A NURSE'S

STEP BY STEP

GUIDE TO

PUBLISHING A DISSERTATION OR DNP PROJECT

TAKING YOUR PAPER FROM GRADUATION TO PUBLICATION

KAREN ROUSH

Praise for *A Nurse's Step-By-Step Guide to Publishing a Dissertation or DNP Project*

"Karen Roush's book is an essential resource for all nursing scholars, most notably new graduates of doctoral programs. The book breaks down the complexities of scholarly writing and provides key insight and vital guidance for publishing dissertations or DNP projects. Roush is an accomplished professor, writer, and editor who shares her expertise in writing for publication in this new book. A Nurse's Step-by-Step Guide to Publishing a Dissertation or DNP Project *will have a permanent place on my bookshelf and will be shared with new graduates and colleagues alike."*

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Julia and Harold Plotnick Professor of Global Nursing
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth College of Nursing

"It is an honor to have the opportunity to read and review Karen Roush's well-written, user-friendly guide and pearls for nursing doctoral students (PhD and DNP) to use in navigating the often-daunting world of publication. This text is an excellent supplement to faculty writing mentorship for students as they tackle preparation of their dissertation or scholarly project for dissemination. I found the differentiation between the purpose of a student paper and manuscript, the description of the iterative writing process, and specific examples of grammatical fatal flaws—as well as the 'write this, not this' tips and the submission process—to be spot on!"

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Professor of Nursing & Pediatrics
Associate Dean for Research and Innovation
UMass Medical School-Graduate School of Nursing

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–Wendy Budin, PhD, RN-BC, FAAN
Professor & Associate Dean
Entry to Baccalaureate Practice Division
Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Perinatal Education*
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
School of Nursing

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KAREN ROUSH, PhD, RN, FNP-BC

Sigma
GLOBAL NURSING EXCELLENCE

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the *AJN* crew for sharing their friendship and writing talents with me. You've enriched my writing and my life.

About the Author

Karen Roush, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, received her PhD in nursing research and theory development from the New York University Rory Meyers College of Nursing. She started her nursing education with an associate degree in nursing from Adirondack Community College in 1982, went on for her BSN at Russell Sage College, and then earned a master's degree at Columbia University, where she specialized as a family nurse practitioner.

Roush served for many years as Editorial Director and Clinical Managing Editor for the *American Journal of Nursing* (*AJN*) and continues her affiliation with the journal as News Director. In addition, she is the founder of The Scholar's Voice, which works to strengthen the voice of nursing through writing mentorship for nurses. In this capacity, Roush works with nurses in varied roles, including doctoral students, faculty members, nursing leaders, and bedside nurses. She is particularly proud of her success working with bedside nurses and other novice writers and shares their joy when they become published authors for the first time. She is an award-winning writer who has authored multiple consumer health-care books, numerous nursing articles in peer-reviewed journals, essays, and poetry. Roush has traveled to Rwanda, Uganda, and India as a nursing volunteer and taught nursing students in Ghana. She was a visiting scholar in the Department of Human Resources for Health at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. Currently she works as adjunct faculty at Pace University and The Graduate Center for the City University of New York.

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Introduction: Becoming an Author

It's time to share your work with the world.

In the Introduction of your dissertation or project paper, you told your committee why your research or project was important. You persuaded them that this was a topic or problem that we needed to pay attention to. But if only your committee members have paid attention, the impact ends there. Don't let what you've accomplished sit in the bottom of a drawer or in a fancy binder on a shelf. Make sure it gets to the people who can use it—other nurses who are struggling to solve the same problems you've addressed; clinicians who need evidence to provide the highest quality, most effective care; researchers building a body of knowledge; and nursing leaders trying to influence policy at local and national levels.

Perhaps you've presented your project and its outcomes to your colleagues and leadership in your organization. Maybe they've even taken it beyond your unit and created a facility-wide protocol based on what you did. Or you've presented your research at a conference where you shared it with a few hundred attendees. People came up to talk to you after a podium presentation or stopped by your poster.

Those presentations are important and are effective in disseminating your results to others interested in your topic. They may even result in replication of your project or collaborations with other researchers. But they don't have the reach of publication. When you publish your work in a respected journal, it has the potential to reach thousands. Your research will become part of the body of knowledge—a building block of nursing science. The project you undertook to improve the care of patients on one unit or in one facility now has the potential to improve care for an untold number of patients everywhere.

Publishing the results of your dissertation or scholarly project is the final step in your doctoral education process. No, your dissertation or project was not your life's work, but neither was it just another student exercise. It was a meaningful endeavor that asked others—participants, key stakeholders, mentors—to contribute their time and effort and expertise. You owe it to them, to future patients, and to nursing science to share what you learned through your work.

Negative findings. You should still publish your dissertation or project if your hypotheses were not proven or your project didn't result in the outcomes you hoped for. Knowing what doesn't work—and why—is important so others don't waste time and resources researching questions you've already answered or hitting the same barriers you've encountered. Unlike in the past, many journals now recognize the importance of publishing reports of negative findings.

Publication is powerful. Research enables you to influence nursing practice and patient outcomes far beyond your corner of the world. The lives of people you will never meet may be better because of your work. Publication connects you to people with similar interests, experiences, and goals. Or it ignites a curiosity in people who weren't interested before. And they go on to build on what you've contributed. It ensures that what you believe needs to be paid attention to *is* paid attention to.

Publication is also important because it strengthens the voice of nursing in the healthcare arena. It is our responsibility to make sure that nursing work—the entire breadth and depth of it—is made visible. There is still a lack of awareness of the contributions that nurses make to science, healthcare policy, clinical practice decisions, and healthcare systems design and management.

Writing a high-quality manuscript is difficult. It takes a lot of focused time and effort to take a paper from a first draft to a publishable

manuscript. And turning a long, complex dissertation or project paper into a concise, focused manuscript presents its own set of challenges. You will get frustrated along the way. When you produce just one page of decent writing after spending hours at your computer, you'll question yourself. You'll think maybe you're just not good at this writing stuff. Not true. Good writing takes critical thinking, reflection, and circling back again and again to make sure everything is connected, logical, accurate, and clearly written. All that takes time.

And you've had a lot of practice writing throughout your doctoral program. You've read tons of scholarly articles, so you are familiar with the structure, contents, and tone of research and quality improvement reports. You've critiqued research for assignments, so you know what a well-written research report requires. You have the foundational skills to do this—you just need a little guidance. This book will help you with that.

Navigating the publication process can be intimidating. Just choosing a journal to submit your work to from the hundreds of possibilities can seem daunting. Should you publish in an open access journal? And what exactly is that? How do you know if a journal is from one of those predatory publishers you've heard about? There are criteria and guidelines and forms to be filled out. There are ethical and legal considerations. And there's the online submission process to wade through.

This book is designed to guide you step-by-step through the process of rewriting your dissertation or DNP project paper into a high-quality manuscript ready to be submitted for publication and then guide you through the process of submitting it. It gives you the background information you need to confidently navigate the world of scholarly publishing.

Let's get started! It's time to become a published author!

SECTION

1

THE BEGINNING

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1

THE ESSENTIALS

This chapter discusses the difference between writing for school and writing for publication. It gives you a general overview of what needs to be done to go from a dissertation/scholarly project paper to a published article.