



ARDITH'S NOTEBOOK

T H E F R E E D O M T O P U B L I S H

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Editorial Help:

Professional spellers

What does a copy editor do?

If you're new to the publishing business, some of the terms might be confusing. It seems as though there are several different kinds of "editors," and between the "editor," the "substantive editor," the "copy editor," the "acquisitions editor," and the "editorial assistant," sometimes it's hard to know who does what. This month we'll focus on the role of the copy editor, which is essentially to make sure the manuscript is consistent and correct before it goes to the production department for layout.

The copy editor's are the last pair of eyes to look over the work before it becomes more difficult to correct problems. The proof-reader will see typos and errors in the final layout, but a good copy editor will eliminate mistakes before it comes to this. The copy editor's jobs include:

- Checking spelling, grammar, and punctuation to ensure that it is correct and conforms to the publisher's house style. For example, a book written in English might use British spelling, American spelling, or Canadian spelling (which can be a combination of both). The copy editor makes sure that the spelling is consistent (*colour* and *humour*, for example, *never* *color* and *humour*).
- Checking word usage to ensure that there are no errors. For example, you can *wreak* havoc but not *reek* havoc unless you are wearing the old Mary Quant perfume, "Havoc." A spellcheck won't pick this up since "wreak" and "reek" are both English words.
- Making suggestions where necessary to recast sentences in a more succinct style, eliminating redundancy or passive voice, for example, where appropriate. For example, "At this time, one-hundred-dollar bills are now not being accepted," could be rewritten more clearly as "We are no longer accepting one-hundred-dollar bills."
- Making sure that all headings, lists, captions, and other material are consistent and conform to the manuscript's style guide. If some bullet lists are punctuated, all should be.
- Checking facts, calculations, and spellings to ensure that there are no errors. A copy editor's best friend is a good dictionary. Her second-best friend is the Internet, although she

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Book Covers

Good design is essential to attracting the attention of potential readers. The cover should give a sense of what the book is about at a glance. It needs to catch readers' eyes and invite them to pick it up and look further. It also needs to include all of the necessary sales information (title, price, and so on) needed by the buyer and seller.

Most book covers feature artwork or photos and stylized type that express or are inspired by the contents. Books' "covers" include the front cover, the spine, and the back cover, but the front cover is where the design must focus on appealing to the eye. The front cover should also include the title, the subtitle (if there is one), and the author's name.

The title, author's name, and publisher should also be repeated on the spine of the book.

The back cover should include a short author biography, a brief description of the book's contents, the retail price, and an ISBN bar code. If you have them, this is where positive quotes from reviews or comments from other authors would be featured.

Great design on a book cover is not easy and is best left to experts. If you are looking for a book designer, there is no shortage of experts online. You can also contact your local book publishers' professional organization and ask them if they can make a recommendation. If you are working with someone new, ask for samples of their work and make sure that you agree on a fee ahead of time. If you are planning to do the cover yourself, go to bookstores and look for books that are similar to yours and take notes about what you like about their covers.

In addition to the design, book covers need to contain the following information:

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Promoting Your Book

If you are selling your book in bookstores, it is often the publicity that will bring people into the store looking for your book. Publicity is media attention that is generated through reviews or author interviews and usually starts with a press release to targeted media telling them about your book. A good press release will tell the reader what your book is about, why it's interesting, and how it can be presented to a media audience.

A properly constructed press release contains the title of the book, the author's name, a brief description of the book, a short author biography, the book's publication date, and details of the person to contact for more information about the book.

The best press release is carefully written and revised specifically for the style of media outlet it is being sent to. A press release to a morning television news show should look stylish, contain short attention-grabbing sentences, and tell the reader why the author would be interesting to their audience. A television producer might like to know that an author presents well on television and is available on short notice. If you are sending a press release to a book reviewer, you might talk about why the book is interesting to the journalist and suggest some of the questions that the reviewer can consider when reading it.

A press release can be sent on its own or as part of a press kit—a package that is sent out to targeted media. It usually includes a copy of the press release, a copy of the book, an author biography, and the publisher's contact information. It can also include anything that will attract attention and make it easier for the recipient to publicize your book. It can also include photo scans of the author for print media, a sample story or review, prepared questions and answers from the author, an autographed copy of the book, and any other relevant information. Where possible, make the packaging interesting: if you are promoting a fun summer cookbook, you could send out your press kit in a picnic basket along with some samples of the food. If you are trying to publicize a book about gardening, you could send the press kit in a gardening apron. The important thing to remember is to make sure that the item relates to the book that you are promoting. Press kits can be costly, so they should only be sent out to media that will likely be interested in your book.

You should coordinate your press release with the arrival of your books in the stores. The last thing that you want to happen is that your book gets reviewed and interested readers go to the bookstore and can't find your book. Be sure to include the book's release date in the press release. This allows editors to commission reviews in advance while knowing when to publish the reviews.

Lastly, if you know that your book is going to get publicity you can let your bookstores know so that they can have enough books available.

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Book Title

This is what you decide to call your book. It should be short, memorable, and provide the reader with a sense of what the book is about.

Subtitle

This can give readers a better idea of the contents of the book, expanding on the title or explaining it further.

Author's Name

This is the name of the author or sometimes a pseudonym or pen name (fictional name used by an author who wishes to remain anonymous).

Author's Biography

This is a short description of the author's accomplishments and any credentials that are relevant to the nature of the book. This can include previous publications or experience with the subject of the book.

Retail Price

This is the recommended retail price that is set by the publisher.

ISBN

Your book will need an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) if it is to be sold through retail book sales channels. The ISBN is a unique identification number that is recognized in 159 countries and territories.

CIP Data

Libraries use the Cataloging in Publication data to catalog your book. After you have obtained the ISBN, use it to apply for the CIP data. Obtaining CIP data is a free service.

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must always keep in mind that not everything on the Web is accurate and things discovered online must be confirmed.

- Keeping an eye on descriptions of characters and any other information the reader is given in order to avoid errors of continuity and consistency. Sarah can't be a five-foot-tall twenty-year-old with blonde hair on page 32 and then grow four inches and change her hair colour by page 70 unless those changes are addressed in the text. (She might have dyed her hair and be wearing heels, but the reader must be told.)
- Making sure that nothing has been lost in the production process: no dropped lines at the bottom of the page, no missing paragraphs, no missing page numbers or folios, and a correct table of contents. It is very frustrating for readers to be unable to use the table of contents and index to navigate through a book because the page numbers aren't accurate.

The copy editor is *not* there to say “gotcha” to the author. The copy editor acts as another pair of eyes, picking up things the author may not have seen. Copy editors should never be “smarty pants” but should have a generous and curious attitude. As a copy editor, you are there to make sure the author's words truly say what he or she intends them to say and if you've done your job well, nobody will notice your work. If you've done your job badly, everyone will....

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In Canada, go to Collections Canada (www.collectionscanada.gc.ca) and choose the links for publishers.

In the United States, go to the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov) and choose the links for publishers.

Bar Code

A bar code is a machine-readable representation of information (usually dark ink on a light background to create high and low reflectance, which is converted to 1s and 0s). Bar codes can be created using software, converted to a TIFF file, and placed into the cover file. The bar code will usually contain the ISBN and the U.S. price of the book.

When finalizing your book cover design, whether you have used a graphic designer or done it yourself, be sure to let others look at it. Always do a final copy edit and have someone proofread your cover.