

1 Introduction

1.1

WHAT IS COPY-EDITING?

The main aims of copy-editing are to remove any obstacles between the reader and what the author wants to convey and to find and solve any problems before the book goes to the typesetter, so that production can go ahead without interruption or unnecessary expense. You might think that there is less need for copy-editing now that authors can use computer software to check spelling and even grammar: why can't the author simply provide the typesetter with a formatted, spell-checked file to turn into a book? Although a computer is a useful tool for the copy-editor, it cannot read for sense, repetition or ambiguity. It will not pick up libel, errors of fact or misleading or potentially dangerous information. The copy-editor is the reader's advocate and the author's ambassador, and in this electronic age has a more pivotal role than ever before in guiding the book through the complexities of the production process.

The majority of copy-editors these days are freelancers, working for a variety of different clients, and often to a fixed budget and schedule. Publishers increasingly expect copy-editors to have the good judgement to be able to strike a balance between quality, cost and time. Different publishers work in different ways, according to the kinds of material they publish. However, common to all types of publication and all methods of production is the value that a good copy-editor can add to the author's work by ensuring that, within the inevitable budgetary and time constraints, the work is presented to its readership in the best possible form.

There are various kinds of editing.

- 1 *Substantive editing* aims to improve the overall coverage and presentation of a piece of writing, its content, scope, length, level and organization. The editor may suggest improvements for the author to make, or may (by agreement with the author) rewrite and rearrange the material, suggest better illustrations, and so on. The

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

1 Introduction

editor at this stage will normally look out for legal problems such as libel and plagiarism and for any quotations or illustrations that may need permission from the copyright owner.

- 2 *Detailed editing for sense* is concerned with whether each section expresses the author's meaning clearly, without gaps and contradictions. It involves looking at each sentence, the author's choice of words, the punctuation, the use of abbreviations, comparing the data in tables with the relevant text, checking text against the illustrations and their captions, and so on. The editor should ensure that appropriate acknowledgement has been made for quotations or illustrations that need permission from the copyright owner, and will also look out for other legal problems.
- 3 *Checking for consistency* is a mechanical but important task. It may be done at the same time as 2. It involves checking such things as spelling and the use of single or double quotes (see section 3.5), either according to a house style or according to the author's own style; checking the numbering of illustrations, tables and notes, and any cross-references to them, and also the consistency of bibliographical references.

'Copy-editing' usually consists of 2 and 3, plus 4 below.

- 4 *Clear presentation of the material for the typesetter* involves making sure that it is complete and that all the parts are clearly identified: for example, the grade of each subheading, which pieces of text (such as long quotations) should be distinguished typographically from the main text, and where tables and illustrations should be placed. Some publishers might also ask the copy-editor to size the illustrations, mark type sizes, and so on, although this is relatively uncommon.

The same person may do all four of these things, or they may be split in various ways. Those who do the substantive editing may be called editor, commissioning editor, project editor, journal editor or development editor; those who carry out the jobs in categories 2–4 may be called editor, desk editor, production editor, subeditor or copy-editor. For the sake of simplicity throughout this book we call the latter copy-editors, and the people who brief them commissioning editors.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

What is copy-editing? 1.1

1.1.1 The copy-editor's role

When the first edition of this book was published, most books followed a clearly defined route through production to publication. The electronic revolution in publishing has changed a lot of things since then, and a book's journey from the author's mind to the printed page can follow many different routes. Most publishers are now concerned not simply with print as the finished product but also with the electronic life of a book in the form of e-books, web pages or CD-ROMs, and this influences their choice of production method and the copy-editor's part in the publication process.

This book is concerned primarily with the copy-editor's role in the transformation of the author's ideas from 'copy' (the raw material of typescript and electronic files) to the printed page; but today's copy-editors need to be well informed about the publisher's production methods and intentions for the finished product, and to be adaptable to the publisher's requirements.

In book publishing, copy-editors may be involved at three stages.

- The typescript should be looked at soon after the book has been accepted for publication, to identify any recurring faults of consistency, style or layout that the author could be asked to correct before copy-editing starts. There might be other general changes that the author should be asked to approve in advance (see pp. 33–6). This preliminary check might be carried out by the copy-editor or an in-house project editor or editorial assistant. At this stage the copy-editor could brief the designer and the production department on any complications to be taken into account in designing the book and planning its production, and could do some mark-up and prepare a brief for specimen pages, if required (see chapter 2).
- At the main copy-editing stage, the copy-editor works through the typescript and illustrations in detail (see chapters 3 and 4), reading for sense and checking for style and consistency, and ensuring that the author's intentions are clearly conveyed to the publisher and vice versa.
- At proof stage the copy-editor may read a proof (although many publishers prefer this to be done by a fresh pair of eyes) or collate

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

1 Introduction

the author's proof with the proofreader's, ensuring that the author's amendments are comprehensible and consistent with the existing material, and that they can be incorporated without great difficulty or expense. The copy-editor ensures that any additional material, such as an index, is well organized and consistent (see chapters 5 and 8), and might be asked by the publisher to see that the cost of corrections is allocated fairly between author, typesetter and publisher through the use of colour coding (see section 5.3).

The good copy-editor is a rare creature: an intelligent reader and a tactful and sensitive critic; someone who cares enough about perfection of detail to spend time checking small points of consistency in someone else's work but has the good judgement not to waste time or antagonize the author by making unnecessary changes.

Copy-editors need not be experts on the subject of the work, but they must be able to interest themselves in it in order to try to put themselves in the position of the intended readers. Authors are so familiar with their subject, and may have written a book over so long a period, that they cannot see it as it will appear to someone else; and the copy-editor will often see where an author has been repetitious or ambiguous, has omitted a step in the argument or failed to explain a point clearly.

Although the copy-editor's main interest is likely to be an editorial one, the job involves production considerations too. Knowing the book in detail, the copy-editor can make the author's intentions clear to the designer and typesetter; and realizing the constraints within which the typesetter has to work, can explain to authors why it may be impossible to carry out their wishes in exactly the way they propose. It is this joint role that gives the job its fascination.

1.1.2 A note about terminology

This book takes as its model the most complicated kind of publication, where the design and house style are not standardized and the copy-editor has to make decisions about stylistic conventions and obtain advice on points of design. We have written as though the copy-editor will, at different stages in the production process, come into contact with the commissioning editor, a designer and the production department. Copy-editors who have a good understanding of what has

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Excerpt

[More information](#)Typescripts: hard-copy, electronic and camera-ready **1.2**

happened to the typescript before it reached them, and what will happen to it after it has left their hands, are able to fulfil their own role most effectively. However, for many freelance copy-editors the only publishing contact will be the desk editor, managing editor or production editor who gives them the work. When we say 'ask the designer' we mean that you should ask someone who has the necessary technical knowledge, if you do not have it yourself. Many publishers outsource design, as well as copy-editing, to freelancers; if there is no in-house designer responsible for the project, the publisher should be able to put you in touch with the freelance.

We use the word 'typescript' to describe the material that the copy-editor works on, whether it is a hard-copy printout, typewriter-produced copy or electronic files, and 'typesetter' to describe the typesetting firm or interfacing house that will rekey the typescript or process ('output') the electronic files and produce proofs.

We have written as though the copy-editor is directly in touch with the author, though in some cases this will not be so. For simplicity's sake we have used British examples, but copy-editors working in other countries can substitute their own conventions, such as proof correction symbols. The problems remain the same, even if the solutions may be different.

1.2**TYPESCRIPTS: HARD-COPY, ELECTRONIC AND CAMERA-READY**

The publisher might receive the finished typescript from the author in any of the following forms:

- 1 ***Hard-copy typescript:*** a computer printout, typewriter-produced copy, or even handwritten manuscript copy that will need to be keyed by a typesetter after copy-editing. Although some publishers make it a condition of acceptance that typescripts be provided in electronic form, there are still occasions – perhaps because the book has been written over a long period or by many contributors – when electronic files for some or all of the book are not available.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

1 Introduction

2 ***Electronic files, with a matching printout:*** electronic files prepared by the author and sent to the publisher on disk, on CD-ROM or by some form of electronic file exchange via an email attachment or server. Although authors may be tempted to think that the file alone is sufficient, it is important for the publisher to insist that the author submits an *identical* hard copy as a verification of exactly what should be included.

The files may be dealt with in any of several ways:

- processed by a typesetter as they are, with little or no copy-editing or design. This is a possibility if the book has been carefully prepared by the author to the publisher's requirements, perhaps using a pre-styled template. The publisher might already have seen an earlier draft or sample and given the author copy-editorial and design feedback. This method is suitable for projects where economy or rapid publication needs to take precedence and might include certain kinds of journal work and proceedings from conferences that need to be published quickly if they are to have maximum impact and, therefore, maximum sales. There should always be a thorough discussion by the interested parties of the merits and shortcomings of this method of publishing, and the author should be told that the material will be produced without copy-editing or even careful reading, if this is the case.
- copy-edited and designed on hard-copy printout (see chapter 3), then corrected by the typesetter before being formatted and output and processed as proofs
- copy-edited and designed on hard-copy printout, then corrected by the author before being sent to the typesetter to be formatted and output and processed as proofs (see section 1.4)
- copy-edited and possibly also designed on screen before being processed by a typesetter (see section 1.6 and chapter 16).

3 ***Author-generated camera-ready copy (crc) or print-ready files*** (see section 1.5): camera-ready copy prepared by the author to the publisher's specifications, or presented alternatively, and more frequently these days, as fully corrected files that are ready for printing. This may be dealt with in one of two ways:

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Capturing the text electronically 1.3

- sent for making film and printing (in the case of *crc*) or simply printing (in the case of electronic files) after minimal copy-editing and design – perhaps just a proofread (there may have been copy-editorial and design comments at a preliminary stage)
 - fully copy-edited and designed on a first draft, after which a final version is submitted by the author.
- 4 ***Electronic files produced in a typesetting programming language such as TeX or LaTeX***, which are designed to help authors key complicated mathematics and are widely used by academics. The publisher can give the author macros that adapt these programs to a particular house style or series style. The author's files can be handled in any of the following ways:
- printed out and copy-edited in hard copy for the typesetter or author to correct (the copy-editorial mark-up and design input are simplified as the formatting controls the presentation of mathematical material; see p. 307)
 - copy-edited on-screen
 - treated as author-generated camera-ready copy or print-ready files.

It is essential that you understand, before beginning work on any typescript, exactly what your role will be: which production route will be followed, who will be responsible for making copy-editorial changes to the files, and whether you are expected to correspond directly with the author or via the publisher. One of the keys to a successful copy-editing stage is effective communication between copy-editor, author and publisher.

1.3

CAPTURING THE TEXT ELECTRONICALLY

If a book, or any part of it, is to be published in a medium other than print, the content and structure need to be captured by detailed digital coding, using a standard mark-up language such as SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language), HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), XML (Extensible Markup Language) or XHTML (Extensible Hypertext Markup Language); see pp. 416–17 for more

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

1 Introduction

information on the differences between them. If the text and illustrations are encoded accurately, they can be converted into various types of electronic product, such as e-books, CD-ROMs or web pages, with either the same page layout as the printed book or the identical content presented in a different layout; so, for example, an XML-coded index would work for an e-book as well as for the printed format of the book.

It is possible for a copy-editor, with the appropriate software and expertise, to apply this coding as part of an on-screen editing process (see section 16.3.7), but it is more complex than the simple structural identification of textual features such as headings, displayed matter and footnotes that is a traditional part of copy-editing, and, to be effective, needs to be completely accurate. Many publishers therefore prefer their copy-editors to concentrate on the editorial content of the book, and to have the digital coding handled as a semi-automated process by the typesetter.

Of the various possibilities, XML has become popular as the 'industry standard' because of its flexibility and ability to encode text and illustrations of any complexity. We have therefore taken XML as the 'model' in this book, although our discussions of XML coding, XML typescripts and XML indexing could be applied to other digital coding methods.

1.3.1 The XML typescript

XML coding can be applied by the typesetter before or after copy-editing. If the coding is to be applied before copy-editing, the publisher sends the author's final disk(s) or electronic files to the typesetter as soon as the book enters production, for the typesetter to generate encoded files that can be used to produce the printing files for the book and also files for electronic repurposing. A printout of the encoded files, which we shall call the 'XML typescript', is sent to the copy-editor for copy-editing; an identical printout is sent to the author as a reference for the copy-editing queries and (unless the index is to be made by a professional indexer) for generating the index (see p. 186). The detailed XML coding is suppressed on the printout, but the standard structural codes for headings, displayed matter, etc. are shown and should be

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Capturing the text electronically 1.3

checked and amended, if necessary, by the copy-editor. It is possible for the copy-editor to copy-edit the text on screen if the XML coding can be 'locked', but this is not, however, quite as straightforward as copy-editing in Word.

The author or indexer can generate the index directly from the XML typescript or electronically from a PDF file of the XML typescript (using Adobe Acrobat[®] and its tools).

There are a number of advantages for the publisher in having the typescript XML-coded before copy-editing. Sample chapters from the book can be loaded on to the publisher's website and circulated to bibliographers and online booksellers so that the book can benefit from maximum publicity and marketing at an early stage. It is cheaper for XML coding to be done as part of the origination process than at a later stage, and, if the index is made by the XML process and is run out as part of the page proof, the extent of the book can be known sooner and the book can be costed and priced and the jacket printed earlier on in the production process. The links of an index prepared by the XML method during the copy-editing stage are embedded at precise points in the text, which means that the page numbers generated from them at page-proof stage are adjusted automatically if changes are made to the pagination of the book at any stage of proof; and the link will always take the reader to the precise point in the text, even if the pagination of the e-book or other electronic product does not match that of the printed book.

The copy-editor benefits from a clear, double-spaced printout rather than the hard copy provided by the author with his or her files (which might not be double-spaced), and the assurance that the author will have an identical printout to hand for answering queries. In addition to the XML coding, the typesetter can be asked to add line numbers to the XML typescript to facilitate queries to the author, or to autogenerate a contents list from the chapter headings if the author has not provided one, or running heads from the subheadings in the text; this can save the copy-editor some time in a book such as a textbook with multiple subheadings and detailed running heads. All these operations should, of course, be checked carefully by the copy-editor, and authors should be told in the usual way about any running heads that need to be abbreviated.

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Judith Butcher, Caroline Drake and Maureen Leach

Excerpt

[More information](#)

1 Introduction

If the XML coding is not applied until after the copy-editing is complete, the copy-editor has the advantage of working (on hard copy or on screen) with the author's own files, and can thus see more clearly the author's original intentions. On the other hand, the benefits of XML tagging, such as auto-generation of pageheads, validation of notes against reference list and the application of line numbering to the typescript, are not available.

For more information on copy-editing an XML typescript, see section 3.6.2.

1.4

TYPESCRIPTS CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR

Some authors, having spent a great deal of time carefully keying and checking their work before submitting it to the publisher, are keen to retain control of their material and take responsibility for correcting their own disks or files after copy-editing. If the author has good keyboard skills and software knowledge and is known to be competent and co-operative, this can be an efficient and cost-effective way of proceeding. However, the publisher should ask the author to submit sample files and matching hard copy for the typesetter to test in advance of the main typescript, so that the quality of the author's keying can be assessed and possible faults that need correction can be identified.

The disadvantages of this method are that it can be more difficult to keep to a brisk schedule and some authors are tempted, when they receive their copy-edited typescripts to correct, to start rewriting! Authors can be dismayed at the amount of alteration required, not just to input copy-editorial changes but to apply house style and perhaps also to add structural coding. Before beginning your copy-editorial work, make sure that the author realizes the amount of work that will be involved in this correction, and can do the work competently. Sending the author a few sample folios of copy-edited text with clear markings on them, either from the printout in question or from another typescript that has copy-editorial (and possibly design) marks, is a good way of indicating the kind and amount of work you will be asking for. Discuss with the production department, and make sure it is clear to the author, how much and what type of structural coding the author will need to