



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
**mentor memo**  
AUTUMN QUARTER 2009

## By Professor Philip N. Howard

This Mentor Memo, part of a series, responds to graduate students' requests for advice about navigating graduate studies successfully.

The series also addresses topics in career preparation and professional development. For more information and to suggest topics, contact Graduate School Dean Jerry Baldasty at [baldasty@u.washington.edu](mailto:baldasty@u.washington.edu).

©2009 University of Washington Graduate School

## Finding opportunities to collaborate and publish

Many scholars enjoy co-authoring because doing so affords an opportunity to develop new ideas, extend our methodological toolkit, and share the workload. The first step in finding opportunities to co-publish is to let your faculty mentors know that you are available to help if they ever get such invitations. Faculty sometimes receive unsolicited invitations to write an article or contribute a book chapter. Since faculty often plan long-term writing agendas, they may decline an unexpected invitation.

They may be more likely to accept such an invitation if they know they can share the research and writing tasks with a co-author.

If you hear of such an opportunity, or see a call for papers that you would like to answer, you may also pitch a co-authorship opportunity to other students or faculty. Whether or not they accept your invitation will depend on how thoroughly you've considered the workload, authorship credits, and of course, the intellectual fit.

## Many forms of collaborations

Collaborative work with faculty can take many forms: payment in the form of a stipend without additional acknowledgement; a thank-you in the acknowledgments of a book or an article; a footnote in the relevant section of the published work; gradations of co-authorship; or independent access to the data or field notes.

Across the humanities and social sciences, an author is someone who makes a substantive creative contribution to a project. A research assistant makes a minor creative contribution or a mechanical contribution such as collecting data or organizing archives.

For the most part, being paid as a research assistant does not eliminate the obligation to acknowledge the contribution of a minor or mechanical contribution. The benefit of collaborating is that all parties acquire new experience and skills, and have the creative opportunity to generate and test new ideas.

there's more... >

## Discussing the workload

There are several good tools that facilitate co-authorship, such as Endnote, Word's "track changes" tool, and of course, e-mail. Your discussion of workload should not only include the details of which parts of an article you will author, but the process for editing drafts, for backing up drafts and data, for keeping notes on major edits, and for resolving intellectual differences. But co-authoring doesn't stop there—you should also talk through the likely division of labor for submitting to journals, corresponding with editors, handling revisions and resubmissions, and reviewing page proofs.

Even though many of these tasks seem far in the future and hypothetical—contingent on acceptance

—they are a significant part of the work of publishing and it is best to talk through the hypothetical scenarios. The more you clarify the workload and timeline before the writing starts, the more likely you are to have a successful collaboration. Moreover, writing may not even be the most difficult task for authors: conceptualizing the problem, designing the research project, and collecting data are major tasks that need to be made even before writing begins.

## Negotiating authorship credit

We are in an unusual profession in that faculty actively work to make students into colleagues. So many project leaders will err on the side of generosity in negotiating an authorship credit, and there are several possible permutations:

- Listing authors in alphabetical order, which in the social sciences and humanities can indicate equal contributions (if specified in the footnotes);
- Listing authors in the order of substantive contributions made;
- Randomizing the order of authors across multiple papers based on the same project;
- In increasingly rare cases, subdividing authorship, which takes the form of "A with B" or "A and B."

Journals may also have their own guidelines for how to acknowledge each other's contribution in a footnote, endnote, or other front matter.

It is best to establish early on—as part of the workload conversation—what the duties and obligations for these credits will be for your particular piece. However, the initially agreed-upon authorship order can change based on the actual contributions realized at the end of the paper.

## Personal negotiations

It is best to have face-to-face conversations about the terms of this important relationship, so avoid using e-mail. Unlike writing a paper for a class, collaborating and co-authoring is a long-term personal commitment to being available and amenable to an extended process. This longer-term working relationship means meeting deadlines (and being flexible with them), deferring to your collaborators in the areas in which they have more expertise, and picking up responsibilities when necessary. Ultimately, it can mean celebrating and sharing the reward of successfully publishing and contributing to the advancement of knowledge.