be *focus on form* activities?
17. Will there be *focus on fluency* activities?
18. Will the book be black and white, or colour?
19. What size will the book be? A4? B5? Other?
20. Will there be illustrations?
21. Will there be photographs?
22. Who will supply the illustrations or photographs?
23. Is there a budget to pay the illustrator or photographer?
24. What size should the illustrations be?
25. How many illustrations should there be in each unit?
26. How many illustrations should there be in total?

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27. Who will design the cover?
  28. What is the budget for cover design?
  29. How many colours can the cover design be?
  30. What size should the cover design be?
  31. What elements need to be included in the design?
  32. In what format should the illustrations/photographs be provided?
  33. Who will hold copyright of the illustrations or photographs?
  34. When will the illustrator/photographer/cover designer be paid?
  35. Will graphs, tables, or diagrams be included?
  36. Who should make the graphs and diagrams?
  37. What software should be used to make graphs and diagrams?
  38. What font(s) will be used in the textbook?
  39. What kinds of activities will be included in the textbook?
  40. Should the rubrics be written in the text?
  41. Should the rubrics be written in English?
  42. Should the rubrics be written in Japanese?
  43. Will the text include space for students to record their answers?
  44. Will the text include space for student reflections?
  45. Will the text include support for students doing presentations?
  46. Will the text include support for self or peer evaluation of tasks or presentations?
  47. Will the textbook include representations of a large cross-section of society?
  48. Will the textbook ensure balanced representations of men and women?
  49. Will the textbook ensure balanced representations of people of different nationalities and races?
  50. Are there any company policies forbidding the inclusion of any topics? If yes, what are the policies? Which topics are taboo, and why?
  51. Will there be Japanese translations or notes used in the student book?
  52. Where will the Japanese translations or notes be located in the student book (if applicable)?
  53. Will links to online resources be included in the text?
  54. Will details of other related resources be included in the text?
  55. Will there be a glossary?
  56. Will there be a separate language support section of the textbook?
  57. Will it be necessary to submit the manuscript unit-by-unit for approval, all units at once, or a combination of the above?

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58. What is the production schedule for the text?
  59. Will there be a teacher's manual?
  60. How many pages or words will the teacher's manual be?
  61. What font will the teacher's manual be?
  62. What size font will the teacher's manual be?
  63. Should the teacher's manual be available in English?
  64. Should the teacher's manual be available in Japanese?
  65. Will the teacher's manual include ready-made quizzes or tests?
  66. Will the teacher's manual include translations of the passages in the textbook?
  67. Will the teacher's manual include translations of the rubrics?
  68. Will photocopiable resources be included in the teacher's manual?
  69. Will suggested lesson plans be included in the teacher's manual?
  70. Will links to online resources be included in the teacher's manual?
  71. Will details of other related resources be included in the teacher's manual?
  72. What else will be included in the teacher's manual?
  73. Will the teacher's manual be printed, or supplied as a download from the Internet, on CD-Rom, or floppy disc?
  74. If the teacher's manual is to be supplied electronically, what format will be used? Word? Acrobat pdf?
  75. What is the production schedule for the teacher's manual?
  76. Will there be tapes or CDs made?
  77. Will tapes or CDs be supplied with the teacher's manual, or will they be available separately?
  78. Will there be a student tape or CD? Will this be supplied with the student book, or available separately?
  79. What is the budget for the tapes or CDs?
  80. How many actors will be involved in recording the tapes or CDs?
  81. What is the gender balance of the actors recording the tapes or CDs?
  82. What kinds of accents are represented by the actors to be used in the tapes or CDs?
  83. Will songs be included on the tapes or CDs?
  84. Who owns the copyright on the songs to be used on the tapes or CDs?
  85. Who will apply for copyright permission to use the songs to be included on the tapes or CDs?
  86. Will the songs on the tapes or CDs be recorded by local artists?
  87. What is the production schedule for the tapes or CDs?
  88. Will there be a webpage to support teachers?

89. Will there be a webpage to support learners?
90. Will there be a webpage for promotional purposes?
91. Who will design the webpage(s)?
92. Who will maintain the webpage(s)?
93. Who will answer inquiries from or about the webpage(s)?
94. Will the webpage(s) be simple, or will it (they) have all the *bells and whistles*?
95. Is there a budget for the creation and maintenance of the webpage(s)?
96. How much is the budget for the webpage(s)?
97. What is the production schedule for the webpage(s)?
98. Who holds copyright on the student book?
99. Who holds copyright on the teacher's manual?
100. Who holds copyright on the CD?

**Kim Bradford-Watts** has been teaching in a variety of contexts in the Kinki region since 1987. She also co-edits a number of JALT publications, writes, and is studying for a second masters level degree, this time in educational studies. Contact her at [kim@bradford-watts.freesevers.com](mailto:kim@bradford-watts.freesevers.com).

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