

### **Your Preface is Our #1 Sales Tool**

The preface is an Author's opportunity to explain the vision behind the Work. It is also the single most important tool used to actively *sell* the book to our sales force as well as to prospective adopters. A well-organized preface that clearly presents a book's advantages is crucial to a book's success and will figure prominently in the promotion, marketing, and sales of the Work.

The preface should present a compelling reason for the reviewer to want to look more closely at the book's content or supplementary package components. It should also act as a user-friendly sales tool for the sales rep. The book's approach and features need to be presented in digestible well-written chunks of information that will catch the reviewer's attention and compel him or her to delve deeper into the book.

### **Types of Prefaces**

Not all books are alike; similarly, not all prefaces will be alike. The type of preface you write should be determined by consideration of the key selling points that you need to make. Ask yourself:

*What is it about this book that will resonate with potential adopters?*

*What are the key words, concepts, and features that will catch their attention?*

Depending on the number and types of features in the text and the uniqueness of text and package components, a good preface might be mostly narrative or it might be heavily illustrated and include many pictures of text and package elements.

A mostly narrative preface is fine for books that are fairly straightforward and do not contain a lot of features and pedagogy. Most often this applies to upper division books or smaller market books. Most introductory and many core curriculum books that contain lots of in-chapter features and elaborate package components will require more elaborate "walk-through prefaces" where key elements are described and illustrated. If your text has an unusually strong pedagogical approach, a walk-through preface will allow you to walk a reviewer through an illustrated presentation of your learning system.

Some prefaces include "To the Instructor" and "To the Student" sections. This can be a particularly effective way to speak directly to each audience, especially if you have a lot of instructor related support components, such as videos, labs, and other resources and want to separate your messages to each audience.

A letter from the author can also provide an effective opening for a preface, particularly for large market books with complex packages. In an opening letter you can frame your book in the market, relate your response to trends in the field, and introduce important features of the book and the package.

Whatever style of preface applies best to your Work, the goal and basics of writing a winning preface are the same. Your goal is to present the competitive advantages of your entire package: the approach, pedagogy, and special features in the book, and the value of your instructor and student resources in your supplement package.

## **Writing the Preface**

Everyone likes a good story. Your preface needs to tell a story that adopters will find compelling. Here are guidelines for thinking about and constructing a good selling preface.

### **Section I. The Purpose of the Book: What is the Story Behind the Book?**

The opening section of the Preface should address the following questions:

1. Why did you write this book?
2. Who is this book written to serve?
3. What are the needs of your target audience?
4. What are the goals of your book and package in light of the needs of your target audience and trends in the market?
5. Did market research inform aspects of the book? Surveys, focus groups, class testing, reviewer feedback? How did this data inform development of the book?

### **Section II. Revisions: New To This Edition Section**

To comply with Federal legislation, which becomes effective as of July 1, 2010, all textbooks must contain information on the “substantial” changes made to a new edition. The Preface of every print textbook must contain a section headed “New to This Edition.” Typically, this section will be featured on the first page of the Preface so it is easily found by customers (and sales reps). “New to This Edition” copy must appear in both instructor and student versions of the book. The section should contain an introductory statement summarizing the basic intent behind the revisions, followed by bullet points. Each bullet point should focus on a “substantial” content revision. The list of substantial revisions should have a minimum of six bullet points, in order to show that the revision is well justified.

“Substantial” means:

- Any change that impacts more than 20% of the content or feature category. Examples: “Over 20% of the research cited is from 2008 or later.” or “Over 50% of the sample student essays are new to this edition.”
- Any addition, subtraction, or change in placement of chapters. Examples: a list of new chapters and reasons for the new coverage; a list of chapters moved for the purpose of better learning or based on user feedback; a list of deleted chapters (this is potentially controversial, but there may be valid reasons to explain why material has been removed).
- Changes in approach, tone, and format that the author incorporates throughout the book – usually these are in reaction to user feedback or new trends in how the subject matter is approached by the discipline.
- Changes that impact exercises, test/quiz items, assignments, or anything that impacts what students will be studying and materials that instructors will have to update in their notes, syllabus, etc.

### **Section III. Organization of the Book**

This section should address the following questions:

1. How is the book organized?
2. Why is it organized the way it is?
3. What is covered in each part/chapter? (You can include a brief synopsis of what is in each chapter, if it is an important part of the book's story.)

### **Section IV. Features/Pedagogy**

This section should address the following questions:

1. What pedagogical features are in the book and why?
2. If a new edition, what is new and what is retained?
3. Is there a unique learning system built into the book?
4. What are the special features? Describe notable boxes, opening cases, end-of-chapter material, appendices, etc. Explain why they are of benefit to the student. How do they assist teaching or learning?
5. How do end-of-chapter materials aid learning and retention of content?
6. If applicable, how do end-of-chapter materials build functional skills?

If the book is a major market book, then the Preface should contain a guided tour or walk-through of the teaching system, features, and pedagogy.

### **Section V. Resources For Students**

Here is where you describe supplements designed for student use, including a companion website, workbook, self-assessment tool, lab manual, or any other student resource. List and describe each and explain why they will help the student learn more effectively or efficiently.

### **Section VI. Resources for Instructors**

Here is where you describe supplements designed for instructor use, including an instructor's manual, test item file, test generator, PowerPoint presentation, instructor software, videos, MyLab application, and anything else designed for teaching or classroom management.

### **Section VII. Online Course Delivery Program**

You may want to have a section in your Preface dedicated to online course delivery. You could include this program under the instructor resource section, but if it is a high value application, you may want to feature it on its own. CourseConnect online courses and MyLabs with classroom management tools fall into this category.

### **Section VIII. Acknowledgements**

It is customary to end the preface with acknowledgements. This section is typically broken down into (1) personal acknowledgements and thanks to those who helped with initial ideas or research, personal thanks to family members, colleagues, and/or support staff and (2) thanks to those who contributed, helped develop the project, and/or involved in its preparation. These

include: manuscript reviewers, contributors, editorial staff (publisher, acquisitions editor, marketing manager, assistants, production), freelancers, sales reps, and other contributors.

### **Section IX. About the Author**

Depending on the strength of the author's experience or reputation in the field, it may be good to include a biography focusing on aspects of the author's background that illuminates the author's expertise in the field. The biography should focus on experience directly relevant to and underpinning the authority of the text.

As noted, you may want to start your Preface with a *Letter from the Author* to your audience or with an *About The Author* section. The decision as to where to place these components should be driven by their importance in conveying your message to your audience. Take a look at some of the examples we have provided in PDF. Also, consult Prefaces in other top selling books in your field. Borrow and adapt ideas to fit your book and your market and tell your story with panache.