

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-84713-1 - Butcher's Copy-Editing: The Cambridge Handbook for Editors, Copy-Editors
and Proofreaders, Fourth Edition

Judith Butcher, Caroline Drake and Maureen Leach

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The Cambridge Handbook
for Editors, Copy-editors and Proofreaders

Fourth edition, fully revised and updated



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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521847131

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First published 1975

Reprinted with corrections 1976

Reprinted 1978, 1980

Second edition 1981

Reprinted 1983, 1986, 1987, 1989

Third edition 1992

Reprinted 1993, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2002, 2003

Fourth edition 2006

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Butcher, Judith

Butcher's copy-editing: the Cambridge handbook for editors, copy-editors and proofreaders /
Judith Butcher, Caroline Drake and Maureen Leach. – 4th edn, fully rev. and updated.

p. cm.

Rev. and updated edn of: Copy-editing. 3rd edn 1992.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 0-521-84713-3 (hardback)

I. Copy-reading – Handbooks, manuals, etc.

2. Proofreading – Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Drake, Caroline II. Leach, Maureen,

III. Butcher, Judith. Copy-editing. IV. Title.

PN162.B86 2006

808.027–dc22

ISBN-13 978-0-521-84713-1 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-84713-3 hardback

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Preface to the fourth edition

I am delighted that, over thirty years after it was first published, *Copy-editing* continues to be widely used as a reference guide for copy-editors. We all still have the same aims of clarity and consistency, but technology and production methods have moved on since the publication of the third edition in 1992, and the ways in which copy-editors work have changed. This new edition has been extensively revised to take account of the fact that most authors and many copy-editors now work electronically; and it addresses a new generation of copy-editors, most of whom now work freelance and for more than one publisher. As today's copy-editors have less in-house support and less contact with designers and production departments, written guidelines are more important than ever before. I hope that this new edition will offer good advice on the points that the modern copy-editor should look out for and the ways that some of the problems can be tackled.

I am extremely grateful to Caroline Drake and Maureen Leach, who have edited and updated this new edition on behalf of Cambridge University Press.

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Preface to the third edition

I was delighted to be asked to prepare this new edition. In the second edition the amount of resetting and repaging had to be kept to a minimum; but this edition has been entirely revised and reset.

I have, however, kept the original coverage, even though most copy-editing is now done by freelance editors or copy-editors who may work to a house style and a standard design, and at only one stage of the book or journal's production. Since they work on their own, they need written guidance both on copy-editing in general and on how their own work fits in with what other people may be doing to typescripts at different stages.

As before, the book is a collaborative effort.

Lynn Hieatt has written a section on typescripts produced by the author on disk (1.2); there is a section on unbiased, non-sexist writing (6.2); and there are five new appendixes: those on Hebrew, on Arabic, and on Islamic and other calendars were written by Roger Coleman, Susan Moore and Iain White respectively.

Christopher Scarles has revised his material on copyright and permissions; Sheila Champney has masterminded and co-ordinated the revision of chapter 13, with the help of Michael Coles, Karin Fancett and Jane Holland (geology), Jane Farrell (medicine), Peter Hammersley (computing), Sandi Irvine, Jacqueline Mitton (astronomy) and Mairi Sutherland. Susan Moore has revised the section on classical books, Gillian Law her section on books on law, and many people have given me expert advice.

I was asked to include more examples, and have done this, particularly in chapter 10, where I have also altered the layout to try to make the information easier to find.

I did consider whether to say more about US and other alternatives to the British style and practice that I have outlined in the book; but style and practice vary so much, both within Britain and throughout the world, that it seemed best to keep the book simple – listing the problems the copy-editor faces and giving one or two possible solutions. I have found that it is more difficult for inexperienced copy-editors

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Preface to the third edition

to recognize a potential problem than it is for them to discover the appropriate solution.

The index is fuller and therefore easier to use; it was made by Michèle Clarke.

In addition to those already mentioned, I should like to thank the following: Henry Hardy and Sandi Irvine sent me long and very helpful lists of suggestions based on the second edition; Susan Moore, Robert Campbell, Gillian Clarke, Nicola Harris and Lesley Ward commented in detail on the whole of the draft of the third edition. Janet Mackenzie provided advice on Australian practice and Mike Agnes on American practice. John Trevitt read much of the draft and answered innumerable questions about production and design. Lynn Hieatt and other people at Cambridge University Press and elsewhere have gone to immense trouble to comment on parts of the draft and answer my questions. Mary Piggott of the Society of Indexers commented on chapter 8. Victoria Cooper and Penny Souster advised me about the music section (14.3) and provided the music examples. I am very grateful to them all, and to my copy-editor, Jenny Potts. I did not follow all the advice I was given; and the book, except in the sections written by other people, expresses my own views.

Despite all our efforts, there may well be errors, omissions or better ways of doing things; and I should be very grateful if you would let me know of any, so that I can continue to improve the book.

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Preface to the second edition

I have taken the opportunity to include the new British Standard proof correction marks and to revise the information about US copyright legislation. Innumerable smaller changes have been made throughout the book.

Preface to the first edition

Copy-editing is largely a matter of common sense in deciding what to do and of thoroughness in doing it; but there are pitfalls an inexperienced copy-editor cannot foresee. Some years ago I wrote a handbook for use within the Cambridge University Press, so that new copy-editors could benefit from the accumulated experience of their predecessors rather than having to learn by making their own mistakes; and it has now been suggested that such a book might be of use in other firms.

It is impossible to write a handbook suitable for every publisher or every kind of typescript. This book is based on my experience at Penguin Books and the Cambridge University Press, where copy-editors work on the premises and see a book through from the estimate stage until the proofs are passed for press. Freelance copy-editors and others working to a more limited brief – or commissioning editors who wish to do their own copy-editing – will be able to make use of the parts relevant to their own job; the things to be done remain the same, although the same person may not do them all.

As I am not writing primarily for authors, I have not, for example, explained the reasons for choosing one system of bibliographical references rather than another. By the time the book reaches the copy-editor the system is chosen, and the copy-editor's job is to make sure that it works efficiently, by eliminating certain faults in it. Publishers now realize more and more, however, that authors must be briefed early and adequately. If your publisher does not already have a good set of notes on style for its authors, do prepare one: not all authors will be prepared

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Preface to the first edition

to follow your instructions, but many of them will be grateful for any guidance you can give.

It is difficult to decide how to arrange a book of this kind, but it seemed best to cover first the things that are common to all books, and to leave the more complex material until later, rather than to adopt a more strictly logical order. Chapter 1 outlines the copy-editor's function. Chapters 2–5 cover this in more detail in relation to the three stages at which the copy-editor works on the book: the preparation for an estimate or the setting of specimen pages; the main copy-editing stage, at which the text and illustrations are prepared for the printer; and the proof stage. Chapter 6 discusses some difficult points of spelling, capitalization and other things collectively known as house style. Chapters 7–9 treat the various parts of the book in more detail: preliminary pages, headings, tables, notes, indexes and so on. Chapters 10 and 11 cover more complex material such as bibliographical references, quotations, poetry and plays; chapter 12 books with more than one author or in more than one volume. Chapters 13 and 14 deal with specialized subjects: science and mathematics, classical books, books on law and music. Chapter 15 gives some points to look out for when preparing reprints and new editions.

Many people have given me good advice during my years in publishing; and it would take too much space to thank them all individually. I am especially indebted to those who have written parts of this book: Michael Coles compiled the chapter on science and mathematics, Gillian Law wrote the section about books on law, and Jeremy Mynott the one on classical books; Mrs M. D. Anderson made the index.

Authors of this kind of book lay themselves open to the charge of not following their own precepts. Alas, both my copy-editor and I are fallible, and I should be grateful if you would let me know of any errors, omissions or better ways of doing things.

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to members of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders, with their wide experience: Anne Waddingham wrote the chapter on copy-editing on-screen and Gillian Clarke kindly read and commented on a draft of the whole book. Robert Whitelock of Cambridge University Press revised chapter 13, with the help of St John Hoskyns on the computing section and Mairi Sutherland on the mathematics. Linda Woodward updated the section on classical books, and Ann Lewis updated the music section; Martin Gleeson gave expert help with the revised and expanded section on books on law. Meg Davies compiled the index. Caroline Murray, production director at the Press, kindly read the typescript and helped us throughout, especially with production matters. Lucy Carolan, Penny Carter, Victoria Cooper, Peter Ducker, Diane Illott, Sarah Stanton, Mary Starkey, Kevin Taylor and Hans van de Ven all read and gave us advice on specialized sections of the typescript. Many in-house and freelance colleagues and members of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders have sent us suggestions and answered our queries. Special thanks are due to our commissioning editor, Kate Brett, our production editor, Alison Powell, our copy-editor, Frances Brown, and our proofreader, Annette Copping.

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