

Publisher (Commissioning Editor) Vacancy

Jacana Media | Johannesburg office

About Jacana

Jacana Media is an independent South African publishing house. We publish books that start conversations, challenge assumptions and shape public life. We are proud to be a publisher with a strong voice in African and southern African literature.

We are looking for a Senior Publisher to join our team in February 2027.

The role

This is a highly creative yet commercially demanding leadership position. You will help shape Jacana's list: identifying trends in the market and other areas of potential growth, discovering agenda-setting ideas and commissioning the books that grow our frontlist revenue. You will be both an editor who can shepherd a manuscript through its structural evolution and a publisher who understands what makes a title succeed in the market.

Core responsibilities

Commissioning and list-building

- Solicit and evaluate book proposals, including agented submissions and steer manuscripts from concept through the peer-review process
- Actively scout African and global academic African-centric and activist talent and commission texts within key identified subject areas
- Present proposals and title strategies to the team, making a persuasive case for them
- Manage a multi-title portfolio
- Nurture relationships with an existing list of authors while planning long-term growth strategies

Editorial and project management

- Oversee the structural evolution of each manuscript, manage the macro-level timeline and brief the production manager
- Work closely and collaboratively with various editorial teams
- Drive special funded publication projects



Contracts, rights and funding

- Manage author contracts
- Manage international rights
- Assist with securing grant and funding to subsidise vital public-interest work

Commercial strategy and finance

- Manage book budgets
- Calculate margins, royalties and advance structures
- Present title strategies to the publishing and sales teams and coordinate closely with colleagues across sales, marketing and production departments
- Track and report on each title's performance after publication, including sales, revenue against budget and media reach

What we are looking for

- Proven industry experience, with concrete proof of previously commissioned, profitable titles that you brought to market
- A track record of structural editing
- Exceptional language skills and editing ability
- Strong financial literacy
- Excellent project management skills
- A strong, active network within activist, scholarly and academic spheres, and among literary agents, critics and media figures
- Experience working with diverse teams and the ability to work collaboratively across departments
- The ability to work from our Johannesburg office on a full-time basis

To apply

Please send your CV, a covering letter and a short list of titles you have commissioned (with a brief note on their commercial and critical performance) to hr@jacana.co.za, with the subject line "Publisher: [your name]". Applications close on 30 November 2026. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Jacana Media is committed to employment equity and encourages applications from all suitably qualified candidates.