

Tracking Changes

The Journal of the Society for Editing

CONTENTS Fall 2018

- 1 So you want to be a web editor
- 4 Calling out bias
- 6 ACES2018: It's about us
- 7 Five tips for editing proposals
- 9 What the heck is register?
- 11 Wait, you can edit poetry?
- 13 Starting a book?
- 15 Editing is a dialogue
- 17 10 podcasts about language
- 18 Ties that bind—and connect
- 21 ACES member discounts



So you want to be a web editor

Preparing for a job in digital communications involves more than knowing how to tweet. ACES member and digital pro Redante Asuncion-Reed shares four critical skills for editors interested in this field.

I got my first job in digital communications in 2006. I was also a blogger for several years, writing my own content and publishing it online, prior to that job. In my career on the web, I have managed organizational websites, led web redesign efforts, and administered web content management systems. I've written, edited, and developed online content, coordinated social media and HTML email blasts, and trained nontechnical people in these skills.

Through it all, I've always considered myself a writer/editor who can do tech (rather than a techie who can write and edit). I always had a love

and passion for writing which I've cultivated from high school to today, more than 20 years later.

For people interested in career paths that combine writing/editing skills with web technology, a position in the web team or online communications department of a company may be a good avenue to explore. If you're reading this article, you likely already have the writing and editing skills required. Here are some additional skills to consider learning.

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

HTML and CSS

Knowing HTML and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets)—the basic building blocks and coding languages of the web—is a basic requirement for a career in web communications. And software such as Adobe Dreamweaver makes the job of writing and editing code easier and faster.



The web is a visual medium. Much of the content you'll work with day-to-day are images, graphs, charts, and logos. If you can't edit these with the same skill you do copy, you may be lost.

But learning the software without solid proficiency in hand-coded HTML and CSS will limit your understanding and your ability to execute projects well in the long run. Fluency in the fundamentals of HTML and CSS will help you recognize badly written code and will also help you fix incorrect or superfluous code that sometimes gets generated automatically by software. To get started, I recommend the free educational resources at <https://www.w3schools.com/>.

Graphics software

Presenting information on the web requires graphical skill and expertise as much as writing and storytelling. The web is a visual medium, and much of the content that you'll work with day-to-day in web communications are images, graphs and charts, logos, and other types of media. You need skills to resize files, convert from one file type to another, edit and crop images, and sometimes even create your own visuals and graphics.

To do this effectively, you need proficiency in image manipulation software, such as Adobe Photoshop, and software for creating vector graphics, such as Adobe Illustrator. I highly recommend learning these tools and developing a proficiency in graphic design in general.

Learn your organization's CMS and become a power user

Most organizations nowadays use a CMS—a content management system—to house their website and its contents, which include HTML, images, documents, multimedia, and other files. A CMS allows web administrators and even nontechnical users to create and edit web pages from a centralized location. A CMS also locks down and separates a site's design and navigation aspects from content. That means a user can edit the content on a web page without worrying about affecting a site's functionality, design, and navigation.

Common CMS systems are Drupal, SharePoint, and WordPress. Learning a CMS is a prerequisite to most web jobs. If you can get access to your organization's CMS, I would recommend doing so and learning the ins and outs of it.

Accessibility and compliance

Increasingly, organizations are recognizing the need to make their websites and web content accessible to people with disabilities. If you're not familiar with these concepts, [WebAIM](#) gives a good overview of what accessibility means for online platforms and technologies, what types of audiences need accommodations, and the law behind it.

continued on page 3

Tracking Changes

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The Journal of the Society for Editing

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The Society for Editing, the nation's leading organization of editing professionals, educators, and students, is dedicated to improving the quality of communication and the working lives of editors. We set standards of excellence and give a voice to editors in journalism, government, business, and beyond through top-notch training, networking, and career opportunities.

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FEEDBACK
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continued from page 2

Employers are increasingly recognizing that core skill sets for web operations include some component of accessibility. Simply put, web professionals need to be able to recognize when a web page, image, web form, or PDF document is not accessible. They need to be able to either remediate the problem themselves or obtain the proper resources to get the problem solved by an expert.

This list is not exhaustive, and it doesn't cover other aspects of the web such as social media, video/multimedia, e-commerce, analytics, data visualizations, and programming languages such as Javascript. These skills, however, will give you a solid grounding for the majority of projects you will encounter. Combining these fundamentals with your writing and editing skills should give you a leg up in getting noticed by hiring managers. ●



The skills on this list will give you a solid grounding for the majority of projects you will encounter in a web-related position.

Redante Asuncion-Reed works for NETE Solutions in Bethesda, Maryland, as a contractor and as a member of the web team at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. He has worked on the web since 2006, primarily for nonprofit organizations based in the Washington, D.C.-area. Find him at redantereed.com.

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ACES member		\$300	\$400	\$575
Nonmember		\$550	\$700	\$850
Student member		\$115	\$165	\$180
Student nonmember		\$170	\$220	\$235
	SINGLE-DAY REGISTRATION			
ACES member			\$150	\$200
Nonmember			\$250	\$300
Student member			\$70	\$90
Student nonmember			\$110	\$150



Calling out bias with confidence: 5 tips

You may be able to spot biased language while editing, but knowing how to bring it up diplomatically is another matter. Here are five ways to make these types of edits just another part of your job.



by Allyson Rudolph

Raise your hand if this sounds familiar: you wince a little when you come across phrases like “men of science”—but the scope of your job is limited. It can feel daunting to suggest the unbiased, conscious-language fix

burning a hole in your brain.

Same. I’m a staff proofreader with limited opportunities for content changes, but I’ve begun correcting biased language with confidence. My suggestions are usually quietly implemented. I’ve been told my queries have tipped the scales for editors who wanted a reason beyond their own gut instincts to adjust something they felt uncertain about. I’ve been thanked, many times. I’ve never—not once—had anyone tell me my work was inappropriate, unwelcome, or unprofessional.

That said, even with supportive employers, it’s wise to call out biased and stigmatizing language with care. If you’re well-versed in the whats and whys of conscious language, but need a little encouragement to mark things up, these tips are for you.

Marshal your resources

It’s no longer radical to expect inclusive, non-stigmatizing language from professional publications. The *Chicago Manual of Style* and *AP Stylebook* have sections on inclusive language. Merriam-Webster’s will tell you when a word is “offensive,” “usually offensive,” or “often offensive.” [Buzzfeed’s style guide](#) is thorough and informative, and they’re winning Pulitzers—it doesn’t get more authoritative than that.

Chances are, your style guide or dictionary of record has a section that you can gaze at when you need some strength—or, more practically, that you can bookmark if you expect to be questioned.

Keep it simple

Just because you *can* write a dissertation on the sociological implications of biased language doesn’t mean you *should*. Some biased language can be corrected like a typo: I think of “mankind” as just a misspelling of “humankind,” and “firemen” as a quaint but outmoded variant of “firefighters.” These changes are self-explanatory, noncontroversial, and economical—and are thus unlikely to cause line break problems or reflow, if that’s a concern.

Keep your queries simple. Just because you can write a dissertation on the sociological implications of biased language doesn’t mean you should.

For bigger changes, a simple “per AP” or “per Merriam-Webster” is probably enough—whatever you’d use in any other circumstance to reassure a nervous employer that your correction is sound. Good editorial judgment still applies, of course—but a little daring goes a long way.

Find your safe word

A law firm in Canada recently encouraged their employees to call out workplace behavior that is, in their coinage, #notcool. They promoted #notcool as a safe word inside this workplace—it’s easy to say in a hard situation, nonaccusatory, impersonal, and instantly understandable.

#notcool has crept into my own work—I use it when I’m flagging a problem that may not be obvious to folks who aren’t paying rapt attention to conscious language best practices. Try coming up with your own word or phrase to lean on when you need to call attention to tough stuff. No hashtag required.

continued on page 5

continued from page 4

Acknowledge scope

Calling out biased language is outside the brief of many editorial and proofreading (especially proofreading) roles. That's okay! Acknowledge your limitations and calmly cite your sources: "This falls outside my mandate, but I recommend changing X to Y per [reference work] and [reference work]." If you know your employer also uses designated sensitivity readers, nod in that direction: "I imagine the sensitivity reader will catch this, but just in case ..."

Make it better

This might not fly with every employer, but I find my recommendations go over best when I offer a useable alternative. Use good judgment, and be mindful of character counts if you're working on typeset page proofs. Keep storytelling in mind: it's harder to say no to a suggestion that manifestly enhances the writing.

I once came across product copy describing a female character as sooooo crazy but sooooo sexy. She's also a ferociously devoted friend, so I suggested a new sentence of similar length based on that trait—a bold rewrite, but one that gave the reader more, meatier information that (bonus!) didn't infantilize, sexualize, or stigmatize. My version made it onto the product, with a "thank you" from the product team.

Above all, remember: you're not changing a mind, you're changing a word. As editors, we courageously change words all the time. By drawing from the skills and techniques you already use to work with confidence, you'll find your bias-busting, stigma-stopping voice in no time. ●

Allyson Rudolph is a staff proofreader for a major American comic book publisher, a dream job she landed after 10 years working various publishing jobs in New York and Washington, D.C.

Help build the Editors of Color Database



A new resource for editors and hiring managers is in the works: the Editors of Color Database. Created by Karen Yin, whom editors may know as the force behind AP vs. Chicago and the Conscious Style Guide, the database was developed as a tool to help people in publishing diversify their staff and sources by connecting with underrepresented communities.

The database is currently in beta. **If you're an editor, proofreader, or sensitivity reader of color, you can help test it by signing up. Register at editorsofcolor.com/register,** and send any feedback you have on the site's functionality or performance to support@editorsofcolor.com. ●



Karen Yin, the force behind AP vs. Chicago and the Conscious Style Guide

CONSCIOUS
STYLE GUIDE

New member Amy Spungen attended an ACES conference for the first time. What she took home was different—and more important—than what she expected.



by Amy Spungen

Though hardly new to editing, I'm relatively new to ACES, and the 2018 conference was my first official ACES event. After the conference, trying to process everything I'd taken in, I felt humbled. Why?

I guess mainly because I realized that I had sashayed through the doors of the Palmer House Hilton with more than a little arrogance, hidden even from myself until afterward, when I realized how much I had learned. And by *learning*, I refer not just to what I took from the sessions—informative and diverse as they were—but to what I came to know about the people of ACES, from the volunteers organizing the event, to the ACES board, to the speakers, to the hundreds of members soaking it all up, like me.

Like many of my tribe—that would be the ACES tribe, I now realize—I am not the most extroverted person on the planet. But at this conference, per instructions, I brought my business cards and stuck out my hand. I met people standing around, sitting next to me, and lounging on the floor (during sessions, ahem). We compared notes and ate lunch together. We passed each other on the escalators of the fabulous lobby. We walked under the El together, bundled into our coats (because after all, it was Chicago in late April).

And as we talked about our experiences as editors, I felt the opposite of what I feel so often as a freelancer, which is very ... quiet. Very isolated.

So thank you, ACES. You provided me with great information on a number of relevant topics, and best of all, you provided me with a much needed, hugely appreciated sense of camaraderie. I loved meeting my colleagues from New Mexico, Wisconsin, California, and Maryland. I learned you have horses, love to hike, make

jewelry, and so much more. We all edit, and we mostly love our jobs, though of course all jobs come with some degree of frustration. But that common experience binds us together.

aces2018

And as we talked about our experiences as editors, I felt the opposite of what I feel so often as a freelancer, which is very ... quiet. Very isolated.

As I pushed through the revolving door at the end of ACES2018 and headed west on Monroe toward the Ogilvie Train Station (having commuted from my Chicago home in the 'burbs), I realized that the biggest gift you gave me was the understanding that the conference wasn't all about me. It's about us.

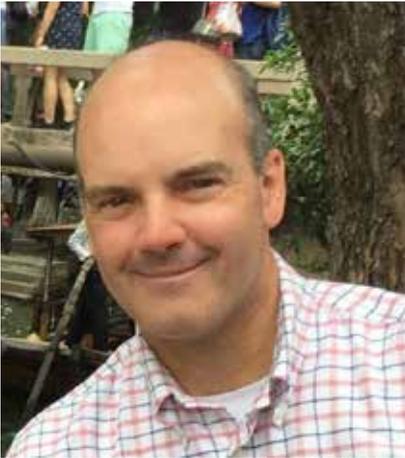
See you next year! ●

Amy Spungen lives in Highland Park, Illinois, in the northern suburbs of Chicago. After working as editorial director for the Chicago Botanic Garden, she turned to freelancing full-time three years ago. Find her at spungenedits.com.



Five tips for editing proposals

When you're trying to win new business for your company, typos can sabotage your credibility and kill your sale. Here are five of the most common errors that creep into proposals.



by Joseph Priest

It may be the most important document in business: the proposal. If you edit for an agency, corporation, or nonprofit, a focus on winning new business is a standard part of doing business.

If you've never worked on a proposal, let me explain. In a proposal, one company explains why another company (or government agency) should hire them. The company may be offering to build an airplane, a healthcare system, or a website. The proposal may span 15 pages or 1,500.

Because the stakes are so high—your proposal may literally win or lose your company millions of dollars—creating a proposal can be stressful. It often involves a frantic team effort that requires combining a multitude of information about capabilities and experience, tapping a number of diverse experts to address specific business challenges, and scrambling to pull together all this content in a snazzy layout under a tight deadline.

Not surprisingly, many grammar and style matters can fall through the cracks when this many people touch this much information under these kind of timelines. And in my role writing and editing proposals over the past 20 years, I've developed my own greatest-hits list of errors that are likely to arise.

Below are five big ones to be on guard against.

1 Would you or will you?

When proposal writers describe a proposed course of action, they can use the conditional verb tense (would) or the future tense (will). In other words, you can say "Our team would start by developing ..." or "Our team will start by developing ..."

The conditional tense is less assuming; the future tense expresses stronger intent. Either works in a proposal. What doesn't work, however, is when writers subconsciously jump back and forth between these two tenses and create sections that read awkwardly. Be on the lookout to keep this verb-tense choice consistent in each section.

2 Mr., Ms., last name, first name?

Likewise, when writers describe the talents of a business team in a bio section, it's easy for them to shift from a formal style (Mr. Joseph Gillis) to a casual one (Joseph) to one in between (Gillis), depending on how a bio was originally developed or what style seems most appropriate to the writer.

The use of the first name tends to be more common in business nowadays, so if that suits your company culture, go for it. Whichever style you choose, make sure it's consistently maintained in the bios.

3 A company of one

When including case studies, a common pitfall in describing past work is to refer to a customer with a plural pronoun: "When Company XYZ launched the product, they needed a way to raise awareness." This use of the "singular they" has become more accepted as business language has become more casual.

But in proposals, it's usually best to lean toward the formal side. So keep organizations singular and stick with the pronoun "it": "When Company XYZ launched the product, it needed a way to raise awareness."

4 In parallel

Proposals are chock-full of bulleted lists. And one common error is a lack of parallel structure in these lists. Almost worse than the grammatical problem this poses, the abruptness of nonparallel lists can come across as sloppy thinking. Here's an example:

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

We offer services to help clients gain media coverage in these ways:

- Developing a full-scale media strategy with measurable objectives.
- Relationships with reporters of top-tier media.
- Writing content, including news releases and byline articles.
- Media and coverage analysis.
- Providing media training for different interview situations.

Sheesh. Avoid sloppy lists like these. Instead, convey clear thinking by ensuring that each item in a list follows the format of the first bullet point.

5 Double trouble

Finally, this may seem like nitpicking, but a lot of different age groups can be involved in proposals. Those whose typewriter habits die hard can add a lot of stray double spaces after sentences.

Be diligent about enforcing the one-space rule. To be sure, it's a minor style point, but it's the same as if black text were used in part of a proposal and gray text in another part. It's small but noticeable. Any inconsistency you can eliminate will make the final product better.

Mistakes in proposals are embarrassing, unacceptable, and, of course, detrimental to business. Regardless of how little time there may be to pull together a proposal, it's important to sweat the details and not settle for anything less than perfection. This is one case in which your eagle eye really may be worth a million dollars. ●

Joseph Priest is a corporate writer at Syniverse, a mobile solutions company in Tampa, Florida. He's been a business writer and editor for over 20 years and has developed content for corporations, agencies, broadcast outlets, and academic institutions that include IBM, AT&T, Philips, Ketchum, WTVT-TV (Tampa), and the University of Tennessee. Find him at @JosephPriest.



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Style haiku



fudge words, legalese
Hobson-Jobsonism, -er
needless variants

hypercorrection
swapping horses, noun plague, puns
enumerations

— from *Garner's Modern English Usage*, by Bryan A. Garner



What the heck is register? And why should I care?

You may have been an excellent editor your entire life without ever learning about register. Nonetheless, understanding its nuances can shed new light on the material you're editing.



by Karen Conlin

If you've ever studied linguistics, you may have heard about register. Register refers to the way speakers change their language according to the subject they're talking about, their audience, and the occasion.

For example, you wouldn't talk to your boss the same way you talk to your 6-year-old—or the

same way you talk to your best friend. You switch your register—the words you choose, your tone of voice, your use of slang—based on the situation. Sometimes we do this consciously; speaking with extra-careful precision during a job interview, for example. Most times, we don't even realize we're doing it.

We know that register exists in speech. But is there register in writing? Sure there is. This article is a perfect example. I'm writing in what I would consider to be the consultative register, with my peers as the primary audience. But what exactly does that mean?

Let's look at the five primary registers, as they're understood relative to speech.

Register in speech

1. Frozen.

This register comprises much of religious and legal language. The wording of the Lord's Prayer, for example, is always the same. (We'll leave out the debate over "debts" versus "trespasses" here, though.) The same applies to the various creeds recited in services (Nicene and Apostles' are the two most common where I grew up). It's frozen because, well, it never changes. It's frozen in time, and everyone who learns it learns it the same way.

2. Formal.

Much of medical and academic language falls into this category, as does a lot of legal language. Sentences tend to be long and complex; word choices tend toward the Latin rather than the English ("vacate" rather than "leave," or "cholecystectomy" rather than "removal of the gallbladder"). The formal register can feel and sound stuffy, and it's often difficult for the average person to understand it on the first try.

3. Consultative.

Think of a meeting with your doctor or attorney. You're the client, meeting with a professional. Similarly, in this piece, I'm the professional, and you're all my clients in that you're reading this piece that I crafted specifically for you. I'm not talking down to you, but I'm not overly casual, either. This one applies as well to the relationship between manager and employee—or between you and a Starbucks barista. There's an assumption of mutual respect, and the language is clear but not too familiar in tone.

4. Casual.

How do you talk with others at your level in your workplace? How about your friends outside of work? Casual register often employs verbal shorthand and slang on a regular basis. It's not how you'd speak to your boss, but if you were asking your cube-mate about lunch plans, you might say "Going out?" rather than "Have you made plans to go out for lunch?" and the shorthand would be understood immediately.

5. Intimate.

This is the language of family, of lovers. Shorthand is everywhere, as are in-jokes that only your closest friends or family will understand. You can say, for example, "Remember the trout?" They'll nod and perhaps burst out laughing, while others outside your circle will simply shake their heads and move along. Your words mean nothing to them. They're not intimate with you.

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

Register in writing

It's a short hop from register in speech to register in writing. In fiction, register helps clarify characterization. (It has other uses, to be sure, but that one is easiest to grasp.)

The stuffy dowager speaks in a formal register, while the street kid probably sticks to a casual or even intimate register, no matter who they're addressing. The academic whiz kid uses the consultative register for all their speech, but the "friends with everyone" professor opts for casual in an attempt to make students feel more comfortable. (Does it work?)

Consider for a moment the kind of work you normally edit. Which register does it tend to fit into? Would a different one be more effective?

In other writing, the lines are a bit more solid. The audience's expectations affect the writer's choice of register. A researcher writing for other researchers will use a higher register than one writing for the general public (at least we hope that's the case). Legal briefs are written for other attorneys and judges, not for jurors or

clients. Papal bulls are pronouncements from the pope. They're not letters home to family.

Consider for a moment the kind of work you normally edit. Which register does it tend to fit into? Would a different one be more effective? If you edit fiction, like I do, what register would you say the narrative voice uses? Dialogue can be anywhere, of course, but what about the narrative itself?

These questions may fall outside the scope of what you've customarily thought about as an editor. But I encourage you to consider them. The answers may point to a problem in a manuscript you couldn't put your finger on before.

If you'd like to see examples of register in real life, [here's a blog post I wrote](#) giving five examples of the same information, each in a different register, for social media. ●

Karen Conlin, the 2018 ACES Robinson Prize laureate, has been serving the indie author community since 2012. Her experiences encompass computer manuals, game materials, and educational software, in addition to nearly a hundred novels, anthologies, and short stories. Find her at @GramrgednAngel or grammargeddon.com.



Join ACES board member Teresa Schmedding for a free, online training session—available exclusively to ACES members.

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Oct. 25, 3 p.m. EDT

Presented by Teresa Schmedding, Rotary International Managing Editor and past president of ACES

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- The basics of developing a content strategy
- Why it's important
- How editors can support it

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Wait, you can edit poetry?

Editing poetry might seem like making a few cleanups to the *Mona Lisa*. Who's an editor to mess with art? In this article, editor Leslie Sainz explains why poetry—just like any other form of writing—can benefit from thoughtful scrutiny.

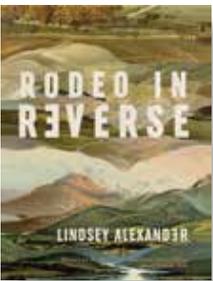


by Lindsey Alexander

Creative writers wear their rejections like Girl Scout patches demonstrating their tenacity—perhaps to hide that most writers are, well, sensitive souls. But publication comes with its own conundrum:

being edited—that great privilege, compliment, and (gulp) terror.

As an editor by trade, I was excited and nervous when I learned my debut poetry collection, *Rodeo in Reverse*, would receive a copy and line edit.



Friends, even editor friends, were surprised to hear it would be thoroughly edited because it's a book of poems. "How can you edit poetry?"

But all good writing can withstand some scrutiny, and even poetry can (read: should) be edited.

I had the good fortune of having poet Leslie Sainz as my editor. (She got into editing poetry at Carnegie Mellon University Press as an intern and has stuck with it.) Debates over commas, rewriting endings, retitling the manuscript—she helped me through it all. If you think copy editors geek out over minutiae, you should meet a poet, especially one who's also an editor.

Here, Leslie answers questions about this mysterious process.

Q A common misconception is that (besides glaring errors) poetry cannot or should not be edited (because it's "pure art"). What does editing poetry involve outside of selecting a manuscript or poems for publication? What are the types of edits you make on poems? How small? How large?



Leslie Sainz is a first-generation Cuban-American, born and raised in Miami, Florida. A CantoMundo Fellow, she received her MFA in poetry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Narrative*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *The Journal*, *The Florida Review*, and the *Four Way Review*. Find her at LeslieSainz.com or [@lesannsai](https://twitter.com/lesannsai).

A: In some ways I consider an editor to be the doula, or birth coach, of a soon-to-be-published manuscript or poem. For me, editing is largely about understanding the process of creation and assisting in the translation and transfiguration of an author's intent.

Anticipating the reader's gaze is paramount in this process. I often ask myself: what is the best way for the audience to receive this work? What information is vital to their understanding of this book or poem, and if it's missing, what is the most appropriate and stable way for that information to be conveyed?

continued on page 12

continued from page 11

Your heart should be alongside the author's, and there must be a strong sense of belief in the project. Not just for what the manuscript/poem already is, but for what it can be—all the possibilities the work holds. From there, it's oftentimes about applying conscious thinking to what a writer has done subconsciously. Most, if not all, of the authors I've worked with have eventually had that "aha" moment where they didn't realize they were reaching into the same bag of tricks across pages of work until I brought it to their attention.

If you think copy editors geek out over minutiae, you should meet a poet, especially one who's also an editor.

My eye is particularly sensitive to patterns of construction, lyrical techniques, and image systems that are recycled without a clear angle of reinvention. Sometimes it's nitpicky line edits, and sometimes it's taking a manuscript that's indefensibly only in couplets and diversifying its vehicles.

Whether my suggestions are big or small, I'm usually confronting the author with obsessions they may have never known they had. Which is exciting! Guiding them through their own work with a brand-new lens of discovery and wonder is a gift only an editor can give. I take that privilege seriously.

Q That said, how do you avoid taking the magic out of a poem? Do you ever worry about, say, ridding Emily Dickinson of her dashes?

All the time! But I like to think my approach to editing is more collaborative—it's more than just me, my red pen, and a manuscript/poem. I think it's just as important to foster a relationship with the author you're working with as it is to hone your eye through reading widely. You need to get a sense of what technical choices are sacred and untouchable to them, and you need to know when "I don't know" is really "Convince me."

When I'm considering striking a writerly "tic," I have to ensure I'm confident in my suggestion not because I'd change the em dash to a semicolon in my own writing, but because the edit serves the work in front of me.

A very dear friend of mine works as a video editor, and she says she knows she's done her job correctly when nobody considers her hand—when the transitions and cuts between scenes are so seamless it appears to the viewer as though the roll was always that smooth. I like to apply that same consideration of anonymity in my editing practice.

Q Because in free verse poetry there are fewer hard and fast rules, how do you decide when to ask for a substantive edit (one that requires rewriting or restructuring)? How do you decide what to let go—something you may not like but fits the author's style?

This is a great question! I think it's important to know how your author revises when they're going it alone. Do they revise for clarity or for complication? Do they experiment with the page during the revision process or do they tend to stick to the same handful of forms?

I've gotten to a stage with my editing practice where I can intuit when a writer is getting too comfortable with what already is, or they're fearful of something (internally, on the page, etc.) and they've abandoned a piece too quickly. I like to frame rewriting or restructuring as an opportunity for play. What is gained or lost by change? How do we weigh the edits that provide both epiphany and erasure? It's equal parts logic and feeling, and while I don't like to put the authors I work with on the defensive, it's always helpful to hear them justify why they made certain choices.

Q What copyediting issues do you come up against most when editing poems?

I'm guilty of this myself, but improper punctuation usage is a big one. And if a poet uses a language other than English that they're not fluent in, there are usually discrepancies with regards to definition and application. Those fixes are the easy ones. ●

Lindsey Alexander is the author of [Rodeo in Reverse](#), winner of the New Southern Voices Poetry Prize. She works as a copy editor with a specialty in making technical subjects dangerously readable for educated lay audiences. She writes a [monthly newsletter](#) on creative living and overcoming impostor syndrome. Find her at [LDAlexander.com](#) or [@blondone](#).



Starting a book? Don't forget your worksheet.

Romance writer Meredith Bond shares her methodology for starting a book. Spoiler: it's anything but romantic.



by Meredith Bond

I'm a fiction writer. I write traditional Regency romances, medieval Arthurian romances, and Regency romances with a touch of magic. Because of my subject matter, many readers might assume that I develop my novels laying on a chaise lounge, sipping tea, and gazing out at a misty moor.

While it is true that I live a good deal of my life in a fantasy world like most fiction authors, the half-naked hunk plying me with nibbles of juicy exotic fruit is only in my imagination—and besides, sticky fruit juice and

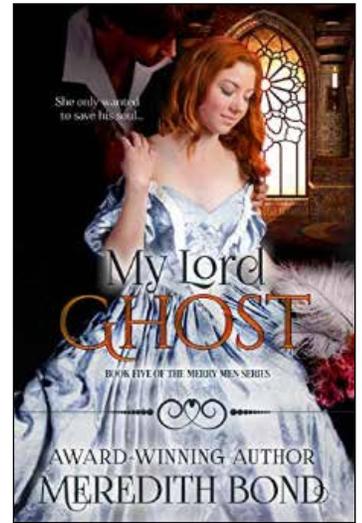
I love helping other people attain their writing and publishing dreams. To that end, I'm sharing the worksheet I use when I'm starting a project.

computers don't go very well together. No, the harsh reality is that before I can indulge in my fantasies, I need to do some cold, hard plotting and character development. I do so systematically, using the most unromantic of tools: a worksheet.

The worksheet lays out tough questions I need to think about, like “what's the point of this book” and “why do I care about it,” and even more difficult, “why would the reader care?” It forces me to define key elements of the plot, such as crises, major turning points, and the resolution. And it helps me articulate who my characters are: their wounds, their motivations, and what makes them lovable.

In addition to writing, I love helping other people attain their writing and publishing dreams. To that end, I'm sharing the worksheet I use when I'm starting a project. If you'd like to learn more about my methodologies, check out my blog: meredithbond.com/category/writing/.

Here's to living your own fantasy and finding your Happily Ever After! ●



Known for her characters “who slip readily into one's heart,” Meredith loves to take her readers on a journey they won't soon forget. She is currently living in Europe enjoying the Bohemian life. Find her on Amazon, follow [her European odyssey on Instagram](#) and learn more at meredithbond.com.

continued on page 14

Curated Reference You Can Trust from HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

UPDATED FOR 2018
Available June
The official dictionary of
The Associated Press Stylebook

UPDATED FOR 2018
Available September
Includes comprehensive, up-to-date
guidance on usage from the celebrated
American Heritage Usage Panel

HMH hmhco.com



**AN AUTHOR'S GUIDE TO COLD, HARD, SYSTEMATIC
PLOTING AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

When starting a book, don't forget:

1. What's the kernel idea? The spark?

2. Main characters (complete separate sections for your hero, heroine, and antagonist)

a. Internal GMC (goal, motivation, and conflict).

They want to _____

because _____

but _____

therefore _____.

b. External GMC.

They want _____

because _____

but _____

therefore _____.

- i. Unique characteristics of this character
- ii. What is their wound? And how does it shape their life?
- iii. What's important to them?
- iv. How do they react to a crisis (run away, face it down, think it through)?

v. What's the worst thing that can happen to this person?

vi. What makes them lovable?

3. Primary secondary characters

4. What is the story question?

5. What's at stake?

6. Where's the sense of urgency?

7. Plot out the narrative structure:

- a. Inciting Incident
- b. Major Turning Point
- c. Rising Action
- d. Crisis
- e. Climax (black moment)
- f. Resolution





Editing is a dialogue, not a dictatorship

Effective communication can make or break your relationship with a client. Here's how to get it right.



by Sydnee Thompson

As a freelance editor, I often work with self-published or independent authors of genre fiction who sheepishly admit they don't know much about the technical aspects of writing. "Editing is a dialogue," I tell

them. "I'm here to help you, not control you."

But during a recent project, I felt frustrated—the manuscript needed to be rewritten, and I knew my client wasn't going to be happy. As diplomatically as possible, I wrote her a letter explaining what needed to change and why. In turn, she was overwhelmed by the extent of the changes I recommended and challenged my logic; now both of us were frustrated.

Having a client strongly disagree with my assessments was far from a comfortable experience, but working through it gave me some great takeaways.

1. Acknowledge that you're still learning, too.

Effective editors have to know a little about a lot. And though clients and colleagues may treat us like authorities, maintaining your humility is crucial. If you're wrong, say so.

Writers often feel obligated to give into all of their editor's demands, so when a client is passionate enough to raise objections, I listen. But first, I had to pause and check my ego so I could ensure I was as engaged as I needed to be.

After she walked me through her plot points, I realized that I had, indeed, interpreted some passages incorrectly. But by pointing that out, she gave me new

insight into how I could help her eliminate ambiguous phrases and improve coherency.

Her voice and vision would be preserved, and the readers would have a more enjoyable experience.

2. Know which battles are worth fighting.

Sociopolitical realities are often informed by the media editors help shape. Being socially conscious professionals, then, requires us to be open to thinking beyond our stylebooks.

For this particular project, I questioned a throwaway reference to mental disability that seemed superficial and harmful. Most readers probably wouldn't think twice about it, but it's my job to, and this is where disagreements tend to get especially heated.

I know that pointing out cultural sensitivity issues like this could strain professional relationships and maybe even burn bridges, but to me, it's worth it. The important thing was that I made my client aware of potential harm beforehand, and in a nonjudgmental way.

Having a client strongly disagree with my assessments was far from a comfortable experience, but working through it gave me some great takeaways.

3. But don't sweat the small stuff.

Engaging meaningfully with a client's perspective builds trust, even if you don't personally see the value in a stylistic change they want to retain. Many people of African descent, for example, capitalize "Black" when referring to race, which isn't common usage.

But is a writer's small act of affirming their marginalized identity really that egregious? Stylebooks are guidelines—people come first.

continued on page 16

continued from page 15

4. Respect, always.

Before I even read through all of my client's feedback and responded, I acknowledged her apology for possibly offending me by saying it wasn't necessary. She'd had every right to challenge me, and my ability to effectively edit her work improved because she felt empowered enough to do so. In the end, she thanked me for being open-minded, and I felt encouraged by how our exchange had given her a more positive outlook on both her book's future and our continuing relationship.

Regardless of whether a client's irritation is warranted, a productive writer–editor relationship is based on mutual respect. When it's clear that respect isn't there, I've had to cut ties—but that's also meant I've been able to free up bandwidth for client relationships that ultimately make both of us better at our crafts. ●

Sydnee Thompson is a copy editor at Hour Media in metro Detroit. Find out more about her freelance editing and writing work at her website, shadesofsydnee.com.

□ indent or insert an em space <□3. Goals>

↪ run in text; no new line

¶ begin a new paragraph <... ends. Another ...>

↵ line break; start a new line

#WordsMatter

or sm cap set in small capitals <SMALL CAPITALS>

lc set in lowercase <lowercase>

ital set in italic <italic>

rom set in roman <roman>

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Editing 101 for Marketing, PR, and Corporate Comms

Half day: How to choose the right voice for your audience and craft error-free, compelling copy.

Includes exercises in audience segmenting.

Presenters: Merrill Perlman, Teresa Schmedding

Nov. 9, 8 a.m.–noon, Cleveland L. Dennard Conference Center, Atlanta Technical College, Building B, 1560 Metropolitan Parkway SW, Atlanta, GA 30310.

Complimentary on-site parking available.

Cost: \$85 for members, \$125 for nonmembers

Combo option: You can combine this class with “Being an Elegant and Authoritative Editor” (right).

This fall, we're breaking out two new boot camps, coming to you from Atlanta, Georgia. Join ACES' board members in person for some of the best—and most cost-effective—editorial training you can get anywhere.

Being an Elegant and Authoritative Editor

Half day: Learn how to go beyond editing basics to elevate the sophistication of a story through editing and how to work with writers to improve collaboration, creativity, and consensus.

Presenters: Nick Jungman, Merrill Perlman

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Complimentary on-site parking available.

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Combo option: You can combine this class with “Editing 101 for Marketing, PR, and Corporate Comms” (left).



10 podcasts about language

Getting bored while you're driving to the office, folding laundry, or working out? Try out these podcasts that touch on editing, grammar, language, and linguistics.

by Molly Gamborg

Grammar Girl

Mignon Fogarty provides quick tips and deeper dives into word choice, idioms, and other usage and style issues.

<http://soundcloud.com/grammar-girl>

Grammar Underground with June Casagrande

June Casagrande offers thoughtful discussion of common issues—including word choice, adverbs, and punctuation—to help you improve your editing and writing.

www.grammarunderground.com/podcast-archive

Fiat Lex: A Dictionary Podcast

Two lexicographers reveal how dictionaries are created—how words get added and removed from dictionaries and how errors are discovered and corrected. They also discuss the etymology and pronunciation of words and answer listener questions.

<http://fiatlex.podbean.com>

Lexicon Valley

This Slate podcast tackles everything about language, from the origins of idioms to questions like “Why are so many swear words monosyllabic?” and “Did the Founding Fathers have a British accent?”

www.stitcher.com/podcast/slate-presents-lexicon-valley

That's What They Say

University of Michigan English professor Anne Curzan discusses linguistics with Michigan Radio host Rebecca Kruth. In each short weekly segment, they explore our changing language, including the origin and evolution of misunderstood words and idioms.

www.michiganradio.org/programs/thats-what-they-say

The History of English

This podcast presents a chronological history of the English language, from the earliest known version spoken 4,000 years ago to the modern version spoken today. It explores how the language has evolved and adapted to historical events and outside influences.

<http://historyofenglishpodcast.com>

The Allusionist

Helen Zaltzman embarks on “language adventures,” exploring everything from why China banned puns to why you should read the text panels accompanying artwork at museums and how companies decide on the right name for a product.

www.theallusionist.org

A Way with Words

Martha Barnette and Grant Barrett discuss linguistics, idioms, slang, and other expressions with callers, getting to the history and meaning of words.

www.waywordradio.org/download-all-a-way-with-words-episodes

Drink Drank Drunk: A Grammar Show with a Drinking Problem

Morgan Obidowski and Linda Huss drink wine, chat, and snark about retronyms, filler words, unattributed quotes in Instagram posts, and how not to correct others' grammar online.

<http://anchor.fm/drinkdrankdrunk/support>

Word-Origin Wednesday

This Grammar Geek podcast presents a word origin in 5 minutes or less, including the definition, examples, origin, and history.

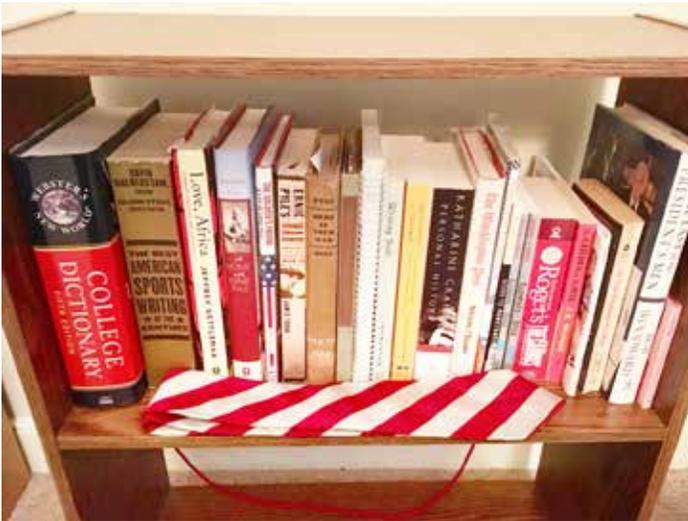
<http://player.fm/series/word-origin-wednesday> ●

Molly Gamborg is an editor at Dragonfly Editorial with a focus on scientific and technical content. She was previously the managing editor at IEEE Micro.

Editor's Note: At the ACES2017 National Conference, we mourned the loss of Bill Walsh, a longtime member of ACES and a fierce defender of copyediting. We also announced the founding of the Bill Walsh Scholarship fund, an annual scholarship that recognizes an exemplary student who intends to pursue a career in editing the news. The scholarship was a combined effort of Bill's family and the ACES Education Fund.

Bill's wife, Jacqueline Dupree, agreed to match—dollar for dollar—the initial donations to the scholarship fund, which quickly topped \$30,000. And at our 2018 conference, she gave the fund another gift: a sampling of Bill's collection of neckties, donated to the Education Fund's annual silent auction.

We caught up with several people who bought ties at the auction to see how they were choosing to honor Bill's memory. Here's what they had to say.



I recently moved to the D.C. area for a job as a multiplatform editor at the *Washington Post* after serving as an intern there this summer. My bookshelf may not be the permanent home for my candy-striped tie (I bought this particular one because I was a week away from graduating from Indiana University when I attended the ACES conference), but I think it belongs among my favorite journalism books. I also have a special link to this tie—it's a reminder that I was the first-ever recipient of the Bill Walsh scholarship. That's an honor I won't soon forget.

Jamie Zega
Multiplatform Editor, the *Washington Post*
Washington, D.C.

I chose a brilliantly plaid tie of Bill Walsh's from the auction in Chicago. My boyfriend, Rich Reece, now wears it to work at Hillsboro Aero Academy, a flight school based at the Hillsboro Airport (code HIO) in the Portland, Oregon, metro area, where he is an admissions representative. Here's a photo of the tie on the pitot tube of a Cessna 152.

Katie Van Heest
Academic Editor, *Tweed Editing*
Portland, Oregon



continued from page 18



I bought a green and gold tie for my father, Evan Chudnow, to wear for the holidays. He's pictured here with my dog, Charlie.

Stefani Chudnow
 Blogger, Detroit Jewish News
 Detroit, Michigan

I purchased several ties, all of which were gifted to my younger brother, who wears them to his new post-MBA business consultant position at Deloitte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Kathryn Wells
 Editor, Cahaba Media Group
 Birmingham, Alabama

I bought a tie, but I haven't done anything interesting with it yet. It is safely hanging out in my closet, awaiting an event that requires a tie.

Mark Kazlowski
 Sports Copy Editor, the Dallas Morning News
 Dallas, Texas



I bought two ties at the auction: one with orange-and-cream polka dots, made of silk, and one that's a kelly-green knit. I keep them in my office above my reference books, and I smile every time I look at them.

Samantha Enslin
 President, Dragonfly Editorial
 Tipp City, Ohio

continued on page 20

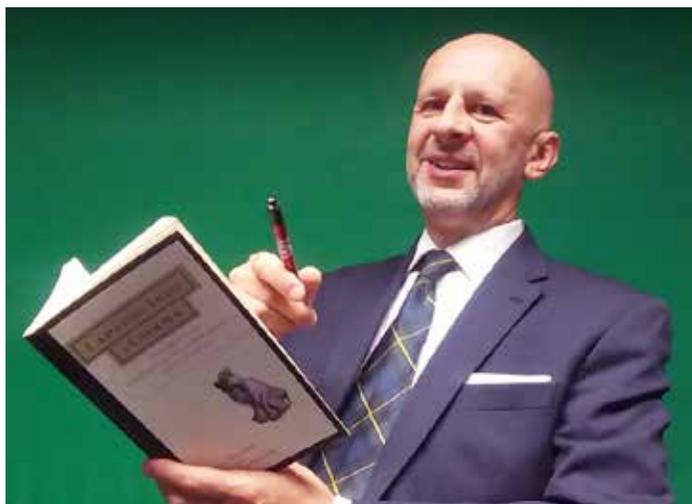
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I'll be turning Bill's ties into a silk-tie quilt. I'm sharing a photo of me holding Bill's ties at my Illinois quilting guild's most recent meeting. I can't wait to get to work.

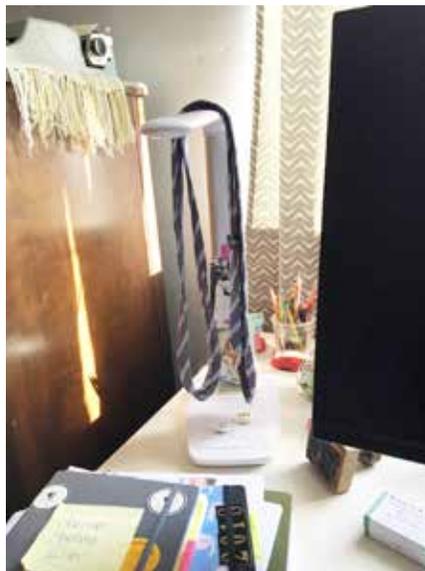
Amy Spungen
Freelance Editor and Writer
Highland Park, Illinois

With my Scottish heritage and my affinity for a Black Watch–patterned winter scarf my wife had given me during the previous holiday season, when I saw this tie at the silent auction, I decided it would be mine at any cost. I managed to get a deal on it, but when Bill's wife spotted me waiting in line to pay for it and explained to me how it was one of his favorites, I had to outbid my own original winning price.



I do wear it to formal occasions, such as weddings, but also to work—especially when I have a meeting scheduled at which I'll be enforcing some Associated Press style guidelines. Today, I'm wearing it to an interview for an internal promotion. Maybe it's my Scottish blood, maybe it's Bill's enduring spirit, but I feel there is hidden strength in this particular tie ... even if some others have said I look like I'm dressed in their grade school uniform!

Robert W.C. Kennedy
Senior Communications Specialist—Corporate
Communications and Investor Relations, WEC Energy Group
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



The tie I bought is rather unceremoniously draped over the arm of my desk lamp, but what I like about that for these photos is that two of my patron saints can be seen: Eleanor Gould and St. Dymphna.

I thought about moving the tie and/or doing some staging, but realized that I

kinda like how it all looks in the photo. I blew some dust off the buttons and the rubber stamp (gotta come clean that I don't always clean), but otherwise, this is my view when I'm working at my home office, tucked in a corner of my bedroom. ●

Carol Pickerine
Freelance Copy Editor/Proofreader
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



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