JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE DONE--A PRODUCTION PRIMER FOR AUTHORS

An Author's Garden of Editors

First in a Series

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Lillian R. Rodberg is principal and senior editor/indexer of The Manuscript Doctors of Emmaus, Pennsylvania, an editing and indexing service specializing in texts in medicine and the life sciences. She teaches courses in copy editing and indexing as well as short courses on aspects of the publishing process and will be active at TAA's 1991 convention. This series of articles is timely, since a special interest group for editors is being formed within TAA.

The Eskimos, it's said, have more than twenty words for snow to encompass the many varieties with which they are intimately familiar. Publishers have only one word for editor, though baffled textbook authors may get the impression that there are twenty varieties and possibly more. To compound the confusion, even an author may be called an editor if his or her textbook entails many chapters written by different contributors.

Bringing order to the bewildering array of editorial species would take a book-length phylogeny--and, indeed, such a volume exists: *Editors on Editing: An Inside View of What Editors Really Do*, edited (!) by Gerald Gross (Harper & Row, revised edition 1985). Some authors may enjoy reading it, but probably only editors are *that* interested in what editors do. You, as a textbook author, may want only to know what to expect of each species of editor you encounter as your text wends its seemingly endless way to print.

Like most categorizations, the following has its arbitrary aspects. Functions overlap; titles, regrettably, vary from publishing house to publishing house and even within houses. In very large publishing houses, creeping specialization has

long since set in along with functional subcategories. Where this is the case, observation and the "like-a-duck" principle may help you: If the specimen brandishes a contract, it's an acquisitions editor; if it seems permanently tethered to a telephone it's a production editor; and if it wields a pack of query slips and the *Chicago Manual of Style*, it's a copy editor.

One species of editor functions for the most part before manuscript submission and therefore is mentioned here only in passing. This kind of editor works directly with authors, either as a freelance consultant or through an institutional publications department, on such matters as scholarship, organization, and literary style. The Council of Biology Editors, of which I am a member, calls this species an **author's editor**. The work of author's editors merits a separate column.

The **acquisitions**, or **sponsoring**, editor is the species best known to authors. This is the person who recruits you to write the text or accepts your proposal, negotiates the contract with you, helps you find contributors, shepherds you through the writing of the first draft, submission for peer review, writing of the second draft,

submission for peer review. . . .I'll not go on, assuming you are either overfamiliar with these matters or likely to be terminally discouraged by their recounting.

Although authors are sometimes under the impression that the acquisitions editor also does the technical editing of the manuscript, this is very seldom the case. The days of the celebrated Maxell Perkins/Thomas Wolfe collaboration are over. A **developmental editor**, either in-house (that is, an employee of the publisher) or, quite often, freelance, may be involved early on--ideally, from the outset, when the text is still being planned and only a rough draft or no draft exists. The developmental editor works on such aspects of your text as organization, appropriateness for the market and the targeted educational level, features and pedagogy, and overall style of expression. Sometimes a developmental editor is called in when a manuscript reviews poorly or needs adjustment in level. Sometimes a developmental editor rewrites; sometimes he or she provides detailed line-by-line guidelines for revision. The author-editor relationship can be a tightrope affair for both sides, but when all goes well, the collaboration can yield valuable feedback, encouragement, and a better text.

The developmental editor's functions overlap those of what the San Diego Professional Editors' Network calls a **substantive editor** and others sometimes call a **line editor**. (In trade publishing, a few--and increasingly fewer--acquisitions editors line edit; in some areas of text publishing, part of this **work** falls to the copy editor.) The **line** editor

begins by assessing the manuscript as a whole for style, tone, structure, logic, and accuracy. Then he or she will perform major, minor, or cosmetic surgery to edit out the weaknesses of the manuscript and enhance its strengths. The editor may reorganize the manuscript, rewrite portions of text, eliminate wordiness, write

transitions and summaries, and work with the author to resolve inconsistencies and clarify confusing passages. [1]

Author's editors, acquisitions editors, and developmental editors have in common the fact that their work is done *preproduction*, that is, before your book is committed to the process that will put it into print.

Just when you thought your task was done, you will find yourself in the hands of the **production editor**, who will juggle the many elements of the production process to achieve that magical moment when you hold the shrink-wrapped copy of your book in your hands. If your text is a complex one, and especially if it has many illustrations, you will be hearing a lot from the production editor. This person's job is essentially that of a ringmaster: to keep the production moving by coordinating the services of the copy editor, designer, artist, typesetter, proofreaders, indexer, printer, and binder--and also by hounding the author as and if necessary to return corrected proofs on time.

The production editor does not generally edit--this is, deal with the words of--your manuscript. That is the job of the **copy editor**, who is often selected by the production editor. (Some publishers prefer that the production editor serve as liaison between author and copy editor, leading the author to think the two are the same.)

Probably there is no time when the exasperation of "just-when-I-thought-I-was-done" is more likely to strike an author than when the first batch of copyedited manuscript arrives, complete with arcane squiggles and flapping query "flags." Moreover, the sins of poorly prepared and often arrogant copy editors have led Jacques Barzun, among others, to conclude that "stupid-copy-editor" is all one word. In another column, I'll talk about ways to avert this sad situation and to help assure that a qualified copy editor will be working not only on but for your book. For now, I'll confine the discussion to what copy editors may be expected (by the publisher and by you) to do:

- Identify and correct errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage that creep into even the most careful author's work in the throes of cration.

- Make style consistent: "Style" here means not literary style but matters like whether numbers are spelled out, how abbreviations are punctuated (PhD, Ph. D., or Ph.D.), whether California is abrreviated and if so, whether as Calif., Ca., or CA. Style may be governed by the publisher, by your professional society's style guide (APA, ALA, and so on), or a combination.

- Cross-check bibliographic references (leading to those irritating "Au: Schmidt as in text or Schmitt as in refs?" that send you back to the library just when you thought . . .); cross-check glossary terms with text; check table of contents against chapter titles and subheadings.

- Watch out for and query inadvertent sexism, racism, ageism, and so (without, I might add, being a fanatic about it).

- Edit the references for conformity to whatever style (Chicago, APA, publisher's) is mandated.

- Mark the manuscript for the typesetter, both with codes called for by the text design and to identify any technical or possibly confusing elements (math symbols, Greek letters).

As you can see, the copy editor's task overlaps that of the developmental/substantive editor. With nearly all text publishers, the copy-edited manuscript is submitted to the author for review and resolution of queries before being sent to the typesetter. Journal articles, in contrast, are generally seen by the author in galley (typeset) form.

One final note: A **proofreader** differs from a copy editor in that a proofreader works with the text in its *typeset* form, comparing it word by word with the copyedited manuscript to make sure all corrections have been made and that no new errors have crept in. Proofreaders are also concerned with strictly typographical matters such as the style (font) of type, spacing, and so on. They do not work on manuscript.

In the next issue, I'll discuss where each species of editor, as well as the many other professionals that bring books into being, fit into the production process. Meantime, it's worth noting that in today's revolving-door publishing world, it's a rare author who works with a single acquisitions editor from inception to completion of a text project. Authors whose texts I've edited have told me horror stories of having as many as seven acquisitions editors. The copy editor is often the only person other than the author and the author's spouse to have read the entire manuscript. The copy editor *is* the only person to come fresh to the manuscript, to read it consecuitively in a short time span, and to approach from the perspective of one who must learn the material--that is, the student who will use the text. For these reasons, the copy editor can be a valuable, objective ally in getting it right and getting it read.

Reference

[1] **How Editors Operate**. Informational leaflet. San Diego, CA: San Diego Professional Editors' Network. Undated.

NOTICE

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