

# Editing

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**Editing** is the process of selecting and preparing language, images, sound, video, or film through processes of correction, condensation, organization, and other modifications in various media. A person who edits is called an **editor**. In a sense, the editing process originates with the idea for the work itself and continues in the relationship between the author and the editor. Editing is, therefore, also a practice that includes creative skills, human relations, and a precise set of methods.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

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## Print media

There are various editorial positions in publishing. Typically, one finds junior editorial assistants reporting to the senior-level editorial staff and directors who report to senior executive editors. Senior executive editors are responsible for developing a product to its final release. The smaller the publication, the more these roles run together.

Copy editors correct spelling, grammar, and matters of house style. At newspapers and wire services, they also write headlines and work on more-substantive issues, such as accuracy, fairness and taste. In some positions, they design pages and select of news stories for inclusion. At UK and Australian newspapers, the term is "sub-editor." They

may choose the layout of the publication and communicate with the printer—a *production editor*. This and similar jobs are also called "layout editor," "design editor," "news designer," or—more so in the past—"makeup editor."

Midlevel newspaper editors often manage or help manage sections, such as business, sports and features. In U.S. newspapers, the level below the top editor usually is the managing editor.

The title of the top editor at many publications may be called an "editor-in-chief," "executive editor" or just "editor." Frequent and esteemed contributors to a magazine may acquire a title of *editor at-large* or *contributing editor* (See below.)

In the book publishing industry, editors organize anthologies and other compilations, produce definitive editions of a classic author's works ("scholarly editor"); and organize and manage contributions to a multi-author book (symposium editor or volume editor). Finding marketable ideas and presenting them to appropriate authors are the responsibility of a sponsoring editor. Obtaining copy or recruiting authors such as: an *acquisitions editor* or a *commissioning editor* for a publishing house.

Improving an author's writing so that they indeed say what they mean to say in an effective manner is substantive editing. Depending on the writer's competence, this editing can sometimes turn into ghost writing. Substantive editing is seldom a title. Many types of editors do this type of work, either in-house at a publisher or on an independent basis.

Changes to the publishing industry since the 1980s have resulted in nearly all copy editing of book manuscripts being outsourced to freelance copy editors.

## Light edits, heavy edits, and derivative works

A "light edit" otherwise known as a "minor change" may be regarded as changes that do not substantively change the theme, typesetting, tone, structure, characters, or other elements of intellectual property that are held by the author. Such changes would include spelling, or grammar in a way that does not deviate from the author's use of, say, non-standard grammar or speech patterns.

A "heavy edit" may change substantively the tone, structure, characters, or other elements of intellectual property contained in the work.

## Executive editor

The top editor sometimes has the title executive editor or editor-in-chief. This person is generally responsible for the content of the publication. An exception is that large newspapers usually have a separate editor for the editorials and opinion pages to separate news reporting and editorial content.

The executive editor sets the publication standards for performance, as well as for motivating and developing the staff. The executive editor is also responsible for developing and maintaining the publication budget. In concert with the publisher and the operating committee, the executive editor is responsible for strategic and operational planning. The executive editor is effectively the head of the newspaper and has considerable influence on its content.

## Periodicals

Editors at newspapers supervise journalists and improve their work. Newspaper editing encompasses a variety of titles and functions. These include:

- Copy editors
- Department editors
- Managing editors and assistant or deputy managing editors (the managing editor is often second in line after the top editor)
- News editors, who oversee the news desks
- Photo or picture editors
- Section editors and their assistants, such as for business, features, and sports
- Editorial Page Editor who oversees the coverage on the editorial page. This includes chairing the Editorial Board and assigning editorial writing responsibilities. The editorial page editor may also oversee the op-ed page or those duties are assigned to a separate op-ed editor.
- Top editors, who may be called *editor in chief*, *executive editor* or sometimes just *editor*
- Readers' editors, sometimes known as the ombudsman, who arbitrate complaints
- Wire editors, who choose and edit articles from various international wire services, and are usually part of the copy desk
- Administrative editors (who actually don't edit but perform duties such as recruiting and directing training)

The term *city editor* is used differently in North America and South America, where it refers to the editor responsible for the news coverage of a newspaper's local circulation area (also sometimes called *metro editor*), than in the United Kingdom, where it refers to the editor responsible for coverage of business in the City of London and, by

extension, coverage of business and finance in general.

## Scholarly books and journals

Editors of scholarly books and journals are of three types, each with particular responsibilities: the *acquisitions editor* (or *commissioning editor* in Britain), who contracts with the author to produce the copy, the *project editor* or *production editor*, who sees the copy through its stages from manuscript through bound book and usually assumes most of the budget and schedule responsibilities, and the *copy editor* or *manuscript editor*, who performs the tasks of readying the copy for conversion into printed form.

The primary difference between copy editing scholarly books and journals and other sorts of copy editing lies in applying the standards of the publisher to the copy. Most scholarly publishers have a preferred style guide, usually a combination of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and: (a) either the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the *MLA Style Manual*, or the *APA Publication Manual* in the US; or (b) the *New Hart's Rules* in the UK. The *New Hart's Rules* are based on "Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers", published by the University Press, Oxford (1893). Since scholars often have strong preferences, very often a publisher will adopt different styles for different fields. For instance, psychologists prefer the APA style, while linguists might prefer the MLA style. These guidelines offer sound advice on making cited sources complete and correct and making the presentation scholarly.

## Technical editing

*See also: Technical writing and Technical communication*

Technical editing involves reviewing text written on a technical topic, and identifying errors related to the use of language in general or adherence to a specific style guide.

Technical editing may include any of the following: correction of grammatical mistakes, misspellings, mistyping, incorrect punctuation, inconsistencies in usages, poorly structured sentences, wrong scientific terms, wrong units and dimensions, inconsistency in significant figures, technical ambivalence, technical disambiguation, correction of statements conflicting with general scientific knowledge, correction of synopsis, content, index, headings and subheadings, correcting data and chart presentation in a research paper or report, correcting errors in citations.

This activity ensures that documentation is of good quality. In large companies,

experienced writers are dedicated to the technical editing function. In organizations that cannot afford dedicated editors, experienced writers typically peer-edit text produced by their relatively less experienced colleagues.

It helps if the technical editor is familiar with the subject being edited, but that is not always essential. The "technical" knowledge that an editor gains over time while working on a particular product or technology does give the editor an edge over another who has just started editing content related to that product or technology. In the long run, however, the skills that really matter are attention to detail, the ability to sustain focus while working through lengthy pieces of text on complex topics, tact in dealing with writers, and excellent communication skills.

Revising is also another form of editing. It is looking for awkward sentences, run-on sentences, and in general parts of the paper that don't make sense to the editor. Usually the writer revises his/her copy before turning it in.

A number of standards and tools (such as XML editors) have been elaborated for the editing of technical documents such as

- Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA).
- DocBook

## Business editing

Businesses and nonprofit organizations often use editors, who may be employees of a company, individual contractors working on site at a client's office or independently off-site, or employees or partners in a specialized copywriting agency. Working with writers inside or outside the business, such editors provide services such as proofreading, copy editing, line editing, developmental editing, editing for search engine optimization (SEO), etc.

## References

- <sup>^</sup> "Encarta Dictionary definition of "editing"." (<http://www.webcitation.org/5kwbaCYwg>) . Archived from the original ([http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary\\_/editing.html](http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/editing.html)) on 2009-10-31. <http://www.webcitation.org/5kwbaCYwg>.
- <sup>^</sup> "Encarta Dictionary definition of "editor"." (<http://www.webcitation.org/5kwbaiWpi>) . Archived from the original ([http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary\\_/editor.html](http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/editor.html)) on 2009-10-31. <http://www.webcitation.org/5kwbaiWpi>.

## See also

- Editor (disambiguation)
- Audio editing
- Film editing
- Society for Editors and Proofreaders (in the UK)
- Video editing

## External links

- American Copy Editors Society (<http://www.copydesk.org>)
- "Black day for the blue pencil" (<http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,1542959,00.html>) - *The Guardian*, August 6, 2005 by Blake Morrison
- Editorial Freelancers Association (<http://www.the-efa.org>) (USA)
- Society for Editors and Proofreaders (<http://www.sfep.org.uk>) (UK)
- Technical Editing special interest group (SIG) (<http://www.stc-techedit.org>) of the Society for Technical Communication (STC)
- Writer Beware of Independent Editors and Manuscript Assessment Services (<http://www.sfwa.org/for-authors/writer-beware/editors/>)

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