

Commissioning Editor: Job description

Commissioning editors identify books or media products to publish in order to build up a publisher's list. They commission work by finding authors or responding to book proposals. Their role is rather like that of a buyer. They also ensure authors deliver typescripts to specification and on time.

The role is most associated with book publishing. In magazine publishing, commissioning editors commission writers to produce articles and features.

This occupation is a mid to senior level post requiring suitable experience and ability. An initial entrant is likely to be recruited into a more junior position, such as editorial assistant, which may then lead on to a career as a commissioning editor.

Typical work activities

Commissioning editors are involved with a project at every stage. They are the key link between the initial proposal for a book or product and the published work.

To develop their publisher's list, commissioning editors research their field in order to learn about trends and gaps in the market. For this purpose, they:

- attend book fairs;
- conduct internet research;
- draw up surveys to identify demand;
- attend relevant conferences.

Typical work activities involve:

- building up a publisher's list of titles for a specific genre;
- managing the list in the current market as well as identifying future markets and new products/titles with commercial potential;
- researching developing market trends on a national and international level;
- identifying, developing and supporting projects and authors;
- meeting with other commissioning editors and senior editors to discuss new proposals;
- reading and evaluating book proposals and manuscripts offered by authors and agents as well as assessing their suitability for the list;
- negotiating contract terms with authors and agents;
- liaising with authors and reviewers throughout the production;
- maintaining a book publishing programme and monitoring progress throughout the publication process;
- organising book launches and signings;
- working with administration, finance, budgets and strategy;
- providing data and contributing to marketing and sales activities;
- managing the 'back-list' (titles already published) and making decisions on whether to reprint, revise, make a new edition or put out of print.

The job may also involve some repetitive tasks, especially in junior positions.