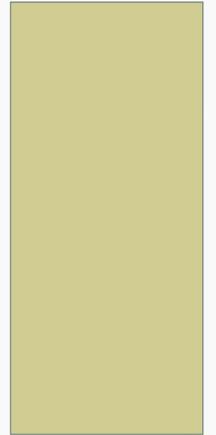# THE TUTOR AS EDITOR

PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM THE WORLD OF PUBLISHING

WHAT EDITORS DON'T DO

Editors are not proofreaders.

Editors are not rewriters or ghost writers.

WHAT EDITORS DO

1. Developmental Editing

helping the author

- choose a topic
- generate ideas
- decide which ideas to pursue or discard
- develop an outline or proposal
- locate sources

WHAT EDITORS DO

2. Content|Substantive|Structural Editing

- point out structural problems
- query gaps in logic
- suggest the author add definitions or examples, expand explanations, provide more background info
- draw attention to internal inconsistencies

  e.g. factual inconsistencies

  e.g. inconsistencies between evidence and the author's interpretation

  e.g. inconsistencies in tone
- look for incomplete or missing references (i.e. plagiarism)

WHAT EDITORS DO

3. Language|Line|Stylistic Editing

- correct errors in grammar, syntax, usage, and diction
- prune wordy patches
   - e.g. redundant or indirect phrasing
- substitute stronger verbs for weaker ones
- eliminate biased language
- remediate "authorial tics"

WHAT EDITORS DO

4. Mechanical Editing

- catch typographical errors
- confirm format of in-text citations and bibliographies
- note inconsistencies and variations in spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, and punctuation
- standardize treatment of numbers and quotations
- standardize use of abbreviations and acronyms
- enforce/apply consistent styling of special elements
  e.g. headings, lists, tables, charts, and graphs
- check use of italics and bold type

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Imperfection

"The problem is that there's no end to the amount of fussing you can do with a manuscript […]. At some point it has to be good enough, and you have to stop."
(Saller 112)

"The manuscript does not have to be perfect because perfect isn't possible. There's no Platonic ideal for that document, one 'correct' way for it to turn out, one perfect version hidden in the block of marble that it's your job to discover by endless chipping away." (Saller 115)

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Flexibility

- the standards and style manuals of disciplines and professors vary
- the preferences and knowledge of editors vary
- a certain amount of editing is optional and subjective
- editing is by nature multitasking: inevitably, we overlook or dismiss some matters as unworthy of attention

"My point is that a manuscript will never be edited the same way twice." (Saller 45)

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Editing in Two Passes (when possible)

"Two passes seems to be the universal magic number: No copy-editor is good enough to catch everything in one pass" (Einsohn, *Handbook* 16)

"This kind of triage is painful: It goes against a copyeditor's nature and training to leave poorly punctuated, convoluted sentences and paragraphs whose logic is inside-out or upside-down. But when time is short, it is more important to have read every page than to have labored over the first half of a project and barely glanced at the rest." (Einsohn, *Handbook* 20)

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Using Checklists

"The use of such checklists would help copyeditors work more efficiently and with greater confidence.
A disciplined approach to types and levels of edit is also likely to reduce author complaints about meddlesome tinkering." (Einsohn, "Roles and Responsibilities" 83)

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Setting Priorities

- consider the author's expectations and schedule

- consider the reader's needs

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Remaining on Task

"Just because it bothers you does not make it wrong" (Judith Tarutz)

- learn to recognize and ignore personal pet peeves

- delegate tasks to the author (e.g. point out the first instance of a recurring error, ask him to find and fix the rest)

- resist rewriting

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Querying

"For a copyeditor, good querying skills—knowing when to query (and when not to query) and how to query effectively—are as important as a solid grasp of punctuation and grammar." (Einsohn 40)

- query during a sample edit to
  - show the author you pay attention to detail
  - reassure the author that you will make no sudden moves without him
  - demonstrate you are willing to listen and negotiate
  - gain insight into the author's disposition
  - establish a collaborative (rather than adversarial) relationship

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Querying (cont.)

- be positive
- don't be too brief or cryptic (e.g. "Logic?")
- avoid "yes" or "no" questions
    - e.g. Did you mean to say that?
        - Yes.
        - Oh. *beat*
- use mitigators or politeness indicators (e.g. "you may want to consider ...")

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Humbleness

"'An editor has to be selfless'" (Robert Gottlieb in Lerner 218)

"there's no room for power-tripping as a copy editor" (Saller 37)

"... you should remember that it is the product of the author's labor and sweat, … and that you are being granted the privilege (along with the frustration) of participating in its publication" (Einsohn, *Handbook* 45)

"Writing center teachers honor their own ignorance" (Warnock & Warnock 18)

EDITORS' ADVICE

On Author Apathy/Rejection

"'You can't care more about the book than he does.'" (Saller 115)

"'In the end an editor can get only as much out of an author as the author has in him.'" (Maxwell Perkins in Waxman 154)

"When I came up against tremendous arrogance in a writer, I realized that usually more than the words were being defended." (Lerner 214)

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