Copy Editing in the Digital Age: How Technology Has Changed Copy Editing

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Eastern Michigan University

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Abstract
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Also, the expectation was that copy editors may feel a sense of nostalgia for the demise of print newspapers, but that was only one small thought by few copy editors. Most copy editors prefer digital journalism and copy editing over printed pages and red ink. They appreciate the software made available to their newsroom and it is now mandatory that a person pursuing the profession of copy editing have a thorough understanding of the necessary software in the newsroom.

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COPY EDITING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: HOW TECHNOLOGY HAS CHANGED COPY EDITING

By
Angela Anne Avery-Ahlijian
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Eastern Michigan University
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with Honors in the English Language and Literature Department

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Copy Editing in the Digital Age: How Technology Has Changed Copy Editing

Angela A. Avery-Ahlijian

Eastern Michigan University

Author Note

Submitted to the faculty of Eastern Michigan University Honors College in partial fulfillment of the degree of Bachelor of Science in Journalism for departmental honors completion.
Preface

The traditional role of a copy editor is to act as a gatekeeper and know when and why it is important to make changes in an article before submitting it into publication. According to "The Art of Editing in the Age of Convergence," by Brian S. Brooks and James L. Pinson, editing is an art. But the threat to copy editing today, according to some copy editors, is that the birth of certain software programs and digital journalism could pose a threat to the quality of that art.

Neil Holdway, news editor at the Daily Herald in suburban Chicago, has been a copy editor for 18 years. He holds a bachelor's degree from Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism and is a member of the American Copy Editors Society.

Holdway says that the newsroom transition to the Web: "It's a bit more frenzied, to be sure. Deadline is not just at night, but all the time. The annoying part is the declining editing on the Web, and the struggle to maintain good editing."

He also says that now the editing is often skipped altogether before Web publication.

"The worst part about newspapers' move to the Web is that it occurred separately from the newsroom." At first, and even still at some papers, -- it was a different department, Holdway said. "Newspapers suffered by not making it part of the newsroom from the start. Now they're slowly catching up."

The declining quality of editing in the digital age is even having an effect on traditional print papers.
COPY EDITING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

David Sullivan, assistant managing editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer says, "My job hasn't changed that much, but our paper is pretty traditional. It's more that copy editing is held in less respect than it used to be."

The traditional job of a copy editor is very different from what a copy editor who is hired into a newspaper 10 years ago might notice. Since all the changes with new technologies and software, the traditional role of a copy editor is nearly unrecognizable to an editor who was in the field 20 or more years ago.

The goal of this thesis is to highlight the traditional jobs and responsibilities of a copy editor, compare and contrast those roles and see where the copy editor's job is headed in the future.

In Chapter 1, we will talk about common personality attributes copy editors share. Then, Chapter 2, we will talk about traditional roles of a copy editor and list the responsibilities journalists have to both the public and their paper. Chapter 3 will look at how the various roles of the copy editor have changed because of the new technology of the digital age. Chapter 4 will talk about predictions into the future and outlook and what can and should be considered while moving forward.
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First and foremost, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. James Pinson, who was abundantly helpful and offered invaluable assistance, support and guidance during this formative experience that enabled me to complete an important long-term goal. Thank you for putting in so much of your time, effort, thought and skills to see to this project’s successful completion. This thesis would have been next to impossible to write without his help and guidance. He is a valuable journalism, copy-editing and history professor, thesis adviser and one of the most multi-faceted, eclectic and interesting individuals I know. Thank you Dr. Pinson.

Thanks to the 12 copy editors, who answered my questions, donating their valuable time, opinions and ideas. They allowed me to gather information directly from the source about copy editing in the age of the Internet.

To Teresa Schmedding, copy editor at suburban Chicago’s Daily Herald, who put me in touch with a group of copy editors from around the country for interviews and taught me a valuable lesson in journalistic practices and ethics.

To Neil Holdway, Daniel Hunt, Kevin Devine, Geoff Larcom, Lisa McLendon, Denise Wolber, Domenica Trevor, Kelli Slayden, Peter Bigelow, David Sullivan, Christopher Wienandt and Arthur Brooks -- thank you all so much for helping me along in the process of my project. In spite of your extremely hectic schedules, you found the time to answer my many questions, return calls and e-mails, and be thorough in your answers. I am in great debt to you and without your help – this project never would have been possible.
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I want to thank my mother who offered a hand when I needed one. To my sister-in-law, Elaine Tams-Avery, who is like a mentor to me and was my strongest support before and through college. You have contributed to my learning experience and goal setting by teaching me the importance of taking on bigger challenges. Thank you for your encouragement, friendship, help, questions, challenges and belief in me. Without you, I can honestly say, I may have fallen short.

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This thesis would not have been possible without everyone’s support and conversation, interest and their actively listening to my ideas and providing honest feedback. Thank you for your unwavering support to see me through to the end of part one of my dreams, your patience while I was working on my thesis for honors completion and for being interested in the process and work I put into it.
Copy Editing in the Digital Age:

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Chapter 1

Who are copy editors?

Personality of copy editors

Some journalists have a personality that best fits the life of a copy editor. It is not just a set of skills, but according to some journalists, it is also a passion.

According to Teresa Schmedding, senior news editor suburban Chicago’s Daily Herald and president of the American Copy Editors Society, copy editors are the heart of the newsroom, editing, writing headlines and churning out high-quality content for multiple platforms.

“I was a reporter but switched after I realized that, no matter how good my stories were, no one was going to read them if they didn't have great headlines and great design. So I shifted my focus to copy editing and design.”

Copy editing is, aside from being the heart of the newsroom, an art that requires a hawk-like eye when it comes to detail. Knowing precisely what changes need to be made, correcting Associated Press style and writing headlines that grab the reader’s attention are only a few of the copy editor’s responsibilities.

“I wanted to work for newspapers. After I’d been in the newsroom of the student newspaper for a while, I discovered that copy editing was more suited to my personality. So, early on, I chose it as my profession,” says Domenica Trevor, paralegal and copy editor at On Point Paralegal and Editing Services. “When I started as a copy editor, reporters still composed their stories on typewriters.”
Trevor began her journalistic career as a copy editor from 1978 until 2009. Her formal newspaper copy-editing career ended when the paper that employed her was closed. Since then, she has operated a freelance copy-editing business, and her clients are magazines, schools and foundations.

Lisa McLendon, deputy copy desk chief of the Wichita Eagle, also found copy editing to be a career to nestle into.

"I applied for a job at a newspaper because I saw an ad that said 'Wordsmiths wanted.' I'd never taken a journalism class or had any idea I wanted to be a journalist. After graduate school, I needed a job and I'm good with language, so I thought I might like being a copy editor. I found that this profession was an excellent fit with my skills and personality."

Chris Wienandt, business copy chief at the Dallas Morning News agrees that copy editing is a career with which his personality is compatible.

"I intended to be a reporter, but I've always been inclined toward copy editing; I hate to see mistakes in print. When I was looking for a job just out of grad school, the easiest way to get hired was to become a copy editor. I was good at it, and it clicked. I still like to do writing occasionally – book reviews, mostly, and I have a package in the works for our travel section."

But some other journalists who once worked as copy editors prefer to be out in the field, interviewing and writing.

Geoff Larcom, executive director of media relations at Eastern Michigan University was a copy editor from 1982 to 1988, working at the Ann Arbor News, which morphed into AnnArbor.com and later at The Detroit News. He often copy edited when he was sports editor of the Ann Arbor News, from 1988 to 2000.
“There are more jobs in copy editing. I got a job doing that right out of grad school. Also, unlike regular news, management jobs in sports usually go to copy editors,” says Larcom, who says he loved his career as a reporter. “The reporters have too much fun and action out on the beat! They never become editors.”

Some editors appreciate the opportunity to experience the best of both worlds. Peter Bigelow, sports editor at AnnArbor.com loves to both write as well as edit for the AnnArbor.com sports section. He has a passion for editing but also appreciates the flexibility that his position as editor offers him.

“There’s an internal struggle sometimes, wanting to both write and edit, and I’ve been lucky enough to be in positions where even if I’ve primarily been doing one, I’ve contributed to the other as well,” says Bigelow.

Some citizens believe the news industry is an industry that is failing due to the changes in the media, software, citizen journalists and newspapers. Many copy editors, however, have faith that newspapers and journalism is alive and well. For some, it is simply their loyalty and love for the press that keeps them going. Hunt says he believes that now is a great time to work in newspapers.

There’s no time I’d rather be in newspapers than right now. If the industry is ‘sinking’ (a common motif used by copy editors to liken newspapers to the HMS Titanic), I’m going down with the ship. While I am a skilled programmer and consider myself ‘Web savvy’ I bleed ink. To use an off-kilter expression, I tell students often: Newspapers are like an abusive lover, and I’m a masochist, an optimist and a zealot — I will never leave her.
This is the common opinion among some copy editors. They are loyal to the newspapers, whether they be online or in print. It takes a special personality to enjoy the art of copy editing on a daily basis.
Chapter 2

Traditional Jobs of Copy Editors

What is a copy editor? He or she is the gatekeeper for a news publication. Any article written must pass through the copy desk with few to no errors. But the job is very different now from what it was years ago.

A copy editor must have flawless grammar and an impeccable knowledge and understanding of Associated Press style. He or she is responsible for much that goes on in the newsroom today.

But before delving into the changes that have occurred in copy editing, first, let's look at some of the things that make a copy editor a good copy editor, according to Brooks and Pinson:

- A passion for, and detailed knowledge of, grammar, spelling, style, punctuation, usage and tightening.
- A love of good writing and the ability to see the potential in a piece, then the skill to help bring it out—or the good sense to know when to leave it alone.
- Knowledge of graphics processes and typefaces; the creativity to see photo, illustration and graphics possibilities; knowledge and good design.
- An interest in everything as a broad grasp of news. You wouldn't want to pay a game of trivia against a good copy editor.
- Knowledge of enough mathematics and accounting to calculate percentages and to read budgets and see whether they add up.
- A grasp of legal, ethical and taste considerations.
- Skepticism that makes you doubt everything and check it. You also need a librarian's ability to find the best sources in print or on the Internet to check facts.
- A dirty mind that lets you see embarrassing double meanings before they are published. Evidently, a "nice" person missed this headline in the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch: "Elliot's size no obstacle for Trojans."
- Enough self-confidence to know you can improve even veteran reporters' copy but enough maturity not to rewrite everything into your own style.
- The ability to handle people—whether stringers or staff, sources or subscribers.
- Sound business and management skills.
- A clear vision of the publication’s purpose, its personality, and the audience and advertisers to whom it appeals, as well as expertise, if possible, in the publication’s specialty.
- A strong sense of responsibility. “The buck stops here,” as President Harry Truman’s desk read.
- A willingness to work anonymously behind a desk for eight hours a day. For many journalists, this is the toughest hurdle. (Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, 2005, 36)

Copy editing is often broken down into basically two types, according to Brooks and Pinson: macro and micro. Macro focuses on the bigger picture, and micro refers to paying attention to the smaller details.

Brooks and Pinson say, “macro” editing, relates to “the big picture.” This type of editing includes the following:

- Making sure stories are worth running.
- Making sure stories have good leads, are organized and flow well.
- Making sure stories don’t have unanswered questions.
- Making sure stories are accurate.
- Making sure stories are objective.
- Making sure stories are legal, ethical, tasteful and sensitive to the audience (Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, 2005, 62).

On the “micro” level, as suggested by Brooks and Pinson, editing must have an eye for the tiny details. Some of these details are:

- Making sure the grammar and usage are correct.
- Making sure words are spelled correctly and that there aren’t any typos.
• Making sure abbreviations, capitalization, numbers and punctuation conform to the publication’s or station’s stylebook.
• Making sure the copy is tightly written so that it doesn’t waste the audience’s time and conforms to space or time limits. (Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, 2005, 62)

Now, let’s take a look at macro editing and what that entails in more detail.

MACRO EDITING

The First Amendment does not guarantee a right to know, but it does provide the right to exercise editorial judgment. Copy editors must adhere to these guidelines when deciding what to edit.

It is possible an undue interference can take place when editing prepublished articles, suppressing certain facts to protect the person, publication or object from criticism or other harm is in violation of the First Amendment. Coerced publication of a certain view also violates freedom of speech.

The editorial process is directly connected to the First Amendment, which will be explained, but first. The First Amendment reads:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (First Amendment, 1791).
Candace Clarke, administrative assistant of online publications and marketing at Poynter.org, says:

When we do our jobs the right way, striving every day to publish reports of integrity and balance, when we ask the tough questions, when we fight to keep the public’s business public and when we provide the kind of watchdog reporting that is the lifeblood of a democracy, we fulfill our promise to that first generation of Americans who believed that one of the best ways to guarantee a democracy was a free and vigorous press. That mission has not—and will not—change (Clarke, 2006).

Making use of the First Amendment protections and acting ethically are two ways newspapers make sure valuable information necessary in a democracy is available for the public to see.

Legalities

There are many legal issues that can arise in print news, the biggest issue being libel. The following is an example of a libel lawsuit as mentioned in the Copy-Editing and Headline Handbook by Barbara Ellis:

A pair of Washington D.C., attorneys successfully sued one paper for half a million dollars some years ago for a headline that said they were ‘jailed,’ whereas they were only ‘held’ by the police. They proved that their practice was adversely affected by a word that had one more count than ‘held’ (Barbara Ellis, Ph.D., 2001, 43).

There are many dangers to watch out for when writing headlines, captions, blurbs and text. Journalists have to be careful when choosing words that could be considered threatening to both the subject and the newspaper. If a word incriminates the subject, it could cause grief to the person and result in a law suit.
A copy editor must understand fully the legalities that come along with the use of words like, "allegedly" and how choosing to use this word could make the suspect appear to be guilty and not offer any legal protection to the newspaper if sued.

The word "allegedly" sounds incriminating and the person on trial or accused of committing a crime is allowed his or her due process. He or she is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. If the copy editor or reporter use the word "allegedly" they are removing the subjects due process from readers and assuming he or she is guilty and jeopardizing the suspect's reputation.

In addition to looking out for libelous problems, copy editors must also check for legal issues such as negligence, copyright infringement and obscenity, as well as be familiar with laws regarding open meetings and open records laws and laws regarding protection of sources to name only a few. This knowledge comes in handy when covering City Council meetings or other public events.

It's the copy editors job to catch negligence on the reporter's end. He or she must fact check and also grammar check to assure there has been nothing missed. As the copy editor, he or she is the one the responsibility falls on. It is crucial that nothing be overlooked to avoid any issues.

Everything published, as well as anything one has written that is not published but can be proven the person wrote originally is protected by copyright laws. In order to abide by these laws, a copy editor must know what is and what is not allowed to be used without permission and/or proper citation. If a reporter uses a brand name, for example: "He wiped the child's nose
with a Kleenex,” Kleenex brand can then sue if they like because permission was never sought before using this brand name. It is the copy editor’s job to know these things.

Obscenity is another issue that cannot be used on public television or in newspapers. The copy editor must be sure to catch anything that can be construed as obscenity and remove it from the article. Pinson says that something is only considered legally obscene if it:

- Appeals to the “prurient interest” (or would arouse) the average person, applying contemporary community standards to the work as a whole.
- Depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way.
- Lacks, as a whole, serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value. (Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, The Art of Editing in the Age of Convergence, 2005, 108)

Ethics

Copy editors are supposed to make sure the publication adheres to the ethical policies of the newspaper for which they work. As an example of such policies, here is the ethical code of the Society of Professional Journalists. This code acts as a guide to assure reporters, copy editors and others are acting in the best interest of the public. The code, found at spj.org, includes the following guidelines:

Seek Truth and Report It:

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.

Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.

Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.

Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.

Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.

Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.

Never plagiarize.

Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.

Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.

Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.

Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.

Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.

Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.

Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

Minimize Harm:

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
• Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
• Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
• Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone’s privacy.
• Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
• Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
• Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
• Balance a criminal suspect’s fair trial rights with the public’s right to be informed.

_Act Independently:_

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public’s right to know.

Journalists should:

• Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
• Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
• Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
• Disclose unavoidable conflicts
• Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable
• Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
• Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

Be Accountable:

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other. Journalists should:

• Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
• Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
• Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
• Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media. Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others (Society of Professional Journalists, 2011).

SPJ suggests journalists follow these guidelines so the truth does not get lost in an array of incorrect, sensational or otherwise misrepresented information and that the public has been delivered honest newsworthy information that is not biased. This code is voluntarily adhered to by professionals in the journalism industry.

Objectivity: the backbone of journalism

Another important characteristic of macro editing is the ability of a copy editor to remain objective, fair and impersonal in style and editing decisions. Readers trust that their news sources will be as objective as possible, with the journalists leaving out their own slant or using personal bias in their research and writing of straight news stories.

Journalists must consistently remain professional and objective in their writing and editing. According to Brooks and Pinson: “They must never distort the truth, editorialize or intrude his or her own judgments. He or she must remain neutral and fair” (Brooks and Pinson, 2005, 101).

Being objective allows readers exposure to all sides of a story and not just the sides the journalist wants their audience to be exposed to instead of imposing his or her personal and possibly biased opinion on the reader. The writer can be objective by avoiding speculation when discussing their topic or ideas and leaving out a personal voice or slant. The editor can help the writer avoid this with good editing, meaning having impeccable grammar and also by providing thorough and necessary feedback to the author.
Good editing and feedback coming from the copy editor to the reporter could be beneficial in that it is the best way to prevent repeat mistakes. A copy editor can simply edit an article and send it to print, but it makes the editor's work easier if the mistake is brought to the author's attention, especially when regarding a lack of objectivity in the work.

**Paying attention to “isms”**

Brooks and Pinson say, ridding the news of sexism, racism, and other harmful “isms” is necessary not for political correctness but so that journalists report accurately and without bias. (Brooks, Pinson, & Wilson, 2010, 283). It is a part of being objective.

Copy editors should leave out racism, ageism, sexism, ableism, ethnocentrism, classism, anti-Semitism, gender bias and religious bias, to name a few. Copy editors must always be looking out for the variety of ways a writer can offend the audience or cause harm. For example, if the reporter wrote, “The suspect is a black male in her mid-20s” the copy editor would probably ask the reporter for more specifics because the description is too vague to be helpful in apprehending the suspect and only pushes prejudice buttons. What was he wearing? What was his height and weight? Were there any distinguishing characteristics, such as scars or tattoos? What direction did he go?
MICRO EDITING

Associated Press style

A copy editor must be astute and incredibly observant, but more important; he or she must have thorough knowledge if Associated Press style. The AP Stylebook includes advice on abbreviations, capitalization, numbers, punctuation, grammar, spelling and usage.

The AP Stylebook, which is updated each year, is the most valuable resource copy editors should have on hand when editing a writer’s work. Every copy desk should have the latest copy either on his or her desk or have an online subscription.

When dealing with grammar and usage, there are many rules and principles that apply to the world of copy editing. But according to Brooks and Pinson, they boil down to just five basic ideas:

1. Make sure your words agree and go together.
2. Make sure your words are in the right order.
3. Use the right form of the word.
4. Use the right word.
5. Punctuate according to sentence grammar (Brooks, Pinson, & Wilson, 2010, 15).

Also, abbreviations are slightly different in AP style. A state’s abbreviations, as they are in the AP Stylebook are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Abbreviations (AP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calif.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Del.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fla.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ga.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Md.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mont.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When dealing with capitalizations, people often want to capitalize all titles. According to the AP Stylebook, titles are only capitalized when the title appears before the person’s name. This is only the case if it is a formal title like “President Barrack Obama.” When an informal title is being used, you do not capitalize the title. Also, it is lowercase if it is a title that appears without a name or follows a name, but also if the person’s name is separated by commas.

When using numbers in an article, according to the AP Stylebook, you spell out the number if it is one through nine, but can use numerals from 10 and beyond. When using numbers that require many zeros (including when referring to dollar amounts), you would spell out the word million, billion, trillion, etc.
Copy editing and proofreading symbols

Below is an example from, *The Art of Editing, in the Age of Convergence* that provides a sample of a copy editor's markings. Copy-editing symbols are different from proofreading symbols and were more commonly used in the newsroom before copy editing became done primarily on computers.

(Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, *The Art of Editing in the Age of Convergence*, 2005, 55)
Some copy editors still use copy editing symbols today, but more commonly used are symbols for proofreading. Although proofreading and copy editing are two different jobs, complete with their own set of symbols, copy editors often find themselves responsible for both of these jobs today, whereas before, there were two separate careers. Below is an example of proofreading symbols.

Figure 3-5. An example of edited copy.

(Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, The Art of Editing in the Age of Convergence, 2005, 54)
According to *The Art of Editing*, proofreading symbols and especially copy-editing symbols, like those in the examples above are rarely used at newspapers today but a few small papers and magazines still use them often and they are still often used in book publishing. Brooks and Pinson say they believe it is still necessary that a copy editor know and fully understand the symbols because they are universally understood in the business of copy editing. They may not be used to edit and return the marks to the author, but they are used to convey messages about the errors to others in the newsroom.

Hunt, copy editor for 11 years for the Orange County Register in Santa Ana California says, “Some symbols are used – I use them probably every day. But they are strictly for proofing or previewing a story or layout.”

WRITING HEADLINES, CAPTIONS AND BLURBS

Headlines are the most read part of the newspaper. They are what sell a newspaper. Headlines are what seize our attention at a glance and entice the passerby, leaving them wanting more. Mastering the craft of headline writing is an important part of being a successful copy editor. Who would not be captured by a headline that read: **12,259 die in Japan tsunami?**

The headline must also fit into the space by following the mechanics precisely. Not doing this can lead to awkward spacing and is naturally unattractive to the eye. Before computers were able to tell you at a glance whether a headline would fit, copy editors had to “count” headlines. That is, they had to figure out how much horizontal space a headline took up by assigning each character in the headline a numeric value based on its width. Then, they would add up all of
those values on each line. Although computers make this obsolete it is still a good idea to know
the process to understand which letters take up the most room on a line, leading you to discover
the most optimal place to tighten.

According to Brooks and Pinson, traditionally, the instructions for headlines are written
as three numbers separated by hyphens. Here are four examples: 1-24-3, 3-36-2, 4-48-1, 6-60-1.

Brooks and Pinson explain further:

The first number in a headline order is the number of columns the
headline will cover; the second is the point size of the headline (its
height in points measured from the bottom of a descended like g to
go to the top of an ascender like h); the third is the number of lines
in a headline. So, a 1-24-3 headline is one column in width, 24-
point type and three lines long.

A note on print measurements: In publishing and printing, we
don’t measure in inches or centimeters but in picas and points.
There are 12 points in a pica and 6 picas (or 72 points) in an inch
(Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, 2005, 229).

Following these rules and guidelines, the copy editor then needs to find the best words to
fill into those one column, 24 point type, three-line headlines. It is more difficult to do than one
might think.

Headline don’ts

Copy editors need to be especially careful that headlines accurately reflect the stories
being published and do not incriminate a person or threaten their reputation. This can happen by
using words like “allegedly” in a headline or falsely convicting a person before they have
received their fair trial. Another could be accusing a CEO of fraud before they have been through their entire due process.

The following are examples of how headlines can be written and indicate that criminal and civil cases are covered fully and fairly by the newspaper.

Suspect charged with car theft in Bainbridge
Police pick up Rockville woman on fatality count
Twin-City MD sued for failing to return call

(Ellis, 2001, 51)

Another headline rule is to beware of typos. The headline is the main object that grabs the reader’s attention. If it is cluttered with typos or other errors, the reader may be more apt to decide against reading it.

According to Brooks and Pinson, another don’t is to avoid vague headlines that say nothing. An example of this would be, “City Council to meet” or “New Bar exam to include test of legal skills” (Brooks, Pinson, & Sissors, The Art of Editing in the Age of Convergence, 2005, 236).

Oversensationalizing a story in the headline is dishonest. A copy editor should never try to create a headline that makes the story sound juicy if it is not 100 percent accurate. The headline must reflect the story exactly and be free of personal opinion, bias and sensationalism.
Chapter 3

New Jobs for Copy Editors

There are many more jobs a copy editor is required to do today than before digital journalism entered the newsroom. Copy editing has changed drastically since the Internet has become more prevalent in homes and businesses around the world. Print journalism is slowly phasing out. The processes by which journalists gather information, interview, edit articles, create headlines, blurbs, layout and design is no longer recognizable to copy editors of the distant past. One change copy editors have endured is pagination.

PAGINATION

Pagination, or computerized pasteup of the paper, was the end of the composing room, beginning in the late 1990s. According to Creative Editing, by Dorothy Bowles and Diane Borden, pagination is the vital link to a grander scheme for automation. Pagination allowed editors to create pages on computer terminals with all the text in place, eliminating the need for pages to be pasted up by the backshop staff (Dorothy Bowles, 2004, 10).

News editor Neil Holdway of the Chicago Daily Herald (suburban Chicago) began his career as a copy editor as newspaper pagination was beginning. Holdway says he helped bring pagination to his newspaper because it was something that offered more control over the job as a copy editor.

“First, copy editing went through the controversy of pagination changing our jobs, adding an element to our jobs besides headline writing and editing,” says Holdway. “Pagination
did add to our jobs, yes, but it also gave us more control of pages and their editing as they were being built."

Pagination meant copy editors had to learn a page-layout software package, such as first Pagemaker, the Quark Xpress and now Adobe InDesign, It also meant perhaps learning to work with photos in Adobe PhotoShop and graphics in Adobe Illustrator, as well as importing AP photos using the Leaf system instead of using hard-copy prints or old AP LaserPhotos that were basically faxed to newspapers.

ONLINE JOURNALISM

Many additional tasks have been added onto the copy desk since, such as editing for the Web version of the paper, which in turn means becoming familiar with search-engine optimization to try to increase user hits from search engines, as well as a host of other technical skills, such as using Dreamweaver to design Web pages, understanding Hyper Text Markup Language, Cascading Style Sheets, RSS feeds, social media like Twitter and Facebook, whatever content-management system the paper uses (such as Gryphon, used at the Eastern Echo), and perhaps learning to edit audio clips on a program like Audacity or video clips on a program like Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere, and making animated graphics in Flash. (Specifics about most of these programs or similar programs will be discussed later in the chapter). Because of all this new programming, some copy editors say, some of the older jobs of a copy editor are suffering, like grammar and fact checking.

"Newspapers' print copy editors often are now editing for two media, the Web and print," says Holdway. "Now when news breaks, copy editors working nights must think of getting the
story on the Web quickly and make sure the headlines and copy are correct there, but also worry about getting the print pages done (before deadline). The annoying part is the declining editing on the Web, and the struggle to maintain good editing. As for the new variety of media, well, it's just the reality, and we must be ready to edit wherever it's needed, which is everywhere.”

Holdway also says he believes there is an upside to the digital changes to newsprint: “I, as news editor at night am monitoring competing media on the Web and Twitter more regularly, and responding as necessary. I know more of what the competitors are doing, whereas before I had to wait until the morning to see if we matched up with the competition.”

Since the Internet has come along in the newsroom, journalism has changed drastically, including copy editing. Some believe these changes are for the better, making journalism more competitive, but some believe it complicates the process, neglecting important tasks like fact checking, grammar, attention to detail and other facets of micro and macro editing. Other copy editors say they believe the basic functions of a copy editor’s duties haven’t changed much at all since the Internet.

Arthur Brooks, former sports editor for the Detroit News, says he believes a copy editor needs to be a jack of all trades rather than someone concerned with or adept at words.

Now, a copy editor has three tasks. Forever, it seemed, it was just editorial functions—headlines, cutlines, put roundups together, read page proofs, stuff like that. Now, it's about a third for that, a third for designing pages on the computer, which started at papers it was at about 1995 or so—and a third working on the paper's Internet site, that was at The News, maybe five or six years ago.

Brooks says his job has changed quite a bit, but it isn’t anything that has been overwhelmingly daunting. Lisa McLendon, deputy copy desk chief at The Wichita Eagle agrees.
She says her job as a copy editor has changed quite a bit, too, and with more on her desk than before new software programs like Facebook and Twitter were introduced to news organizations:

When I started, there was one computer in the whole newsroom that was hooked up to the Internet. Most of what we looked up was in paper references. The paper was put together by compositors cutting and pasting. There was no website for the newspaper. And that was in 2000. I do so many more small things now. I edit stories before Web publication and go into the website to fix errors after publication. I edit cutlines for online photo galleries. I run a blog and a Twitter account for the paper ‘Grammar Monkeys.’ Plus, I still edit copy, write headlines and cutlines, proof pages and occasionally do some layout.

Things have been constantly changing, adding more software programs, hardware devices and new ways of doing things in the newsroom to keep the copy desk on its toes. Some copy editors believe that while all of these changes are taking place on the copy desk, sacrifices are being made to important aspects of copy editing in order to make room for these new programs.

Some say fact checking and grammar, for example, have become less important and set aside while page layout, design, headlines and other aspects to the editorial process have been the main priority. Also, editors have to be more tech savvy than ever before. With software changing and updating almost every year and new programs coming out, being astute and on top of things when it comes to technology has an entirely new meaning now that news is primarily online. Good grammar is one of the copy desk’s responsibilities and is being nudged aside, especially since newspapers have been turning into smaller, digitally operated news sources.
Pinson says that some of the things copy editors once did have changed because of the many other new tasks placed on the copy desk and since new software and technologies are constantly being introduced to newspapers. Pinson says:

Some of the consequences, it seems to me, for copy editors as newspapers morph into smaller, primarily digital operations as the Ann Arbor news did when it changed into annarbor.com, include:

The jobs will become increasingly dependent on tech savvy, involving a number of software programs and knowledge of things like search engines and Web analytics. This will leave less and less time for doing things well that copy editors have traditionally done.

Although I'd like to think good journalism skills are good journalism skills in any medium, the truth is that the nature of the medium you're working in influence what best practice is.

FACT CHECKING

Fact checking is an important part of copy editing. In fact, according to Copy Editing, A Practical Guide by Karen Judd, some publications, mainly magazines, hire staff that specialize in fact checking.

Magazines usually have two or three staff people who do nothing but verify the information in manuscripts. In some houses, fact checkers plan to move up to become proofreaders or copy editors; in others their job is so important that they specialize in it. Fact checkers also frequently handle permissions (Karen Judd, 2001, 13).

Fact checking is something that has become easier for copy editors to do with the Internet at hand. Pinson says:
Copy editors will, if they have time to fact check at all, could more easily do it than in the old days because of the ability to do a quick Web search from their computer. This will require a skill everyone needs to develop: Web literacy in evaluating the reliability of information on the Internet (James Pinson, email to Angela Ahlijian, April 20, 2011).

McLendon also says appreciates the ease of fact checking by use of the Web today as opposed to before the digital era, but that it changes her job a lot:

It (copy editing) has changed tons! It's so much easier to access so much more information. I can check all sorts of facts that I used to have to trust the reporter on. But in other ways, too: I have to think about headlines differently, often writing separate headlines for the paper and for the website. I can keep up with breaking news from all over the world—I read more news than ever thanks to links on Twitter and Facebook, which has made me more aware of how our own stories come across on the Web.

Christopher Wienandt, business copy chief at The Dallas Morning News says that the job of a copy editor itself has not changed fundamentally, but the way the job is done today is different from what it was years ago, before the Internet and computers were used in the newsroom.

It's not so much that the tasks have changed, but that how you get them done has changed. Our stylebook is online, as is the AP stylebook. Most reference sources are online, so we don’t have to call the library anymore. I suspect some of the people on our desk don’t even know we have a library in the building, let alone any librarians. However, the library isn’t staffed at night anymore, so it’s of no use to us anyway—and it’s rare that we call the public library, which we used to do a lot.
Schmedding agrees that there have been some changes, but like Wienandt, Schmedding believes the fundamentals of copy editing have remained the same. It is necessary that copy editors stay up-to-date on software programming and other tech skills.

It can be faster-paced, but overall, it hasn’t changed a ton. I work for a paper where design and copy editing are done by copy editors so we’ve always had a strong emphasis on tech skills. That hasn’t changed, just expanded to include the Web as well as pagination—I think things are going just fine (today as opposed to before digital). It would be great if we were able to monetize our own content. But I tend to be a little ahead of the curve so how things have turned out here, in my shop, is pretty much the way I imagined and wanted.

Schmedding does not believe there have been many changes to copy editing in the past 20 years, but other copy editors say there have been many changes. How one sees the newsroom today as opposed to 10 to 20 years ago is based on the copy editor’s personal experiences with layout, design and the more traditional jobs.

SOFTWARE

Copy editors are now not only editing stories, writing headlines, captions and blurbs and doing layouts on paper, but also they now function (since the 1950s or 1960s) as proofreaders, and (since the late 1980s or early 1990s) as the backshop, doing the “cutting and pasting” of putting the paper together on computers instead of by hand. They’ve had to learn an array of software skills to do this.

“The core responsibilities haven’t changed – policing spelling, grammar, style; writing headlines and cutlines and other display type; watching out for libel,” says Wienandt.
But as technology has developed, more and more technical responsibility has fallen to the desk. In the early days, knowing computer coding. Later on, understanding the ins and outs of pagination. In all eras, becoming a de facto in-house tech support department that can solve computer problems without having to get the ‘real’ tech people involved. Most of the functions that used to be handled by the backshop, the people who actually put the type on the pages and sent them off to platemaking, are now handled by the (copy) desk.

According to Wienandt, one advantage, however, of the new technology is it’s much easier to write headlines now. He says there is no longer the need to memorize how wide a one-column story is, or two, etc.:

Although our system doesn’t allow you to edit a story in true WYSIWYG mode, we can see exactly how a story will look in print by clicking on an icon. It’s much easier to verify information than it used to be. We can now do a Web check on information we used to have to make phone calls about, for example, times, dates, locations, prices of events.

Computer software and the Internet have also allowed copy editors to do a lot more with layout and design than before when pages were glued together in the backshop.

Adobe Creative Suite: InDesign for print page layouts

Adobe InDesign (CS5.5 or earlier) software allows you to design and see page layouts before publication or digital distribution. It has built-in creative tools and precise control over typography. It also allows integration of interactivity, audio and video for playback on tablets, phones and computers.
COPY EDITING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Many college journalism programs already have this software installed on computers in their computer laboratories so that students can learn and become familiar with a program they will see again out in their field after graduation.

Denise Wolber, 28, copy editor at American Concrete Institute, the Structural Journal and the ACI Materials Journal, Shotcrete magazine, Concrete International magazine, and the Concrete Repair Bulletin Magazine says she has not had to worry at all about the transition to software. She has found InDesign and other software programs to be very useful in her career as a copy editor.

I would have to say that all the software we have available now has definitely improved how we do things. There are so many things out there that can make processes more efficient and help people be more productive. I’ve personally developed processes in InDesign and Microsoft Access that greatly improved my day-to-day activities at my previous job. Right now, my company is looking into using XML to speed up our graphic design process.

Flash

Adobe Flash is a program originally from Macromedia, now owned by Adobe. Web journalists use it to create online slideshows with photos and sound, animated infographics, movies, animated illustrations, and interactive multimedia story packages.

Mindy McAdams, who has written an entire book on using Flash on journalism website, says: “Flash journalism constitutes a new form of storytelling that is distinct from print, broadcast, and much of today's online journalism. Although Flash journalism packages often combine familiar elements from photojournalism, radio journalism, and infographics, the combinations result in something that has not existed before” (McAdams 2005, xviii).
Pinson says that as with other multimedia software, copy editors will not usually be on the frontline using them to create content for websites. Instead, copy editors will mainly probably be involved looking them over for macro issues like accuracy and legality, and micro things like style, grammar and spelling. But understanding them enough to edit or tweak them or simply suggest ideas is a plus (James Pinson, email to Angela Avery, April 20, 2011).

**DreamWeaver**

DreamWeaver, by Adobe, is a software program copy editors use to design their page layouts. According to Adobe’s website, it is “editing software that provides both visual and code-level capabilities for creating standards-based websites and designs for the desktop, smartphones, tablets, and other devices.”

DreamWeaver makes page layout much easier than in the past. A rich knowledge of HTML is not as necessary when using this program.

**PhotoShop**

Adobe’s PhotoShop is an image editing software program that is used by photo journalists as well as copy editors to edit digital photographs. This software can change the image to fit the needs of the article or publication. It deals with creative and technical touch ups and darkroom manipulation. There is, however, a degree of ethics necessary when using this software program for journalistic pieces. If the photo is edited too much, it can be considered manipulative by some.

Digital photo editing has been a controversy in journalism. When using this software, the copy editor must be sure he or she is adhering to factual accuracy when making changes.
Susan Sontag discusses in her article, "On Photography", the lack of objectivity in photo manipulation. She says, "Photographs, which fiddle with the scale of the world, themselves get reduced, blown up, cropped, retouched, doctored and tricked out." This is common for magazines to do. (Sontag, 1977, 4)

**Illustrator**

Adobe’s Illustrator allows designers to craft realistic-looking 3D artwork. Journalists need to be able to create flawless artwork to depict the image and message they are trying to convey to their readers. Illustrator allows copy editors to create vector illustrations. It has an intuitive interface that allows its users the ease of creating without much hassle.

**WordPress**

Since 2003, WordPress software and websites have been creating blogs for users. WordPress started out with only a single bit of code and few users. Since then, WordPress has become the largest blogging tool in the world, gaining the attention of tens of millions of users per day.

WordPress and the rest of the blogosphere have become a common place for journalists to post their opinions and news. Some say that part of what makes a blog journalism depends on whether it has gone through some kind of editorial or screening process, but in journalism today, there is not much time for editing blogs even on news sites from traditional news sources like newspapers.

Blogs are sometimes viewed as a way to cover news and events that the mainstream media may have missed or update a recent event so it can reach readers instantly.
Real news tends to come from print journalism with blogs offering commentary about it, but blogging is also something some news sources use to put out their news faster and much easier. The New York Times, for example has more than 60 active blogs written by a variety of staff writers and freelancers. Also, when staff writers create their blogs for the New York Times, the blog is approved by an editor before being posted.

**Final Cut Pro**

With Final Cut Pro, or other video editing software like Adobe Premiere, Apple iMovie or Windows Live Movie Maker, a journalist is able to create movie trailers, edit audio easily, add special effects and share the creations on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and more. It is a simple software program with an intuitive interface. The video can be uploaded to your computer by a USB device, disk, Web, SD card, etc.

Once the video is on the computer, it is ready to be edited. The program has easy to use functions that make it simple for copy editors to deal with video editing, but creating and editing videos will typically be done by others.

**Audacity**

Audacity is free software that is used for recording and editing sound. The software allows copy editors to use an MP3 file and/or recording from a microphone and place it on a computer or website. Once there, you can edit the sound until you have found the perfect recording. It even allows users to edit while listening to the recordings on their computer.

Most college campuses have this program installed on their computers in labs. It is a simple program and helpful when a sound component should be added to a piece.
An example of this program in use would be National Public Radio's "This I Believe" podcast. This program, according to npr.org is "based on a 1950s radio program of the same name; Americans from all walks of life share the personal philosophies and core values that guide their daily lives. On the website, there is a list of photographs with a recorded voice adjacent to the photo. This, often times, has been accomplished using Audacity.

This software allows the copy editor to use an MP3 file and/or recording from a microphone and place it on a computer or website. Once there, you can edit the sound until you have found the perfect recording. It even allows users to edit while listening.

Facebook and Twitter

Social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook are also key ways journalists have engaged in delivering and gathering information.

Twitter allows the copy editor to send news updates while it is happening. It is a fast way to get a link to a recently published article out onto the reader quickly. Twitter is also an easy way the newsroom can gain followers. Each Twitter account has a fan base that is constantly updated with the latest "Tweet" from the user.

Facebook is similar, but has more components. It allows a fan base of followers, like Twitter does, but it also has a place to store photos, documents, create events, ads, comment on posts, video sharing, and provides a way to communicate directly with readers.

Some content management systems used in newsrooms will automatically send out Facebook and Twitter updates as well as RSS feeds because these will also have the effect of raising a story's search-engine rankings, making it more likely a reader doing a Qeb search for the information will find it.
OTHER DIGITAL SKILLS

Hyper Text Markup Language

As an editor, it is a useful skill to have at least a basic knowledge of Hyper Text Markup Language. HTML is a language for Web pages that allow users to create files that will appear the same to various types of computers.

An example of an HTML bold text code would read: <b>This is bold text.</b>

“Under our current system, a working knowledge of HTML is essential for those of us who post stories to the Web,” says Wienandt. “Electronic publishing gives us control and flexibility that would have seemed unimaginable 40 years ago.”

Although Dreamweaver lets you lay out Web pages visually, a knowledge of HTML is still useful to tweak pages when things are not working right.

Cascading Style Sheets

HTML and CSS are the two main technologies used to build Web pages, working together to create the style or theme of the page. CSS is often what gives a website its color, layout and font style.

According to W3.org:

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is the language for describing the presentation of Web pages. This includes colors, layout and fonts. It adapts the presentation to different types of devices, such as large screens, small screens or printers. CSS is independent of HTML and can be used with any XML-based markup language. The separation of HTML from CSS makes it easier to maintain sites, share style sheets across pages, and tailor pages to different environments. This is referred to as the separation of structure (or: content) from presentation. (Web Design and Applications: HTML & CSS, 2010).
Search-Engine Optimization

Search-engine optimization increases a websites online visibility by making it more visible in search results. It is responsible for making the website more easily found when conducting a search in a search engine.

When searching for a website, it is important that the newspaper's website be found easily when users conduct a search for certain topics otherwise the site is lost in a sea of many other sites with similar words found in their titles.

Pinson says content management systems can automatically aid copy editors in search-engine optimization:

Content management systems can also help with search-engine optimization and improve the chance the story will be found in a Web search by automatically suggesting keywords for headlines that help with the rankings, adding keywords to the coding of the page header, and automatically sending the headlines out as RSS feeds, Tweets and Facebook entries (James Pinson, email to Angela Avery, April 20, 2011).

It's important, too, that copy editors choose to use key words when writing headlines. In a print newspaper, a headline may say City Council votes to widen Main Street, but a Web headline might include the town's name for those doing a Web search for the story.
Chapter 4

 Outlook, Predictions for the Future

Many journalists are now out of work because jobs have been combined and some of the old ways of doing things have changed. Mark Briggs, author of *JournalismNext*, says such trends will only continue:

Looking forward, the state of news, media and journalism will probably look a lot more like it did at the turn of the 20th century, when more news organizations were competing for audience. Each was tiny compared to the behemoths of the 1990s and 2000s, but there were many more of them. So, instead of a daily newspaper with 50 journalists, a mid-size city might have 10 digital news operations with about five journalists each, covering a topical or geographic niche. Another operation might combine editors and programmers to aggregate the journalism available in all these locations and deliver a cohesive package to a different audience (Briggs 2010, 4).

There are still many journalists left working in the newsroom and at the copy desk, though. Their duties may be in some ways also the same, but there are also many new responsibilities placed on the copy desk. Online journalism has changed the life of some copy editors quite a bit.

"We're all Web workers now. Previous generations of journalists -- and other workers in all industries -- had the luxury of expecting some supergeeks in their organizations to take care of the digital duties for them. For better or worse, those days are gone" (Briggs 2010, 9).

Some copy editors are more worried about what is being lost and how to preserve that rather than how to keep adding to the pile of work for copy editors.
Kelli Slayden, 25, editor and graphic designer for the American Concrete Institute and the Post Tensioning Institute, says that when publications go digital, as most already have, the editorial process should be preserved and not dropped for cost savings or in order to meet a deadline. She says she believes credibility and quality are things that should be maintained and not compromised just because there is a Web component:

"I’d suggest that the editorial process is maintained and not dropped for cost savings or in order to meet a deadline. Credibility and quality are things that should be maintained, not compromised."

And the sacrifice of good editing to these new roles is an issue about which many copy editors are concerned. The issue now is as Slayden says:

There’s a great need, in my opinion, for quality control in our field. Personally, I think people would embrace technology and the changes that come with it if there was more control and patience involved with the process. Everyone has become so obsessed with having information at their fingertips that quality is oftentimes compromised. I don’t know how many times—on a daily basis, mind you, that I’ll stumble across a blaring typo in an online article. Because of this constant need for up-to-date information, there’s a strain on editors to maintain and sometimes beat deadlines instead of putting forth the quality work they’re capable of.

Kelly says there should be jobs created in order to maintain these important parts of the editorial process.

There will always be a need for technically savvy people in the new world of copy editing people who can learn new software and technology at a fast pace and then again when
newer, updated software is released. Copy editors will have to learn the same things broadcast journalists already know. Pinson says:

Copy editors, like reporters and photographers, will need to be multimedia specialists, able to edit stories in a variety of formats, not just print ones. They'll have to learn for example, the sorts of things people in broadcast know about editing stories for radio and television, as well as learning to edit newer Web-specific formats. (James Pinson, email to Angela Ahlijian, April 20, 2011).

But because there are fewer jobs out there right now at newspapers, it is important that copy editors start thinking of other ways to create a personal brand for themselves and generate an income by involving themselves in other ventures in the field. They have to protect themselves better. Their ability to stay with one particular company until they retire is unlikely in the job market for journalists today.

Copy editors, like all journalists, working in the smaller operations that are the likely future of journalism, will be able to depend less on staying with one company for long periods of time from which they might ultimately receive a pension. They'll have to manage their own 401K pension fund, change jobs and even careers more often and also become more entrepreneurial about starting their own side businesses for extra streams of income. This will mean setting up a 'journalism brand' for themselves by blogging, starting their own Web sites, self-publishing their own digital books, writing for freelance sites like ehow.com and mahalo.com, founding their own companies, and so on (James Pinson, email to Angela Avery, April 20, 2011).
CONCLUSION

Copy editing is no easy task. It requires the type of person who is annoyed by bad writing and can spot and correct errors both large and small, from factual mistakes and legal issues to tiny spelling, style and grammatical errors. Although some choose it partly because so few are good at it or want to do it that it can be easier to find a job as a copy editor than as a reporter, mainly this is something people do because they enjoy the newspaper business and enjoy editing text and writing headlines and are also good with new technologies increasingly required.

Throughout this thesis, we looked at what it was a copy editor did before the Internet was introduced to the newsroom. Then we looked at what changes were made once Internet, software programs, layout and design were changed forever. The job of a copy editor is always changing.

Next, we looked at predictions for the future. What current copy editors thought about the changes and how they see the future, what copy editing tweaks need to be made and what should not be neglected, like leaving grammar and fact-checking to the wayside.

There is such a variety of jobs a copy editor is required to do today—more than there were before the Internet, digital journalism and software programs were implemented into the newsroom. The digital era is here to stay, but will always be changing. Improvements in the newsroom will be constant and never ending. Some reporters and editors might see these changes as a threat, but many copy editors see this as an opportunity.
APPENDIX 1
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Personal Information

1. Age: ________________________________________________________________

2. University attended: ________________________________________________

3. Majored in: _________________________________________________________

4. Job Title: ___________________________________________________________

5. News organization (affiliations): _____________________________________

Questions

**Question 1:** How long have you been a copy editor?

**Question 2:** What made you decide to become a copy editor? Had you always wanted to be or did you stumble upon it?

**Question 3:** Were you a copy editor before high-speed Internet (or the digital age)?

**Question 4:** How do you feel your job as a copy editor has changed since the digital age?

**Question 5:** In what ways have your daily tasks changed or developed?

**Question 6:** Do you find these changes to be good, bad, helpful, annoying, etc.? If so, why?

**Question 7:** Do you find your job to be easier or more difficult having many new jobs in the newsroom done via computer and Internet?

**Question 8:** What is the best and worst part about the changes (electronic changes) that have occurred?
Question 9: If you could have it all (newsroom operations) done your way, how would you want things done?

Question 10: Do you have any suggestions for change?
APPENDIX 2

COPY EDITOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: How long have you been a copy editor?

Brooks, Arthur: For 30 of my 38 years as a newspaperman. The first eight were about half and half. 30 years before I retired.

McLendon, Lisa: 10 years

Bigelow, Pete: It’s actually kind of hard to pinpoint the exact starting date, because all my roles, as mentioned, have been involved a little bit of both writing and editing.

In college, I was the editorial page editor in 1996, so that’d be the very first time. In the professional sense, I became an assistant sports editor at The Daily Times-Call in suburban Denver in 2004. But prior to that, I’ve had jobs that included some editing in their responsibilities from 1998 to today.

Wienandt, Chris: I have been copy editing in newspapers since 1978, when I was hired by the Abilene Reporter News. I also did copy editing at an ad agency during college (1969-73), for the Baylor University music library (1968), and for the Texas Legislature (1974). (I took a break from copy editing during a stint in the Dallas Morning News IT department, 1998-2004.) My age: 59.

Sullivan, David: Since April 15, 1975, the night Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge. That was coincidence, though.

Wolber, Denise: I graduated from Western in 2005 and after that I worked as a proofreader for about two years. This is my third job out of college, so I would say I’ve been a copy editor for about four years now.

Trevor, Domenica: Thirty-three years, since 1978, when I started working on the desk of my college newspaper at the University of Illinois. My formal newspaper copy editing career ended in 2009 when the paper I worked for was closed; since then I have operated a freelance copy editing business and my clients are magazines, schools and foundations.

Geoff Laram: I was a copy editor from 1982-1988, working at the Ann Arbor News and Detroit News. I often copy edited when I was sports editor of The Ann Arbor News, from 1988 to 2000.

Kelli Slayden: I’ve been an editor (on and off) for approximately 5 years; this includes time spent editing my college literary journal, freelance work, and 2 years of editing at ACI.

Holdway, Neil: 18 years. And I am 40 years old.

Schmedding, Teresa: 20 years
Question 2: What made you decide to become a copy editor? Had you always wanted to be or did you stumble upon it?

Brooks, Arthur: Eventually I found out I liked the set hours and duties more. Also, I was not great as a writer.

Mclendon, Lisa: I applied for a job at a newspaper because I saw an ad that said "Wordsmiths wanted." I'd never taken a journalism class or had any idea I wanted to be a journalist. After graduate school, I needed a job and I'm good with language, so I thought I might like being a copy editor. I found that this profession was an excellent fit with my skills and personality.

Bigelow, Pete: I did.

When I was in college at Rutgers in New Jersey, I spent a year as the editorial page editor of The Daily Targum, the student newspaper, and then another year as the sports editor and loved working at the paper.

I knew I wanted to be an editor eventually because I really enjoyed the chance to put my own stamp on the section, both on a daily basis and over the long term.

Later on, when I was working as a professional reporter, there were some more practical reasons for wanting to be an editor again – editors get paid more!

But that really wasn’t the only reason. It was again, a chance to shape the direction of our coverage, the design of the newspaper and assign good stories. Again, get a chance to put my own stamp on the section, in my case sports.

There’s an internal struggle sometimes, wanting to both write and edit and I’ve been lucky enough to be in positions where even if I’ve primarily been doing one, I’ve contributed to the other as well.

Wienandt, Chris: I intended to be a reporter, but I’ve always been inclined toward copy editing; I HATE to see mistakes in print. When I was looking for a job just out of grad school, the easiest way to get hired was to become a copy editor. I was good at it, and it clicked. I still like to do writing occasionally – book reviews, mostly, and I have a package in the works for our travel section.

Sullivan, David: I didn’t set out to become a journalist – my degree is in urban planning. I didn’t have money for a master’s and my girlfriend at the time was editor of the college paper. So I went into journalism. I didn’t want to be a reporter as a career, and I thought laying out pages and picking wire stories sounded like fun.

Wolber, Denise: I originally majored in secondary education, but after my pre-internship, I decided it wasn’t really for me. My concentration was in English with a creative writing
emphasis. I had always been interested in proofreading/editing and I've been a huge bookworm since I was little, but I kind of stumbled into it. Looking back now, I wish I would have majored in English with a professional or technical writing emphasis so I could have been more focused on the field I am in now.

Trevor, Domenica: I wanted to work for newspapers; after I'd been in the newsroom of the student newspaper for a while I discovered that copy editing was more suited to my personality. So, early on, I chose it as my profession.

Larcom, Geoff: There are more jobs in copy editing. I got a job doing that right out of grad school. Also, unlike regular news, management jobs in sports usually go to copy editors. The reporters have too much fun and action out on the beat! They NEVER become editors.

Slayden, Kelli: Originally, I wanted to be a writer. I dabbled in journalism for several years and even considered publishing children's literature (and even illustrating my own books). Eventually, I got tired with the writing process (or maybe it was just writer's block) and realized that I enjoyed the editing process much more. I found myself looking forward to editing exercises in my early college years; eventually, it became a passion. Within weeks, I found myself taking copy editing courses and picking up odd jobs here and there.

Holdway, Neil: I stumbled upon it, in college. I tried reporting in college and it was fine, but then I discovered how the rest of the newspaper comes together, and I enjoyed it. I like all the writing that still comes with copy editing, and I enjoy design and editing copy.

Schmedding, Teresa: At Mizzou, we learned all sides of journalism; I was a reporter but switched after I realized that, no matter how good my stories were, no one was going to read them if they didn't have great headlines and great design. So I shifted my focus to copy editing and design.

Question 3: Were you a copy editor before high-speed Internet (or the digital age)?

Brooks, Arthur: Yes

McLendon, Lisa: Yes; when I started there was one computer in the whole newsroom that was hooked up to the Internet. Most of what we looked up was in paper references. The paper was put together by compositors cutting and pasting. There was no website for the newspaper. And that was in 2000.

Bigelow, Pete: Answer not given.

Wienandt, Chris: Yes; my first copy editing job began in 1978. My paper had just gone to computers, so I've never worked in hot type. We relied on the dictionary and whatever reference
books we had in the library (a.k.a., morgue). We’d call the public library if we had a question we couldn’t answer in house.

**Sullivan, David:** Answer to No. 1 should speak for that. Never worked at a Linotype shop, but I go back to the era of burpee tapes and optical character readers.

**Wolber, Denise:** No—I’m only 28, so I’ve pretty much always used computers and the Internet at work and school. I think the Internet first started getting popular when I was in eighth grade or so. I’m too young to really provide any insight on what copy editing was like before we used computers for everything.

**Trevor, Domenica:** When I started as a copy editor, reporters still composed their stories on typewriters.

**Larcom, Geoff:** Yes I was.

**Slayden, Kelli:** No.

**Holdway, Neil:** Yes. I became a copy editor as newspaper pagination was beginning, which means pages were still being pasted together in a composing room as I was beginning. I helped bring pagination to my newspaper.

**Schmedding, Teresa:** Yes

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**Question 4: How do you feel your job as a copy editor has changed since the digital age?**

**Brooks, Arthur:** The editing functions are far less important now because of working on Internet stuff and designing pages on the computer.

**McLendon, Lisa:** Tons. It's SO much easier to access SO much more information. I can check all sorts of facts that I used to have to trust the reporter on. But in other ways too: I have to think about headlines differently, often writing separate headlines for the paper and for the website. I can keep up with breaking news from all over the world. I read more news than ever thanks to links on Twitter and Facebook, which has made me more aware of how our own stories come across on the Web.

**Bigelow, Pete:** I've got really mixed feelings. The technology is actually fantastic. It makes distributing information so much more cost-effective than having printing presses and delivery trucks, etc.

But it's the Wild West at a lot of places. How do you build yourself as a credible information resource online when there's a zillion websites where a prospective reader can turn?

I'm not saying that some blogs can't be great and as good if not better than the mainstream
media – often they are, and kudos to them.

Most of them are not, and readers have no idea how information is processed, vetted and shaped along the way.

What’s the old line from Spiderman? With great power comes great responsibility. Something like that. Now everybody has a piece of that power, and judging by the comments section on a lot of news stories, a lot of people wield it recklessly.

I keep hearing newspaper pundits and “experts” keep saying that online is the future. That’s only partly correct. It’s the present too. I’m 34, and I don’t know a soul my age who subscribes to the printed paper. Even as a newspaper employee, I had found it easier to read my news online.

**Wienandt, Chris:** The core responsibilities haven’t changed – policing spelling, grammar, style; writing headlines and cutlines and other display type; watching out for libel. But as technology has developed, more and more technical responsibility has fallen to the desk – in the early days, knowing computer coding; later on, understanding the ins and outs of pagination; in all eras, becoming a de facto in-house tech support department that can solve computer problems without having to get the “real” tech people involved. Most of the functions that used to be handled by the backshop (the people who actually put the type on the pages and sent them off to platemaking) are now handled by the desk.

**Sullivan, David:** My job hasn’t changed that much, but our paper is pretty traditional. It’s more that copy editing is held in less respect than it used to be.

**Wolber, Denise:** Again, can’t really answer because I’m too young. Not much has changed for me.

**Trevor, Domenica:** Well, my job as a newspaper copy editor essentially disappeared with the digital age. Speed and links, not accuracy and depth, became primary. But for publications where accuracy, depth and consistency remain important, my services are still in demand and, ironically, I am able to provide them thanks to digital technology. The Internet has made the fact-checking aspect of copy editing easier; the key is finding reliable online sources.

**Larcom, Geoff:** You can do more sophisticated editing and are far quicker.

**Slayden, Kelli:** n/a

**Holdway, Neil:** Well, first copy editing went through the controversy of pagination changing our jobs, adding an element to our jobs besides headline writing and editing. Pagination did add to our jobs, yes, but it also gave us more control of pages and their editing as they were being built. Now of course we have the web, and that is changing our jobs again, though this time we are struggling to maintain the editing, more than with editing; now the editing is often skipped altogether before web publication. So now we copy editors are having to learn to edit immediately and the deadline cycles are changing—it’s not just editing at night for the morning paper, but editing at all hours as stories break and move.
Schmedding, Teresa: It can be faster-paced, but overall, it hasn't changed a ton. I work for a paper where design and copy editing are done by copy editors so we've always had a strong emphasis on tech skills. That hasn't changed, just expanded to include the web as well as pagination.

Question 5: In what ways have your daily tasks changed or developed?

Brooks, Arthur: Much of the time now you have to go back and forth between print and Internet chores, or you might be designing or working exclusively on the Web product.

McLendon, Lisa: I do so many more small things now. I edit stories before web publication and go into the website to fix errors after publication. I edit cutlines for online photo galleries. I run a blog and a Twitter account for the paper (Grammar Monkeys). Plus I still edit copy, write headlines and cutlines, proof pages and occasionally do some layout.

Bigelow, Pete: Answer not given.

Wienandt, Chris: It's not so much that the tasks have changed, but that how you get them done has changed. Our stylebook is online, as is the AP stylebook. Most reference sources are online, so we don't have to call the library anymore. I suspect some of the people on our desk don't even know we have a library in the building, let alone any librarians. (However, the library isn't staffed at night anymore, so it's of no use to us anyway.) And it's rare that we call the public library, which we used to do a lot.

Also, it's much easier now to write headlines; there's no need to memorize how wide a one-column story is, or two, or whatever. Although our system doesn't allow you to edit a story in true WYSIWYG mode, we can see exactly how a story will look in print by clicking on an icon.

It's much easier to verify information than it used to be. We can now do a Web check on information we used to have to make phone calls about, e.g., times, dates, locations, prices of events.

Sullivan, David: We write Web heds on every story is the main thing. Most of our Web work is automated.

Wolber, Denise: I would have to say that all the software we have available now has definitely improved how we do things. There are so many things out there that can make processes more efficient and help people be more productive. I've personally developed processes in InDesign and Microsoft Access that greatly improved my day-to-day activities at my previous job. Right now, my company is looking into using XML to speed up our graphic design process.
Trevor, Domenica: When I worked at a newspaper, copy editing rapidly shifted from an editorial pursuit to a production effort as newspaper companies were able to get rid of highly paid, unionized printers and typesetters and locate the copy editing and typesetting tasks in the same person.

Larcom, Geoff: Copy editors now have to do more computer functions, but the wordsmithing remains.

Slayden, Kelli: My daily tasks are constantly changing and being modified to accompany digital transitions. Oftentimes, they’re from a labor-savings standpoint or finding ways to streamline things we do manually.

Holdway, Neil: Newspapers' print copy editors often are now editing for two media, the web and print. Now when news breaks, copy editors working nights must think of getting the story on the web quickly and make sure the headlines and copy are correct there, but also worry about getting the print pages done. Also, I as news editor at night am monitoring competing media on the web and Twitter more regularly, and responding as necessary; I know more of what the competitors are doing, whereas before I had to wait until the morning to see if we matched up with the competition.

Schmedding, Teresa: Pretty much the same, though we edit first for multiple platforms then design/write headlines later.

Question 6: Do you find these changes to be good, bad, helpful, annoying, etc.? If so, why?

Brooks, Arthur: Annoying if having to go back and forth.

McLendon, Lisa: Yes. All of the above. It's more exciting -- I'm never bored -- but I often feel that my attention is fractured. I like being able to expand the reach of the paper. I like having all this information at my fingertips. But I sometimes feel flooded by information.

Bigelow, Pete: No day is ever the same. That's probably the best and worst part about the job.

It's not so much the actual editing that changes, but every day you're dealing with different writers, who have various strengths and weaknesses, you're trying to plan coverage for the next few days and sometimes next few months.

You're responding to breaking news, and trying to utilize staff resources as best as possible. You're dealing with the cranky caller who wonders why the Tigers box score is wrong, the reporter who wants another day off, the photo editor who wants to cut the number of assignments you turned in by half and a dozen other requests out of your control.

Once you're done with that, you can turn your attention toward the next day's paper.

Vetting stories. Budgeting the section's pages. Laying out the pages. Waiting for the late stories to arrive, then write headlines and captions and let your adrenaline start rushing because you've
got 20 minutes before deadline, and you wonder if you'll actually pull it off.

That's the job.

Some days, it swallows you. The days you come out on top and like the product at the end? Awesome feeling.

**Wienandt, Chris:** Overwhelmingly, I think the changes are beneficial, for the reasons I mentioned in the previous answer.

**Sullivan, David:** I think anything that helps us succeed on multiple platforms is good. I wish we could figure out how to make money off them.

**Wolber, Denise:** I think they are helpful overall, but at the same time I think we have to be careful to not be too reliant on technology. Even if you have a good process in place, it is still good practice to double-check your work and make sure that the software/program you're using is working as it should. And, of course, when there is any type of glitch in the system and you have to call IT to figure it out, that situation is ALWAYS annoying.

**Trevor, Domenica:** These changes led to the deterioration in editing standards at all but the biggest newspapers in the country. At The New York Times, copy editors edit copy. At Ann Arbor.com, copy editors no longer exist. They are content formatters.

**Larcom, Geoff:** There is a difference between design word editing at larger websites and papers. There, problem arises when those skills are mixed and you have to both design and edit stories.

**Slayden, Kelli:** They're definitely helpful. Spending time on processes that aren't editorial in nature helps me to continue doing what I enjoy—it doesn't matter to me whether I'm editing something on paper or online. My only concern is the future of editing. To me, editing programs (or even a simple spell check tool), while helpful to some, are a detriment to others (like an editor). As more processes become automated, our jobs may become obsolete. And I'd hate to see that happen.

**Holdway, Neil:** Well, it's a bit more frenzied, to be sure. Deadline is not just at night, but all the time. The annoying part is the declining editing on the web, and the struggle to maintain good editing. As for the new variety of media, well, it's just the reality, and we must be ready to edit wherever it's needed (which is everywhere).

**Schmedding, Teresa:** Good! Reporters and editors are turning articles in earlier to get them online, which means we're not sitting here until midnight waiting for the perfect prose. And I think technological changes have presented a great opportunity for copy editors to play larger roles in the newsroom and not be hidden, unsung heroes.
Question 7: Do you find your job to be easier or more difficult having many new jobs in the newsroom done via computer and Internet?

Brooks, Arthur: Easier in that the process is way faster, precise and flexible that it had been worse in that you’re doing the same work in essence twice.

McLendon, Lisa: A little of both. The fact-checking is way easier, but the constant multi-tasking I think affects the quality of work sometimes.

Bigelow, Pete: No answer given.

Wienandt, Chris: In terms of the jobs that involve research, the computer and Internet have made our jobs far easier. From a production standpoint, it’s a wash – we can handle much more of the process ourselves, which gives us control over the process, but we HAVE TO handle more of the process ourselves, which takes time away from what should be our primary duty as journalists: editing.

Sullivan, David: It’s more difficult, but not to the point of tearing your hair out.

Wolber, Denise: Definitely easier. Like I mentioned before, computers nowadays can make things so much more efficient so you can concentrate on the tasks that actually need people to do them and get away from all the tedious work. I think computers free up a lot of valuable time.

Trevor, Domenica: My job became much more difficult because I tried to continue being a copy editor despite the added typesetting and design roles. So, of course, they were all done badly.

Larcom, Geoff: Overall, it is easier. And the elimination of the composing room is a huge benefit to print journalism.

Slayden, Kelli: It’s definitely easier. The resources we need are at our fingertips and having the ability to research something, access an online dictionary, or use other online tools is extremely helpful.

Holdway, Neil: The new tasks can be learned. It probably gets more difficult the older you are, but they still can be learned. The fundamentals of copy editing always remain.

Schmedding, Teresa: Mostly easier, though it’s important to keep face-to-face communication going with your colleagues and not hide behind e-mail.

Question 8: What is the best and worst part about the changes (electronic changes) that have occurred in copy editing over the years?

Brooks, Arthur: You’re processing so much you don’t get to read things as well as you should.
Follow-up question 1: You were there when they actually did lay out, so I just wonder what it felt like in the newsroom during the time things were drastically changing?

If one takes the digital age as one where computers were first used, my experience goes back to 1975 at the Cocoa (Fla.) TODAY. That's the first paper I used computers. They got there before I did, so I can't say what peoples' reaction was. All the workers thought they were pretty cool, though, and set us apart from the rest of the papers.

I worked at a paper in Buffalo after that, and it didn't have computers, so maybe we really were at the forefront. I thought when I learned what I had to; it was a great way to do things, saving a lot of time. There was no animosity or apprehension from what I recall, except when things didn't work (the screen would freeze, and you'd lose what you were doing). All that said, you were talking about machines that today would be thought of as coming from the Stone Age. And there still were parts of the job that stayed as they had been ... the type and headlines came out on paper and then was cut out and pasted (by wax) on a page grid that was the size of an actual page. Stories were written on electric typewriters and then fed into a clunky, box-like machine that scanned them so they allegedly would pop up on your computer.

Writers say at a game in Miami would type their stories and send them by a phone hookup connected to your office, and then you had to type them into the system yourself. The computers could be used for editing and writing cutlines and headlines, and AP wire stories moved on them, too. Each story had a number like s101 (sports). Say s101 was a story of a late baseball game from Los Angeles you wanted to get in, fine, but it wouldn't pop up on the screen until s102 moved. So, sometimes you didn't know whether to wait or start typing yourself. The screens probably weren't bigger than maybe 6 inches by 4 inches. There was an annoying light green tint to the screen and yellow lines slanting across that looked like yard lines on a football field, which made things tough to read and gave you big headaches and neck aches. No wonder we went to Norman's Lounge after work and drank beer!

Now, a copy editor has three tasks. Forever, it seemed, it was just editorial functions—headlines, cutlines, put roundups together, read page proofs, stuff like that. Now, it's about a third for that, a third for designing pages on the computer (which started at papers I was at about 1995 or so) and a third working on the paper's Internet site (that was at The News, maybe 5-6 years ago). So, you need to be a jack of all trades rather than someone concerned with or adept at words.

McLendon, Lisa: Best: availability of information Worst: slowness of the news industry to adapt to technological advances. Here's an example: Two publishers ago (about 3 1/2 years), I sent an idea to the publisher about something we could do on the website that would be both useful to readers and a possible source of revenue. It was not particularly complicated, but it was going to take a chunk of time/work to get set up. This spring they're finally moving on it, but it may be too late.

If I could have done it my way, I would have integrated the copy desk with the online desk much sooner. Copy editors' skills dovetail nicely with a lot of tasks for online, and it's better to be proactive than reactive about accuracy online.

Bigelow, Pete: Answer not given.
Wienandt, Chris: The best: the ability to check just about any fact online; the worst: although we went through a period of having to become minor masters of programming, I’m not sure I can come up with a “worst” anymore (although under our current system, a working knowledge of HTML is essential for those of us who post stories to the Web). Electronic publishing gives us control and flexibility that would have seemed unimaginable 40 years ago.

If I could have had my way, I would have re-examined our procedures long ago to align them with the realities of what online publishing now requires (e.g., a 24-hour news cycle instead of just a few deadlines per shift) instead of trying to tweak our traditional ways of operating. To put it another way, our workflow needs a drastic overhaul, and we haven’t come to terms with that yet.

Sullivan, David: The problem is that the case with which things are posted on the Internet and the fact that you can get thousands of people click on anything has led editors and publishers to believe that copy editing can be given up, because all that matters is eyeballs. I don’t care where something is published, but it needs to go through a formal editing process, not just have someone look at it for 30 seconds and run spellcheck.

Wolber, Denise: See response above. The best part is probably added efficiency; the worst part is that computers are machines, and machines can always break down. We can’t rely too much on them for our day-to-day work.

Trevor, Domenica:

Geoff Larom: I would separate layout from copy editing in all jobs. Copy editing was tough when there was an abundance of computer coding in the 1980s, but it is improved now.

Another problem is people who must edit and also do a lot of web posting, which mixes mechanical and intellectual skills.

Slayden, Kelli:

Holdway, Neil: The worst part about newspapers’ move to the web is that it occurred separately from the newsroom at first (if not still). It was a different department, with no regard to editing. Newspapers suffered by not making it part of the newsroom from the start. Now they’re slowly catching up.

Teresa Schmedding: I think things are going just fine.

**Question 9: If you could have it all (newsroom operations) done your way, how would you want things done?**

Brooks, Arthur: I think the technology is fine and likely will be better. The

McLendon, Lisa: Editing is not expendable. Credibility is what separates legitimate news organizations from all that Internet yammering, and if you lose that, you’re done.
Bigelow, Pete: Answer not given.

Wienandt, Chris: n/a

Sullivan, David:

Wolber, Denise: If I had it all done my way, every company/office/newsroom would be using the latest and greatest technology and software so that everyone is operating at the highest level of efficiency and productivity. I think some people are far too resistant to change and want to do things the way they’ve always been done, but I think that is a huge disadvantage nowadays with all the programs that are out there. Ideally, I would spend most of my time editing and developing new processes instead of spending so much time on menial tasks.

Trevor, Domenica: Best thing: I can work by myself on manuscripts sent to me digitally by editors and writers.

Worst thing: Copy editing at newspapers has all but vanished.

If I could have it done my way, newspapers would still pay copy editors to edit copy.

Larcom, Geoff:

Slayden, Kelli: With the changes in technology comes a change in terminology. Being an editor in the digital age is challenging because we have to not only stay current with the things going on around us (such as technological changes/advances) but also changes in editorial style.

It’s challenging to pinpoint style guidelines alongside ever-changing technology. For instance, with the advent of Web sites like Facebook and Twitter, we need to develop editorial guidelines that can be used when posting information directing our readers to a Facebook page or to a particular “Tweet.” Since there’s no basis for how these things should be formatted, we oftentimes find ourselves having to converse amongst ourselves to decide how a Twitter address should be written (ie: is it @address or #address?).

So, I guess it’s good and bad; the changes are good because it keeps us on our toes and forces us to keep up with technology, whereas it’s bad because it can often lead to inconsistency. Because there’s nothing to fall back on (like a style guide that has a general “rule” for how to format/write something out), we oftentimes have to “wing it” and wait until style manuals are updated for a steadfast rule.

Holdway, Neil:

Schmedding, Teresa Would be great if we were able to monetize our own content. But I tend to be a little ahead of the curve so how things have turned out here, in my shop, is pretty much the way I imagined and wanted. Copy editors are the heart of the newsroom, editing/writing headlines and churning out high-quality content for multiple platforms.
Question 10: Do you have any suggestions for change?

Brooks, Arthur: The only change I'd like to see is more copy editors, so they could do their jobs -- editing, design and Internet -- better. This won't happen, though, because it's a question of money papers can't or don't want to spend.

McLendon, Lisa:

Bigelow, Pete: Answer not given.

Wienandt, Chris: I don't wish for change so much as for a renewed realization by management that quality editing does matter, that mistakes that creep into print or online diminish a publication's credibility, and that, although our work may not be directly translatable to dollars-and-cents value, it is essential to maintaining the high standards that readers demand of us.

Sullivan, David: News organizations need to emphasize that they are selling quality and comprehensiveness, and not simply competing with every blogger. Oh, and they need to figure out how to make lots of money off apps.

Wolber, Denise: n/a

Trevor, Domenica: Other than taking an ax to the technology, no.

Larcom, Geoff: Try to avoid mixing posting jobs with pure word editing functions. They are different skills.

Slayden, Kelli: There's a great need (in my opinion) for quality control in our field. Personally, I think people would embrace technology and the changes that come with it if there was more control and patience involved with the process. Everyone has become so obsessed with having information at their fingertips that quality is oftentimes compromised. I don't know how many times (on a daily basis, mind you) that I'll stumble across a glaring typo in an online article. Because of this constant need for up-to-date information, there's a strain on editors to maintain and sometimes beat deadlines instead of putting forth the quality work they're capable of.

If more articles and publications are going digital, I'd suggest that the editorial process is maintained and not dropped for cost savings or in order to meet a deadline. Credibility and quality are things that should be maintained, not compromised.

Holdway, Neil: An interesting development we're learning now: Not every story need be published on the web immediately. You can parse these things out. That helps with the pressure to edit.

Schmedding, Teresa:
Question 11: What is your full name and job title? What publication do you work for?


Wolber, Denise: 28, copy editor, ACI Structural Journal and the ACI Materials Journal, Shotcrete magazine, Concrete International magazine, and the Concrete Repair Bulletin Magazine. My department (Publishing Services) also works on marketing and education pieces, such as materials for our annual conventions, bulletins, flyers, etc., and we publish committee reports developed by our technical committee members.


Larcom, Geoff: 53, executive director of media relations, Eastern Michigan University. Previously worked in newspapers for 27 years.


Schmedding, Teresa: senior news editor, Daily Herald and ACES president.

Daniel Hunt: 30, copy editor, Orange County Register.

Question 12: Where did you receive your education? What was your major?


McLendon, Lisa: University of Texas and Truman State University.

Bigelow, Pete: B.A., 1999, Rutgers University, political science.

M.I.J. (master of international journalism), 1978, Baylor.  
Ph.D., 1995, American literature, University of North Texas.

**Sullivan, David:** B.S. 1975, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ball State University.

**Wolber, Denise:** Bachelors, English and Spanish, Western Michigan University, 2005.

**Trevor, Domenica:** I have a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Illinois; a master’s degree in American diplomatic history from the University of Illinois; graduate level coursework completed in Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan; and will receive a second bachelor’s degree, in paralegal studies, from Eastern Michigan University in April 2011.

**Geoff Larom:** Geoff Larcom, executive director of media relations at Eastern Michigan.

**Slayden, Kelli:** Bachelors, English, University of Michigan.

**Holdway, Neil:** I graduated from Northwestern's Medill in 1992, journalism major.

**Schmedding, Teresa:**

**Daniel Hunt:** Bachelors, communication, Bakersfield College.
References


Vita

Angela Avery-Ahljian is a student of journalism at Eastern Michigan University. She has written for her student newspaper, The Eastern Echo as a staff writer, wrote an article for the seasonal IT News publication (spring edition), wrote for Autos.com and Directautos.com, is a novice photographer and has been published in two student publications, the Cellar Roots and Eastern Michigan University’s magazine (back cover). Also, Angela has written a variety of press releases for the university, updated the emich.edu calendar and wrote articles relating to faculty awards and accomplishments. After graduation, she plans to go to law school.

Angela has one son and lives in Commerce Township, Michigan. She plays on a recreational soccer team in Novi (Team Henn) and enjoys taking photographs of nature, city life and wildlife.