

# The Editor's Companion

## Second edition

AS THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY takes shape, editors face many challenges: technology is transforming publishing, text is losing out to graphics, and writing is distorted by cliché, hype and spin. More than ever, editors are needed to add value to information and to rescue readers from boredom and confusion.

*The Editor's Companion* explains the traditional skills of editing for publication and how to adapt them for digital production. It describes the editorial tasks for all kinds of print and screen publications – from fantasy novels, academic texts and oral history to web pages, government documents and corporate reports. It provides advice on operating a freelance business. It is an essential tool not only for professional editors but also for media and publications officers, self-publishers and writers editing their own work.

This revised edition is fully updated and features:

- Extended coverage of onscreen editing, single-source publishing and digital rights
- A comprehensive glossary of editing terms
- A full guide to proof correction and text mark-up symbols
- Companion website developed especially for students that includes editing exercises, expert tips and essential weblinks

With its broad coverage of editorial concerns *The Editor's Companion* is an all-in-one reference guide for both beginners and professionals.

Janet Mackenzie is a freelance editor with more than 40 years' experience in the profession and has conducted many training workshops on editing. She is an honorary life member of the Society of Editors (Victoria), a Distinguished Editor of the Institute of Professional Editors and recipient of the George Robertson Award for services to publishing.

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## Preface

The profession of editing for publication has a broad reach, spanning literature, education and business services. Since its function is to clarify communication, it lies at the heart of the knowledge economy.

Text is being displaced in the dissemination of information – largely because it is often clumsy and ineffective. Editors add value to raw text; we transform information into knowledge. But editorial skills, properly applied, do not draw attention to themselves, and therefore they are overlooked and undervalued. Editing is crucial to the effective presentation of information and the lucid discussion of ideas. The editor knows how to make a product that is functional and fit for its purpose. We conceptualise the kind of publication that will best do the job for the given resources – whether it is a marketing brochure, a website, a textbook or a novel – and we bring it into being.

The profession has taken the future into its own hands. In 2001 editors nationwide adopted *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, which codify the knowledge that editors bring to the job. Admirably succinct, they are statements of principles with wide ramifications that need to be unpacked. The *Standards* can be regarded as beacons on a rocky shore; *The Editor's Companion* takes them as its reference points for a detailed chart of the coastline.

The first chapter describes the editing profession. The next seven chapters follow the divisions of the *Standards*: A, the publishing process, conventions and industry practice, Chapter 2; B, management and liaison, Chapter 3; C, substance and structure, Chapter 4; D, language and illustrations, Chapters 5–6; E, completeness and consistency, Chapters 7–8. Methods and techniques are covered in Chapters 9–10 and the final chapter deals with freelance editing. The first edition of this book included the *Standards* as an appendix but as this edition went to press they were being updated; the current version can be found on the website of the Institute of Professional Editors. The URLs (web addresses) cited were correct at time of going to press; for updates see the book's website.

## Preface

The role of the editor in the production process has expanded beyond traditional copyediting. Editors undertake concept development and information design at one end and typesetting and layout at the other, with a bit of publicity and marketing on the side. Screen publications require editors to adapt their expertise to an unfamiliar medium and learn new jargon and technical skills. As amateur publishing expands, editors are asked to assemble the publishing team and manage the whole project. *The Companion* marks out traditional editorial skills amid the fluid job descriptions of digitised knowledge.

I have taught editing at every level from primary school to postgraduate master classes and in-service training, and I am grateful to the participants for their insights. I know that editors need advice on applying the *Standards* to their work, on systematic methods of working, on adapting to screen work, and on making a success of freelancing. *The Companion* answers their questions.

Since 1966 Australian editors have relied on the government *Style Manual*, now in a sixth edition by Snooks & Co. (John Wiley & Sons Australia, 2002), and I have not attempted to duplicate its thorough coverage of writing, typography and reproduction. *The Companion* translates the *Style Manual's* recommendations into practical editing tasks and provides advice on the puzzles that arise in daily work. As in-house training declines and more editors freelance, editing can be a lonely business. *The Companion* replaces, to some extent, the friendly guidance and reassurance that were once provided by mentors and colleagues.

I am grateful to my mentors, Camilla Raab, Peter Jones and Peter Ryan at Melbourne University Press, who launched me on my editing career.

I am indebted to the Institute of Professional Editors (formerly Council of Australian Societies of Editors), its council and working groups on standards and accreditation for pleasurable collaboration. For permission to reproduce copyright material I am grateful to John Bangsund, Mike Crooke, Peter Donoghue, Susan Hawthorne, Pamela Hewitt, Carole Hungerford, Janet Salisbury, Will Twycross and Lan Wang.

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Janet Mackenzie  
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