aces
the society for editing

Tracking Changes

The Journal of the Society for Editing

CONTENTS Fall 2020

Microaggressions in editing

Our biases can come through in the edits we make.

by Crystal Shelley, LCSW

Editors, like all humans, have implicit biases, which can sometimes be reflected in our edits. Although we may believe that we're improving the copy, we may actually be undoing the conscious choices that writers have made, especially when we make assumptions as we're editing.

Sometimes our biases show themselves in microaggressions. These are brief, commonplace comments or actions—often unconscious or unintentional—that signal hostile or negative attitudes toward marginalized groups.

Just because microaggressions are unintentional doesn't make them any less invalidating or hurtful. In everyday life, microaggressions appear in different ways. Someone who is non-white is called a credit to their race. A disabled person is told how inspiring they are for

microaggression noun

a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)

—Merriam-Webster.com

persevering. A woman is referred to as a mom in an article about her professional achievements.

In editing, microaggressions can take various forms, such as the following:

- Changing *Black* to *black*: Capitalizing *Black* to refer to race, identity, and culture is often done with intention and is now **recommended by most style guides**.

- Changing *Black* to *African American*: *Black* is accepted and preferred by many Black folks, and **not all Black people are African American**.

- Hyphenating Americans: Leaving terms like *Asian American* or *African American* unhyphenated has gained wider acceptance thanks, in part, to **an article by Henry Fuhrmann**. Adding the hyphen can undermine a writer's decision to not hyphenate.

- Changing the singular *they* to *he/she*: The singular *they* has become **a popular choice as a more inclusive option** than *he/she*, so changing it reverts to the *he/she* binary.

- Changing someone's pronouns: A person's or character's **pronouns should be honored and used accordingly**. Changing pronouns can be disrespectful and harmful.

- Italicizing non-English words: When non-English words are changed from roman to italics, this can have an othering effect because the **words are treated as something different or foreign**.

- Making dialogue "proper": Changing nonstandard English, regionalisms, or accented speech to make it more "proper" may strip characters of their identities.

- Changing terms used to self-identify: The **terms that people or characters use to refer to their own identities should be respected**, even if others might see the terms as controversial or derogatory.

These types of microaggressions go against one of the cardinal rules of editing: do no harm. All of these examples can change the intended message of the copy and lead to distrust by the writer.

If microaggressions are the result of our implicit biases, what can we do to avoid them? There are no foolproof answers, but we can take steps to minimize the likelihood that we'll do harm in this way.

- When in doubt, look it up. As editors, we're trained to be curious if we're unsure of something. This, too, should be the case when we edit subjects that we don't personally have experience with, especially when it comes to marginalized identities we don't have.

- Query as a learner rather than assume as an expert. If you can't find an answer through research, ask the author whether a choice was intentional instead

> These types of microaggressions go against one of the cardinal rules of editing: do no harm. All of these examples can change the intended message of the copy and lead to distrust by the writer.

---

of making the change. Frame it as a desire to understand.

- Keep up to date with evolving trends in language by talking with other editors, following activists on social media, and subscribing to the ***Conscious Style Guide* newsletter**.

- Learn about your personal biases through **Harvard University's implicit association tests** and reflect on how the results may affect your editing.

- Listen to writers when they discuss what they want for their stories.

- Recognize that you may not be the best editor for the job. Sometimes, projects require a deeper level of understanding that may be beyond our knowledge base, so refer the project to someone who does have the expertise if possible.

As editors, we understand that words hold power and see how our edits affect the pieces we work on. When we follow the principle of doing no harm, we should remember that this goes beyond grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The changes we make can mean the difference between empowerment and invalidation. The calls for capitalizing *Black* and removing the hyphen in *Asian American* may result in seemingly small changes in language, but they are powerful statements—and reversing the gains achieved through these efforts may be doing the harm that we so carefully try not to do. ●

Crystal Shelley is a freelance copy editor, proofreader, and sensitivity reader who works with self-publishing fiction authors. She also practices as a licensed clinical social worker. She unites her love of language and social justice by providing editorial services with a focus on representation and conscious language.

Fact-checker, fact-checker, check me a fact

Old-school techniques can be part of the copyediting process.

by Sasha Nyary

I'm pretty sure a fact-checking essay in 2020 is expected to be about the all-stars [CHECK] like **CNN's Daniel Dale** [CONFIRMED], or how the *Washington Post's* **"Fact Checker" column** [CHECK] decides the number of Pinocchios [CHECK] awarded to a story.

But in my decade [CHECK: 1989 to 1998 is nine years] as a fact-checker [CHECK: job title was *reporter* and then *editor*] at Time Inc. [CONFIRMED], the work was precise, intense, and tedious [WRITER OPINION].

During my brief stint at *Sports Illustrated* and nearly a decade at *Life* magazine (back in the days of print), we checked every single piece of editorial content in an issue—every noun, adjective, and verb; every lede and kicker; every hed, dek, subhed, pull quote, directional, and byline—from the cover, the table of contents, and the masthead, to the features, profiles, columns, and sections.

We made sure that captions matched their images, and if that image happened to include text, such as in graffiti or a billboard, we checked those words as well. When we ran a photo of Arabic graffiti as part of our Gulf War coverage, I showed it to the religion reporter at *Time* magazine, 20 floors above us, who spoke the language. He confirmed the text was political, did not contain curses, and, perhaps most important, the image wasn't flipped.

Fact-checking could be like a treasure hunt. I spent hours on the phone chasing down the world's greatest Nabokov experts, trying to confirm a specific incident in a specific short story. The writer was certain it was Nabokov; the experts knew it wasn't—and thankfully that section was cut before I had to weigh in.

Sometimes fact-checking took me to strange places. When I was checking a story about Guns N' Roses, I put on my trench coat and walked into Times Square to see whether there really was a magazine called *Big Butts*. No, said the proprietor of the first newsstand I stopped at;

he had *Big Boobs* and *Big Bottoms* but no *Big Butts*. I let the writer keep it anyway.

Despite the occasional cheap thrills, I grew to loathe fact-checking as derivative and vicarious. But years later I can see that everything I learned—from some of the best magazine editors, writers, copy editors, photographers, and designers in the country—I still use every day in my writing and editing.

That's because the exacting process of examining a piece of text word by word, whether a two-name byline or a 10,000-word feature, is excellent training for every editorial job, whether writing, copyediting, or developmental editing. My job required me to be both utterly literal and attuned to nuance and subtlety, so I developed a sensitivity for language that forces me even today to balance technicalities with poetry. If the writer calls a dress *teal* and the catalogue describes it as *blue*, which do I go with? And was it a *dress* or a *jumper*?

> **The exacting process of examining a piece of text word by word, whether a two-name byline or a 10,000-word feature, is excellent training for every editorial job, whether writing, copyediting, or developmental editing.**

I had to be prepared to defend or concede my every decision to everyone involved, from the writer and editors to the copy editors and designers. Not just facts—I grew to understand that how text was placed on a page, jostling for space with images, in fonts of various sizes and types, could also affect the veracity of a story.

At Time Inc., a fact-check was complete when every single word had a red-pencil slash through it, indicating it had been confirmed—and a red slash through every letter in every name, including punctuation.

The teal dress, the slow bus, the rainy evening, the spicy stew, 25,000 demonstrators, *Great Expectations*, Jane Austen, the president's age—all would get underlined to be researched. That 5,000-word *Life* magazine feature could take three solid weeks to fact-check—and an investigative *New Yorker* piece of the same length no doubt takes far longer.

Truth be told, if the writer resisted changing their language—if the *spicy stew* was really a *thick soup*—well, "writer's opinion" often sufficed. As much as I like to soapbox about the truth, my real goal as a fact-checker was to prove the writer correct—in addition to keeping the magazine out of libel suits, of course. I strived not to change anything that I didn't have to. In hundreds of assignments over nine years I was in zero court cases

(Time Inc. had very good lawyers) and had only five mistakes.

The first one was in a fall 1989 issue of *Sports Illustrated*. An NHL player's name had appeared incorrectly in "For the Record," the one-page, back-of-the-book, tiny-print weekly listings. I hadn't caught it. Thankfully, the chief of reporters, who terrified me, hadn't either, and the hockey reporter who brought the error to my attention did so discreetly.

And there was my first lesson: no one wants their name spelled wrong. The truth matters. ●

Sasha Nyary is an editor and writer living in Maine. Her freelance business, Sasha Nyary Editorial Services, and her blog, First Draft, *can be found at* SashaNyary.com.

Fact-checking tips for copy editors

Is fact-checking part of the job? Make sure the expectation is clear at the start of a project. A formal fact-checking process is a full-time job and should not be confused with copyediting. I mostly copyedit 500- to 1,000-word stories today, and as part of my checklist, I usually confirm proper nouns and general facts. When I find a fact that seems beyond the scope of my assignment or I don't have time to run it down, I make a note in the text.

The internet is your friend. Check facts online or use the resources you have on hand. Going to a library, city hall, an archives, etc., is research and, in my opinion, above and beyond unless you have a specific agreement.

Choose your naming authorities. A term I adopted from library school, *naming authorities* are my impeccable sources for names. They vary depending on what type of name I'm looking for—an individual; a company; a title of a movie, book, or poem. For people, I use profile pages on organizational sites and personal websites. I usually avoid social media to check names.

Develop your list of "red check" sources. IMDb is great for confirming which classmate turns invisible in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or how many TV shows Brad Pitt has appeared in. The Poetry Foundation is a better place to look for a line of poetry than quote aggregators. I always check the titles of books, in part because their authors often get them wrong. Alas, the CDC website is no longer reliable.

A note about Wikipedia: Wikipedia is a safe source for details about *Buffy* episodes and other non-political topics, such as a list of Pulitzer Prize winners, the plot of *Great Expectations*, or the periodic table. Take care, though. Because Wikipedia can be edited by anyone at any time, the content, especially for controversial topics, can be unreliable.

Check out other sources. The *AP Stylebook* **entry on misinformation**, BuzzFeed's **entry on QAnon**, *Conscious Style Guide* on lots of things—style guides have excellent resources for sorting out fact from fiction. **The Poynter Institute** offers political fact-checking resources, as does the Annenberg Public Policy Center's **FactCheck.org**.

AP Stylebook updates race-related terms

AP

by John Daniszewski

The Associated Press announced an important change to AP style this summer, after more than two years of in-depth research and discussion with colleagues and respected thinkers from a diversity of backgrounds, both within and from outside the cooperative.

AP's style is now to capitalize *Black* in a racial, ethnic, or cultural sense, conveying an essential and shared sense of history, identity, and community among people who identify as Black, including those in the African diaspora and within Africa. The lowercase *black* is a color, not a person. We also now capitalize *Indigenous* in reference to original inhabitants of a place. These changes align with long-standing capitalization of other racial and ethnic identifiers such as *Latino*, *Asian American*, and *Native American*.

The change has not been without controversy, mainly from some editors and readers who believe that *white* also should be capitalized.

AP concluded that while *Black* is a defining ethnic or national identity for African Americans and people of African descent in many countries due to a history of discrimination, relatively few white people view *white* as their ethnic or national identity. The AP plans to review the capitalization policy periodically. In the meantime, editors are free to follow their own news policies on this question.

The updates become part of the *AP Stylebook*'s **race-related coverage** guidance, which begins:

> Reporting and writing about issues involving race calls for thoughtful consideration, precise language, and an openness to discussions with others of diverse backgrounds about how to frame coverage or what language is most appropriate, accurate and fair.

> Avoid broad generalizations and labels; race and ethnicity are one part of a person's identity. Identifying people by race and reporting on actions that have to do with race often go beyond simple style questions, challenging journalists to think broadly about racial issues before having to make decisions on specific situations and stories.

> In all coverage—not just race-related coverage—strive to accurately represent the world, or a particular community, and its diversity through the people you quote and depict in all formats. Omissions and lack of inclusion can render people invisible and cause anguish.

A few highlights of the updated race-related guidance on AP Stylebook Online include:

Black(s), white(s) (n.)

Do not use either term as a singular noun. For plurals, phrasing such as *Black people, white people, Black teachers, white students* is often preferable when clearly relevant. *White officers account for 64% of the police force, Black officers 21% and Latino officers 15%. The gunman targeted Black churchgoers.* The plural nouns *Blacks* and *whites* are generally acceptable when clearly relevant and needed for reasons of space or sentence construction. *He helped integrate dance halls among Blacks, whites, Latinos and Asian Americans. Black* and *white* are acceptable as adjectives when relevant.

Indigenous (adj.)

Capitalize this term used to refer to original inhabitants of a place. *Aboriginal leaders welcomed a new era of Indigenous relations in Australia. Bolivia's Indigenous peoples represent some 62% of the population.*

people of color

The term is acceptable when necessary in broad references to multiple races other than white: *We will hire more people of color. Nine playwrights of color collaborated on the script.*

Introducing

Word Matters

A new podcast from Merriam-Webster

Word Matters is a show for readers, writers, and anyone who ever loved their English class.

Join Merriam-Webster editors as they challenge supposed grammar rules, reveal the surprising origins behind words, tackle common questions, and generally geek out about the beautiful nightmare that is language.

LISTEN AND SUBSCRIBE
wherever you get your podcasts.

Be aware, however, that many people of various races object to the term for various reasons, including that it lumps together into one monolithic group anyone who isn't white.

Be specific whenever possible by referring to, for instance, *Black Americans, Chinese Americans* or *members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.* Examples: *The poll found that Black and Latino Americans are bearing the brunt of the pandemic's financial impact, not people of color are bearing the brunt of the pandemic's financial impact. Most of the magazine's readers are Black women, not most of the magazine's readers are women of color.*

In some cases, other wording may be appropriate. Examples: *people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds; diverse groups; various heritages; different cultures.*

Do not use *person of color* for an individual.

Do not use the term *Black, Indigenous and people of color,* which some see as more inclusive by distinguishing the experiences of Black and Indigenous people but others see as less inclusive by diminishing the experiences of everyone else. Similarly, do not use the term *Black, Asian and minority ethnic.*

Do not use the shorthand *POC, BIPOC* or *BAME* unless necessary in a direct quotation; when used, explain it.

Black Lives Matter, #BlackLivesMatter

A global movement launched after the 2012 killing of Trayvon Martin with a goal to eradicate systemic racism and white supremacy and to oppose violence committed against Black people. Either *Black Lives Matter* as a noun or *the Black Lives Matter movement* is acceptable. BLM is acceptable on second reference. Although there are many groups that use "Black Lives Matter" or "BLM" in their names, only 16 are considered affiliates of the *Black Lives Matter Global Network. The Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation,* which provides organizational infrastructure and funding to the affiliate chapters, was founded in 2014 after what is known as the Ferguson uprising over the August 2014 police shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. The *BLM network* is acceptable on second reference.

Some respond to the Black Lives Matter movement by saying "all lives matter" or "blue lives matter," the latter in reference to police officers. Neither is a formal movement, so lowercase and enclose in quotes.

slaves, enslaved people

The term *slaves* denotes an inherent identity of a person or people treated as chattel or property. The term *enslaved people* underlines that the slave status has been imposed on individuals. Many prefer the term *enslaved person/people* to separate people's identity from their circumstances. Others prefer the term slave as a way to make a point of the circumstances. Either term is acceptable. Try to determine an individual's preference.

Juneteenth

June 19, the traditional commemoration date of the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States. The holiday also has been called *Juneteenth Independence Day* or *Freedom Day*. President Abraham Lincoln first issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring all slaves free in Confederate territory on Sept. 22, 1862, but the news took time to travel. June 19, 1865, is the date when word of the proclamation reached African Americans in Texas. ●

John Daniszewski became AP's vice president for standards and editor-at-large in July 2016 after more than a decade leading its international news department as international editor, senior managing editor, and vice president for international news. Prior to that, he spent 20 years as a reporter, editor, and correspondent for both the Associated Press and Los Angeles Times. *He has worked in more than 70 countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia, including postings to Warsaw, Johannesburg, Cairo, Moscow, Baghdad, and London. He became a member of the Pulitzer Prize Board in 2013. As vice president for standards, Daniszewski oversees the implementation of AP's news principles and values, working with the staff in all formats to maintain AP's reputation for accuracy and neutrality across the news cooperative's worldwide bureaus.*

Want to write for *Tracking Changes*?

ACES is currently accepting submissions for upcoming issues of *Tracking Changes.*

Learn More

Using an editorial calendar to improve productivity

One copy editor explains how she used this tool to plan monthly publications.

by Cynthia Williams

Editorial calendars are used to plan the development and publication of content. The calendar outlines the themes to be covered and articles to be written, sometimes months in advance, helping the editor focus on the big picture and what issues to explore. Such calendars also ensure the inclusion of timely and relevant material, prevent redundancy in coverage, and assist in managing expectations in-house. They are commonly used at magazines but are also used by smaller organizations with publications distributed on a regular basis.

I found myself in such an organization as a young copy editor assisting with two monthly health newsletters. Here, I present that context, what factors helped with the establishment of the editorial calendar, what I wish I had done differently, and lessons learned.

Context

My department was composed of four physicians, a web coordinator, and me. The physicians' main jobs did not involve writing for the newsletters. They spent their days poring over research, diving into databases, testifying before congressional committees, and writing petitions to government agencies.

Each month, I sat down with the director of the department (who was one of the physicians) to plan the upcoming issue. This usually involved him sharing what research the physicians could write about.

After our meetings, I or the director would assign a story to the physicians, who would then have about a week to think about their framing and write the story. The short notice, at times, left them scurrying to complete drafts and affected the quality of early versions.

The process made my work with them far from seamless. I needed a routine that would give the physicians more time to write and think about how to communicate to a lay audience.

Facilitating a new process

Realizing that I needed to manage the workflow better, I used two strategies that aided the transition to having an editorial calendar: I leveraged the director's receptiveness to improvement and made sure my requests to the team were specific.

I asked the director if I could hold a meeting so the team could flesh out an editorial calendar. With the director's buy-in, the meeting held more significance for the team. I asked each physician to bring two or three ideas.

On our first try, we were able to put together an editorial calendar for the next three issues. After that, meetings were held quarterly. The gatherings primed the physicians to think about how their research could be

2016 Editorial Calendar

Forbes

Issue	Editorial Themes	Ad Close	On Sale	Online Launch
Jan 18	**30 Under 30** Global Business/Entrepreneurs • Second Acts • Financial Planning/Millennial Money Luxury Leaderboard: Seal The Deal—Men's Accessories** • Business of Luxury Feature*** • ForbesLife Department	12/7	1/4	1/4 **1/23** *Davos World Economic Forum* ★
Feb 8	*All New!* **Best Small Co's: Small Giants** Tax Planning • Best ETFs & Mutual Funds • SportsMoney** ***Special Insert*** ForbesLife Guide to 'Travel' • Luxury Leaderboard: Seal The Deal—Men's Accessories** • ForbesLife Department	1/4	1/25	1/20
Feb 29	**Retire Well** Social Media • Tech & Innovation • Energy Revolution Luxury Leaderboard: Seal the Deal—Men's Watches** • Business of Luxury Feature*** • ForbesLife Department	1/25	2/15	2/17
Mar 21	**Billionaires*** **7.2 Million Reach** Luxury Leaderboard: Travel** • Business of Luxury Feature: Collections	2/15	3/7	3/2 **3/11** *SXSW* ★
Apr 11	**Innovation Factory** **7 Million Reach** Best Employers • Internet of Things • Tomorrow's Transportation • Midas List ***Special Insert*** ForbesLife Guide to 'Spring Fashion' • Luxury Leaderboard: Luxury Lineage—Watches** • ForbesLife Department	3/7	3/28	3/23

Figure 1.
Editorial calendar from *Forbes* magazine

Article Topic/Title	Author	Deadline for Draft 1
January Issue		
Proper Storage of Medication	*Writer 1*	*November 23*
Riskiest Cholesterol Medications	*Writer 2*	*November 23*
All About the New Blood Thinner	*Writer 3*	*November 23*

Figure 2.
An example of our editorial calendar. (The production schedule would have more details, including dates for editorial reviews, graphic design, printing, and mailing.)

translated for our audience before it was time to discuss the calendar.

Second chances

If I had to start the process again, I would push the imaginations of the team even further by taking on themed issues. I also would insert an "idea bank" of readers' questions at the bottom of the calendar, to see whether any of the physicians would be willing to answer those questions in an article. To find out what they were working on and be proactive about framing articles for a lay audience, I would communicate more regularly with the physicians. To make the meetings even more productive, I would discuss each publication's calendar at separate times.

Lessons learned

In an organization of subject matter experts, copy editors can often be seen as "just" support staff. However, if we are grounded in what we know (i.e., editing, organizing, and being process oriented) and think creatively about our strengths, we can contribute much more than good grammar to our teams. Opportunities that call for our specific skill set allow us to lead from where we are and to challenge ourselves. ●

Cynthia Williams, project manager at Dragonfly Editorial, has nearly 20 years' experience editing manuscripts and corporate communications on climate change, community capacity building, good governance, and social science. She has worked as an in-house editor and a freelancer, and curates interviews with editors of color at Outside-the-Book.com.

ACES Diversity and Inclusion Resources

The ACES Diversity & Inclusion Committee compiled a list of resources pertaining to diversity and inclusion for editors.

We believe that communication belongs to everyone, but that it often fails to adequately represent the diversity of our society. With that in mind, ACES seeks to support editing that reflects the diversity of our members and the audiences they serve, focusing on awareness and inclusion of underrepresented communities.

If you think something is missing and should be added to the list, please let us know.

ACESDiversity@aceseditors.org

What's your pronoun?

Respecting a person's correct personal pronoun contributes to a more inclusive environment.

by Christine Steele

I didn't think too much about personal pronouns until this past spring, and now they are on my mind often. I've learned the importance of why they matter. The copyediting courses I teach online were moved to a new learning management system, Canvas, in April. Canvas offers a drop-down menu in the settings to choose your personal pronouns, if you'd like to share them. They are then included beside your name when you post on the discussion board.

Sometimes people might make assumptions about the gender of another person based on that person's appearance or name. Using someone's correct personal pronoun is a way to respect them and create an inclusive environment, even online.

Besides *they*, which was Merriam-Webster's 2019 Word of the Year, there are alternatives to using *he* and *she* when someone's gender is unknown or when they are not simply male or female. *They* is not the only option. There are less-familiar pronouns, such as *ze*, *zir*, and *hir*, but singular *they* has become a pronoun of choice for many. It's important to become familiar with other pronouns.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation points out that being misgendered can be hurtful, angering, and even distracting. Everyone should have the option of expressing their preferred name or personal pronoun, and the way this is communicated may vary across settings—formal vs. informal, email vs. in-person/virtual meetings, name badges, business cards, and so on.

The following is what I've learned from a training session, along with some excellent resources, about the different types of pronouns and how to use them.

- Avoid saying *preferred pronouns* because they aren't preferences. They are personal.

- Use the phrase *preferred name*. *Preferred name*, unlike *preferred pronouns*, is OK because a name is a preference.

- When you find yourself in a position to ask someone for their pronoun, consider asking, "Are you comfortable sharing your pronouns with me?"

- MyPronouns.org will teach you the what, why, and how of sharing and asking for pronouns and what to do if you make a mistake when addressing someone with the wrong pronoun.

- [The Human Rights Campaign Foundation has a free handout](#) reviewing what's in a pronoun, the persistence of gender norms, and why pronouns matter.

- Read the book *What's Your Pronoun?: Beyond He and She* by Dennis Baron. Published in January 2020, it's based on 40 years of empirical research and examines the alternatives to *he* and *she*. The author has collected more than 200 coined pronouns going back to 1770, and each one is documented by publication, date, and page number, as he wants his readers to find them. His story is how we got from *he* and *she* to *zie* and *hir* and now singular *they*.

Here are some fun facts in the book:

1. Singular *they* first appeared in 1375.

2. *It* was once a common pronoun for infants, but it's rarely used today. As for adults, though, *it* has been used since the 16th century as a way to insult, dehumanize, or mock a person.

3. In 1850, *hiser* was coined as a blend of *his* and *her*.

4. Gender-neutral and nonbinary pronouns have been on Sephora ads and Oreo cookie packaging. Oreo promoted "Pronoun Packs" for PrideFest in 2019 to celebrate inclusivity.

As Baron says in his book, even though some words may seem to include others, they may also exclude them. And not all languages treat gender the same way.

Better understanding language and its origins, and using language correctly, can help us be courteous and respectful to others while also leading us toward being more effective and respectful editors ourselves. ●

Christine Steele (she/her) is an instructor for the Copyediting Certificate Program at UC San Diego Extension and freelances as [Steele Editing & Writing](#).

Editors beware: you're being targeted

Cons, fraud, blackmail—there's a scam for each of us now.

by Ruth E. Thaler-Carter

Who woulda thunk it—we humble editors apparently are red meat to a certain type of scammer. Yes, friends, we are worthy: several versions of a scam targeting editors have been making the rounds. The messages claim to find us through ACES and other organizations.

These scams do not appear to be after our money (ha!), but are probably attempts at identity theft. They pretend to offer work in editing and related services with major companies (Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Penguin Random House, Grifols, STADA, etc.). Red flags include: the message is from a Gmail account address (although some have used names of people who do work for the company), and the offer requires interviews via Google Hangouts or Telegram.

If one hits your inbox, just delete it. If you've responded to one of these, do not engage any longer. Block the email address to which you responded and change your email password.

Other common scams are so badly written that they're obviously not worth a response—but not every potential client's first language is English, so don't automatically assume that every clumsily written message is from a scammer. Unfortunately, legitimate clients could be affected by jerks who attempt to scam editors with phony offers hiding attempts at financial or identity theft.

Be aware that editors are also being targeted by the classic overpayment scam. These cons have been going on since before email and online shopping began, from small and large online purchases to home rentals and more. Even though I've known about these as long as they have been around, I almost fell for one that seemed to be a legitimate writing assignment—until a check for more than twice the agreed-upon fee arrived (via FedEx, no less, on a Saturday), from an account in the name of someone other than the supposed client.

Regardless of the sender, relevance of assignment to your editing services, amount of offer, etc.: **if you ever get a check or money order for more than an agreed-upon amount, don't use it**—or at least call the bank of the supposed owner of the account before depositing it to your account; your own bank might not be able to act. Money orders might be easier to verify, but call the supposed issuer before trying to deposit one.

Increasingly common scams are blackmail attempts claiming to have access to your email program, internet accounts, or computer camera, and threatening to release embarrassing photos, videos, or social media posts if you don't pay a ransom, usually via bitcoin or by buying gift cards. These can come as email messages or ransomware that holds your computer hostage. If you get an email with such a threat, delete it and change your password. If someone gets control of your computer, there might be no alternative but to pay the ransom.

Much of the protection against scams comes down to networking with colleagues about such trends and being cautious about how we conduct our editing businesses. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. As one of my favorite *Hill Street Blues* characters used to say, "Let's be careful out there." ●

(Adapted from the author's recent posts to the An American Editor *blog and EFA discussion list, and articles in the EFA newsletter.)*

Ruth E. Thaler-Carter (WriterRuth.com) is a long-time ACES member and frequent conference presenter. A full-time freelance writer/editor since 1984, she is the editor of the Editorial Freelancers Association (EFA) newsletter; author/publisher of Get Paid to Write! Getting Started as a Freelance Writer; *coauthor of the 2020 editions of* Freelancing 101: Launching Your Editorial Business *and* Résumés for Freelancers: Make Your Résumé an Effective Marketing Tool . . . and More! *for the EFA; and the owner of the* An American Editor *blog and Communication Central, which hosts the annual Be a Better Freelancer® conference. Her editing clients include a law firm, PR firm, university think tank, content site, car audio company, associations, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and individual authors.*

From trial attorney to editor

These two occupations have more in common than you might think.

by Maggie Gigandet

Before I became a freelance writer and editor, I was a trial attorney. Those who are surprised by my career transition usually believe that these fields are unrelated.

But I see more similarities than differences. The goal of each occupation is to get a message to an audience as clearly and precisely as possible so the message has the greatest chance of having its desired effect.

Four main skills help both freelancers and trial attorneys accomplish this goal:

- **Attention to detail:** Before a trial, I had to master the details of a case so I could detect even slight changes in testimony. A jury's belief in my case could depend on evidentiary details; the credibility of a witness could rest on whether the details of their account were consistent. Similarly, editors must be masters of details. Every aspect of a piece, from correct punctuation to consistent substantive details, contributes to a reader's understanding and the author's credibility.

- **Evaluation of weaknesses:** When preparing for trial, I had to analyze all evidence for weaknesses in logic. Knowing where the logic of a story broke down helped me point out the opposition's flaws, argue why my position made more sense than the opposition's claims, and defend my case against similar attacks. This also helped me determine whether the jury would be left with unanswered questions so I could answer them before the jury went to deliberate. An editor has the same job. An editor must identify weaknesses in a piece's structure or content and must work with the author to resolve unanswered questions the reader may have.

- **Use of every opportunity:** From jury selection to closing arguments, each stage of a trial is an opportunity to persuade the jury. A trial attorney should never wait until closing arguments to begin their persuasion of jurors, even though it is the only stage called an *argument*. Likewise, editors must always keep the purpose of a piece in mind and identify any missed opportunities to further that purpose. This evaluation makes a piece more powerful and cohesive.

- **Knowledge of the audience:** My audience determined how I crafted the substance and style of my arguments. Because a judge's role is to rule on questions of law, I relied heavily on case law and statutes when arguing before a judge; I did not need to explain legal terms or concepts, as the judge was an attorney. When arguing to jurors who determined the facts of a case, I had to take on a storytelling role and focused on presenting a cogent and compelling description of the events at issue. I dedicated portions of my arguments to describing legal jargon and fundamentals, as many jurors were not familiar with legal proceedings. I varied my style depending on my audience as well. When arguing to a judge, I was more formal and reserved. In front of a jury, however, I was animated, moved with purpose to emphasize my words, and used the tone and volume of my voice to engage jurors. Editors must know the audience of a piece in order to fully evaluate the piece's effectiveness. An editor should determine if there are any terms or concepts that the audience won't understand and should ensure that scholarly pieces don't have the tone or style of a blog post. Thus, an editor must begin with the end in mind and make sure the author is writing for the correct audience.

Whenever my new career becomes intimidating, it helps to remember these core skills that I have practiced for years. Remembering one difference also helps: the audience of any piece I work on has chosen to spend time with it instead of dutifully obeying a summons. I'll call that a perk of the job. ●

Maggie Gigandet is an attorney licensed in Tennessee and Kentucky. Before she stopped practicing and became a freelance writer and editor, she tried cases as a prosecutor. She enjoys researching and writing about gardening, history, and wildlife. Contact her at maggie.gigandet@gmail.com, and visit MaggieGigandet.com.

Editing for association magazines

Producing high-quality materials with a small staff and budget limitations requires some creative solutions.

by Emily Primeaux

I've followed a rather interesting writing and editing path over the course of my career. My most recent six-and-a-half-year tenure as the associate editor at an association magazine has been some of the most enlightening work yet—it forced me to be more flexible, creative, and innovative in how I managed the magazine's editorial process.

Associations are created to fulfill training, resource, networking, and event gaps for industry professionals who want to connect with like-minded experts and continue their education in that respective field. But behind the scenes, associations can face budgetary limitations that can negatively influence requests for staffing, resources, and innovative updates to work products, like paper-quality improvements or website redesigns. It isn't uncommon for association staff to wear many hats and handle multiple responsibilities.

Our association magazine was an intimately small, but incredibly talented, in-house staff of editors and designers. My direct reporting line was our editor-in-chief, and I was his sole editor. Our brilliant art director handled the design of our magazine, but also managed all collateral for other association initiatives. I also worked on a plethora of non-magazine projects within our association's marketing department.

Our tiny but mighty team was regularly forced to consider how we could effectively produce original and compelling content while thinking outside the box. Every year our customers consistently rated our 76-page bimonthly publication the number one benefit of membership. So, how did we do it with staffing, budget, and time constraints?

I learned that we could make up for limitations by tapping into the talent of the very members that comprised the industry. For the most part, subject-matter experts contributed the copy that became our articles. The substantive editing that followed was often laborious and tedious—these contributors aren't necessarily professional writers, after all. However, association magazines by and large can't exist without expert-driven content. Subject-matter experts share their expertise while editors work magic to help their concepts flourish on the page.

Where we couldn't find the content, my editor and I threw on our writing caps and shifted into author mode. We wrote the Q&As, narrative profiles, news items, and even the occasional deep dive. And when we were spread too thin, we usually could make a compelling case to management to hire freelance writers and editors. Often, our freelance writers were association members who also had a knack for writing and a desire to be more widely seen—a win-win!

When we didn't have the time to fact-check, we would ask the authors to provide their sources—and to source them properly. Though we could easily research these seemingly simple ideas ourselves, it became too time-intensive to do so when we were staring down the barrel of features, columns, departments, and deadlines.

> **Associations can face budgetary limitations that can negatively influence requests for staffing, resources, and innovative updates to work products. Our tiny but mighty team was regularly forced to consider how we could effectively produce original and compelling content while thinking outside the box.**

Our art director used local photographers and aspiring illustrators when our budget got tight. Every five years we asked printers for bids to make sure the one we worked with was offering competitive pricing, and

then we insisted that our printer front the cost of travel and lodging for press checks. We co-mailed our magazine with other publications to save on cost, and we highlighted association initiatives in print when we were short on technical copy.

It took constant creativity to stay ahead of the game, and when the issue finally went to print, we'd sigh with satisfaction and start again. It was never easy, but it was always rewarding when the advance copies would hit my desk or when we'd receive a member email congratulating us on another issue well done. ●

Emily Primeaux is a writer and editor with experience working globally for nonprofits, associations, and startups. She's interviewed headline-makers including Theranos whistleblower Tyler Shultz and the retired DEA agents behind the hit Netflix show Narcos. *Emily is now a full-time freelance writer/editor. Her portfolio and services can be found at* EmilyPrimeaux.com.

Its time for a new challange.

If that headline made you cringe, we want you here. The College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln gives you the credentials that will stand out — so next time opportunity knocks, you and your advanced degree from Nebraska will be ready.

Explore our career-furthering opportunities
journalism.unl.edu/ACES2020

For this issue of *Tracking Changes,* we asked members how COVID-19 has affected their work. Here are their responses.

Networking leads to new clients

I lost my primary anchor client in March, which was nearly half my income, so I reached out to everyone I knew and said I was available (an understatement!). I received several referrals from other freelancers and past clients, and I was able to land several new clients, including by August, a new anchor client. It's a reminder that you have to network and market yourself all the time. Staying in touch with past clients and connecting all the time with fellow freelance writers and editors made the difference in landing new work.

Melanie Padgett Powers
Owner, MelEdits
Silver Spring, Maryland

More clients than normal

I am a freelance editor working with graduate-level university students and independent authors, and I actually gained more clients than normal during these past months. It's possible that some writers have more time on their hands right now (for better or for worse), but then I have also lowered my fees when needed to help clients retain their writing momentum during these trying times of financial instability.

Dr. Cristina Olsen
Academic Editor and Writing Coach
Battle Ground, Washington

Sharing a small space

I stay at home with my toddler son and copyedit during nap times. For five months, my husband, a graduate student in math, also worked from home, which is a 700-square-foot apartment. While my husband taught over Zoom in our bedroom, I would work in the living room in the easy chair, with my computer on a lap desk, while our son napped in his adjoining bedroom. The arrangement felt both cozy and cramped!

Rebekah Slonim
Freelance Copy Editor
West Lafayette, Indiana

From editing on paper to working electronically

Prior to the pandemic, quite a few of my assignments still required working on hard copy. To be honest, I was concerned my workload might dwindle if some of my clients weren't prepared to work electronically. I'm very fortunate the opposite has turned out to be true and I've stayed consistently busy without a single lull.

Carla Benton
Freelance Book Copy Editor and Proofreader
Chicago, Illinois

Adjusting to working from home

I've had to adapt from a writer and editor who detested working at home to one who works solely at home. I've had to learn when my best times of productivity in a home office are, what work space and audio and video background work best, and how to structure breaks and starting and stopping times for the day. Ultimately, I feel this experience has made me a more versatile and rounded professional.

Joseph Priest
Principal and Owner, Priestly Pointers
Tampa, Florida

Steady business for work-from-home regular

I'm thankful to have always worked from home, so the stay-at-home orders earlier this year didn't really change anything for me. Plus, business has remained steady for me, so I'm very lucky to have been relatively unaffected by this whole thing. It's like living in a bubble. I know that not a lot of people can say that.

Kristen Hamilton
Owner/Book Editor, Kristen Corrects Inc.
Nampa, Idaho

Writers with personal stories

I'm sensing a "now's the time" attitude about sharing personal histories, genealogical information, and other writing projects that people have tucked away. I've had more clients come to me with their memoirs, as well as short stories they started years ago and put aside.

Emily Bowles
Freelance Copy Editor
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

"One long, continuous Zoom meeting"

I manage the Editing Services team for FINRA. Our organization has been working fully remotely since mid-March, which means the past eight months have basically been one long, continuous Zoom meeting! While we've had to incorporate kids and spouses into our workday and make some slight changes to our processes, we've managed to stay well connected and productive during a very stressful time. I'm proud of my team!

Claire Fleischer
Associate Manager, Editing Services, FINRA
Rockville, Maryland

The ACES Academy webcasts

Perspectives: People of Color in the Editing Community

Date: December 17
Time: 4 to 5 p.m. EST
Trainer: Cynthia Williams
Cost: Members: Free / Non-Members: $30

Outside-the-Book.com, a website launched during the pandemic, turns the spotlight on copyeditors of color, interviewing one editor each week. In this session, website curator Cynthia Williams will discuss the origins of the site, what she's learned from the interviewees, resources for editors of color, and the future of Outside-the-Book.com.

REGISTER NOW

Keep It Simple: The Science Behind Plain Language, and Why You Should Use It

Date: January 14
Time: 4 to 5 p.m. EST
Trainer: Cheryl Stephens
Cost: Members: Free / Non-Members: $30

Research shows the less work audiences need to put into reading, the more they will find sources credible, and the better they will connect with the messages. In this interactive webcast, you will learn the most up-to-date techniques, drawn from neuroscience and cognitive psychology, to: simplify your writing and make it accessible, engage readers and make reading a pleasant experience, and get your message across effectively. We'll discuss evidence and best practices in: the three-stage reading process, how readers measure readability, techniques for improving retention and recall, content framework methods, priming and recency, the literacy role of inferences and predictability, and creating ease and fluency.

REGISTER NOW

Did you miss recent webcasts?

The ACES Academy also offers **recordings of these webcasts and more**.

For Editors Who Want to Wear All the Hats: Editorial Work in Instructional Design for Online Learning

Trainer: Carla Douglas
Cost: Members: Free / Non-Members: $30

At any given time, instructional designers (IDs) manage multiple projects; identify copyright, permissions, and fair-use issues; spot bias; reorder and rewrite content; coach subject matter experts; improve readability; apply house style; write video scripts; proofread design layout; create learning scenarios—and more! In this webcast, we'll walk you through an ID's typical day, describe the variety of editorial tasks they engage in, and identify the technology and tools they use to bring learning to life.

Wrong Number

Trainer: Neil Holdway
Cost: Members: Free / Non-Members: $30

Learn the math that is used in copy again and again—but is so easy to get wrong—and make sure all numbers are meaningful to your audience.

Sensitivity Reading and Beyond: Empowering Editors to Talk About Conscious Language and Representation

Trainer: Crystal Shelley
Cost: Members: Free / Non-Members: $30

The concept of sensitivity reading is met with differing opinions, from praise for being a necessary service to cries of censorship and cancel culture. This session will provide an overview of what sensitivity reading is and isn't, what to look for, and the reasons why it's valuable. It'll also empower editors to have conversations about authenticity and representation outside of a sensitivity reading role. Not all editors are—or want to be—sensitivity readers, but we can leverage our relationships with writers, publishers, and corporations to advocate for accurate representation in service to readers.