UNIT 8 KINDS OF COPY EDITING

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8.0 AIMS

In the first block of this Course, we have told you about editing in general and we have tried to be as detailed as is necessary for even a novice in the field of editing and publishing to understand what editing is. We have also told you about the various responsibilities of the different types of editors, and, in passing, about types of editing, copy editing and proof reading. We have also introduced you to the complex Editor-Author-Publisher relationship and the concept of House Style and Style Manuals. This first block basically dealt with the persons and processes of converting ideas into books.

In the second block, we told you about the persons and processes involved in the creation of books—mss for books may be acquired, commissioned or submitted by someone who has written a book which needs to be published, in his opinion.

In this first unit of this block, we shall tell you about the kinds of copy editing that an mss is subjected to. We expect that you will be able to show your familiarity with the domain of copy editing, explain the meaning of the term 'copy' and be able to describe the various kinds of responsibilities that a copy editor will be entrusted with in the day-to-day practice of his undertaking.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The copy editor is a late entrant in the domain of printing and publishing. As the technology of printing developed, multiple copies of books could be printed and sold, and books became more affordable. Earlier, books were laboriously copied by hand and hence those available were very few in number and not affordable by the common man.

With new developments, the printers discovered that they could make more profits if they divided up the tasks of book production into smaller units instead of trying to do all the work themselves. Thus arose the entity of the publisher who owned the publishing house but not necessarily the printing press. The printer too needed to avail the services
of experts who could take over several of the tasks hitherto performed by one or two persons. In order then, that there is an interface between writer and printer arose the persona of the editor. The editor’s tasks were further sub-divided into those who looked at the content, primarily and those who also interacted with the those personnel involved in bringing out the physical embodiment of the book like the artists, printers, binders etc, by giving them detailed advice/instructions. You will by now, we trust, appreciate the need for specialization in one or other aspects of publishing—one person cannot perform so many tasks with the competence that trained specialists can.

Sometimes, depending on the size of the organization you are working in, in addition to copy editing, you will discover that you are also expected to do a fair amount of substantive editing. This is to say, you will be expected to look at the content as well as interact with the printer through copy editing symbols and written instructions. However, as copy editor, your primary responsibility is to copy editing and not to substantive editing.

8.2 WHAT IS COPY EDITING?

When an author has finalized his manuscript, he or she cannot bear to wait to see it in printed form! There are many reasons for this, the chief being that s/he has been working so hard and so long at the text that s/he also cannot appreciate that a considerable amount of work still needs to be done on his manuscript before this can happen. Pressure from the author, if succumbed to, will result in a slipshod manuscript going to the press and a lot of time, effort and money will be wasted in improving it, composing it and proof reading the errors that are bound to creep into this hurried piece of work after they are caught at the proof stage. It is the responsibility of the copy editor to ensure that the author’s will does not prevail because the blame for shoddy production will be laid at the copy editor’s door anyway!

The duplication of labour (of error correction at later stages of production) can be avoided if the manuscript is looked at professionals in the field of editing and typography (page layout and design) who mark and correct it before it is sent to the press for production.

Preparing the manuscript for publication is called copy editing or copy preparation.

This copy preparation process helps the author too since it results in a readable document, book or journal or magazine, which is error-free and attractive to look at. After all, eventually the ultimate purpose of publishing any document, a book, for instance, is to have it read and appreciated by people. And since the best editor is an invisible one, the praise/blame for the book is laid at the door of the author. For a harmonious relationship, one of the (informal) tasks of the copy editor is to, at least once, establish contact with the author and discuss the nature, degree and rationale of the editorial changes proposed to be carried out prior to printing.

Activity 1

Look at your favorite magazine or book and try to analyse why you find it attractive. Spend a minute to ponder on how all these features were combined together.

Apart from the contents, look at some of the other features and make a short list (4-5 items) of these.

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit)
8.3 WHY IS COPY EDITING IMPORTANT?

Copy editing saves the publisher’s resources, time and money both, and is therefore an important stage in the process of production of a book. In this context, whatever we say about a ‘book’, would also be applicable to any published text, be it a magazine or journal or newspaper. For a newspaper, things are slightly different because the time constraints are radically different and priorities are therefore necessarily different. For example, in a daily newspaper, the author is not consulted too frequently when editing changes are being made.

We would like you to bear in mind that we are talking here of the traditional processes of production. Insofar as the English press is concerned, electronic facilities for copy editing, spell checking, and global corrections have made the editing process somewhat simpler today. For example, the WYSIWYG facility, the “What you see is what you get” has made possible a variety of pre-viewing options which were not available before the computers and desktop publishing systems had made their entry. In this facility, the document as seen on the computer’s monitor is what the printed copy will look like. There may be a few differences as regards the colour but generally one can obtain a fair idea from the computer’s monitor of the look of the final document.

8.4 INTRODUCTION TO HOUSE STYLE

We have already told you about house style and style manuals. To recapitulate: Why should you as a copy editor know about “house style”?

The reason is that you will have to both implement it and instruct and interact with the personnel involved in the production of the final printed document from the raw manuscript. In the terminology of printers and publishers, a manuscript is a printed, typed or handwritten script along with relevant photographs, transparencies, artworks, drawings etc. The whole set is also commonly known as ‘copy’. House style is a collection of certain rules and procedures for the guidance of all the persons involved in the production of the final published book.

Distribution of work makes the whole exercise worth the labour, particularly if everyone if following a set format. The idea is to both Maintain uniformity in the style of the various publications of the same category published by the publishing house and also to maintain uniformity within the parts of the same publication.

Let us understand this with the help of a few examples in a book:

1) In a book, if one paragraph is set in 10 point, Times New Roman like this:

   House style is a collection

2) it will be an irritant to find the next one printed in 14 point bold

   Arial Black like this.

According to Mendiratta “The house style may vary from a set of rules with a short reference to standard dictionaries to a fairly comprehensive guide or style manual dealing with typographical style, rules of grammar, punctuation, list of abbreviations…”

The house style is used to serve as an instrument of ‘economic and precise production’. You would have read more about house already but suffice it here to remind you that such a guide is of great use to beginners and apprentices on the one hand and to the experts in the field dealing with the actual production and printing process. If such a document does not exist in your organization, it will be of invaluable help to create it.
for oneself as one matures in the field. Basically it is an aide memoire to yourself so that you can refer to it again and again when in doubt.

For example, are you spelling center as centre as well? Or programme as program?

Does your house style use ten point or 12 point? Do you left align your text or is it justified on both the left and right-hand margins? And how much space do you leave between lines, paragraphs?

We can go on and on but you will soon realize that you really should not trust your memory. It would of course be best if you had access to a readymade style guide.

8.5 ROLE OF COPY EDITOR IN PUBLICATION PROCESS

The publication process has three sub-stages and the copy editor is involved in all three sub-stages of the process of publication: cost estimation, press copy preparation and proof reading, and these, in turn, are linked to the three levels or stages of copy editing.

What is cost estimation? Remember, no publisher is in the field for philanthropic purposes. Eventually he is there to make a profit, the exact proportion of which may of course vary from publisher to publisher. There are precise ways of calculating the various costs which we shall deal with later.

Copy preparation involves preparing the ‘copy’ for the printer. This will carry instructions regarding type size, page dimensions, indentation, captioning, tabular setting, chapter headings and folios etc. Nowadays the software available in your personal computers offer options like spacing, paragraphing and indentation so that you can see what your final document will look like but this was not always so, hence the highly developed field of copy editing.

Proof reading is basically an exercise to check that the copy editor’s instructions have been faithfully carried out but also extends to identifying errors missed at the earlier stages of the publishing process. Sometimes incompatibility of page making software and wordprocessing software creates new errors that must be manually cross-checked.

8.6 TYPES OR LEVELS OF COPY EDITING

While there are various ways of discussing the types of copy editing a manuscript undergoes before it emerges as a printed document, we shall describe the types by way of the level of difficulty they present to you.

The level of copy editing may be light, medium, or heavy, depending on the quality and complexity of the manuscript. Generally speaking, you would need to see that the manuscript is complete (all the parts, from the preliminary pages to the various chapters, illustrations etc, conclusion, the index if any etc), properly organized, consistent in content and presentation, and properly referenced if need be.

Light: As a novice, you may probably be asked to look at errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage, as well as checking the style for consistency in capitalization, numbering and spelling.

Medium: When you have gained some experience you will be entrusted with greater responsibility: You may have to eliminate objectionable matter like racist, sexist or xenophobic language, check for looseness of language (using a non-specific word when there is a more precise one available (nice food, nice is one word that you may repeatedly encounter), cross-check references, see if copyright matter needs permission, and mark design elements and styles for the typesetter.
Heavy: Eventually you would need to be able to improve clarity, change the voice to the appropriate (active in preference to passive unless the subject is scientific or technical in which case you would use the passive), eliminate jargon and interact with the author to discuss additions, deletions and rearrangements.

At this level, you would probably be entering the domain of the substantive editor. The substantive editor is responsible for the following: revising murky passages to improve clarity, changing passive to active voice, eliminating jargon, and making suggestions to the author for cuts, additions, and rearrangements.

### 8.7 ELEMENTARY COPY EDITING

What do we mean by elementary copy editing? Let us consider it as the first step in your training as a copy editor. In this you are not expected to have much experience in working on your own. Apart from seniors in the profession who could be your mentors, there are number of reliable tools like dictionaries, thesauri and dictionaries that can guide you in issues of language usage as well. For example, you could have the Longman Dictionary, the Oxford Dictionary, the Advanced Learner’s Dictionary and the Collin’s Cobuild Dictionary on your work desk. In addition, you could have the Roget’s Thesaurus which, in case you have not seen it as yet, is a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms.

At the elementary level ‘the editor corrects errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage, as well as making the style consistent for capitalization, numbers, and abbreviations’ (Courtesy: San Diego Professional Editors Network).

We cannot caution you enough to **always** look up the spellings of words in dictionaries and usage manuals and not rely on your memory alone. Sometimes our memories can deceive us and we would in trouble indeed if we introduced errors during our copy editing!

Punctuation, of course, is an important responsibility and you cannot afford to relax your vigilance at all. Look out for a quote beginning with a single quote and ending with a double one. Maybe there is a round bracket at the beginning of a parenthesis and a square one to close it. These may seem small details but in practice, these very errors will leap out at you and distract from readability and reliability and cannot be ignored.

**Consistency in capitalization** is a pitfall for many novices. You may encounter South India and south India, god and God, mother and Mother. At such times, you need to look at the word in context and add it to your Style Sheet. The Style sheet is an important aide memoire since it is rare indeed that you will find a readymade style sheet to make your work simple. Of course, there are a number of readymade ones which you could use and keep adding your own aids members to them as well. When in doubt, consult the author or an experienced senior.

**Software:** We would like to caution you that the software in your personal computers will certainly help but can never replace the human experienced eye.

#### Activity 2

Try writing out, on your computer, phrases like

- They are *cooking* apples
- They are *looking* apples
- They are *booking* apples

Did your computer indicate, by means of green or red underlines, which of the above phrases makes no sense or has wrong capitalisation?

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.)
Several words, particularly those which are personal names, have many acceptable spellings. You may have to prepare a style sheet for yourself in which you note down, at the first occurrence, the spelling used for Verma for instance. Verma is equally often spelt as Varna. Then there are occasions when people spell their names due to personal choices, numerological considerations, etc. You would need to bear in mind that if there is a word spelt in several ways in the document, it is a better idea to consult with the author as to his personal preferences before making any decision on your own.

As regards numbering, you will observe, during the course of your work that a number is variously written as

One, 1, I

Again, page numbering may be i, ii, iii, iv, v in the preliminary pages of a book and then in the main body of text it becomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. It is important that you appreciate that there are important reasons for this to happen and you must pause before you put your editorial pencil to work. The reason for this particular feature is not idiosyncrasy but that the preliminary pages like the preface or acknowledgment of a book are sometimes late in arriving or are separately written and the machines involved in the printing process at the press cannot be held up till they come. The preliminary pages are therefore numbered separately.

It is important, in addition, to check the usage of words. Sometimes a certain word may be grammatically correct but due to a variety of reasons, be inappropriate in the particular context. This inappropriateness may be due to cultural factors, regional factors, racial factors etc. In India in particular, you would need to exercise great caution because of caste and class sensitivities as well. And before making and changes, do consult/advise the author too.

8.8 MEDIUM COPY EDITING

As we said above, and we repeat, when you have gained some experience you will be entrusted with greater responsibility. That is to say, when you are familiar with some of the tasks of a copy editor and also are able to appreciate that reference tools like some of the ones we have listed above are invaluable tools. Experience, which also we laid some stress on, cannot be replaced by word processing software alone. This is not to run down software but to sensitise you to the necessity of acquiring experience. When you will approach the task of copy editing, it is indeed helpful to run a Spell Checker so that obvious mistakes are caught. That leaves you free to concentrate on nuances and matters of style. With experience, you will discover that language which is perfectly correct grammatically may still offend readers. In fact, management students study this issue which in the domain of human resource management as a branch of study!

*The Thomas Theorem* deals with how we perceive language. "If we perceive it as being insulting or negative in connotation, then the practical consequence will be that it is insulting, regardless of whether either the denotation of the language or the intent with which it was delivered had been."

Using the right word is often a task left to the copy editor/language editor/editor. Sometimes the author cannot achieve the desirable effect because he is so close to the subject matter. You will need to check for looseness of language — using a non-specific word — the ubiquitous nice when there is a more precise one available. Who has not come across: a nice girl, a nice day, a nice meal?

You will need to check for cross references. Sometimes there is a reference to "see page 6 for details" and when you come to page six, there are no details or perhaps, during the process of page making, page 6 has become page 7 or 5.
The copy editor needs to look out for matter that has been reproduced from some other source. In case copyrighted material has been used, the necessary permission and any payment for its use should here be obtained by the author. While it is true that this responsibility is not the publisher's to the extent that you as copy editor are responsible for cross-checking, do check that necessary permissions has been taken and that the quotation is accurate.

Apart from these, you also have to interact with the printer and give him instructions as regards design elements and styles for his typesetter. You will learn in detail about these the next block.

8.9 HEAVY COPY EDITING

We are deliberately using relatively informal terms because these are introductory units. As we proceed further into the course, we shall use the more precise ones. So what do we mean by heavy copy editing?

As copy editor, you will need to make a fairly exhaustive list of queries to cross-check with the author. This will work to your advantage because there will be less demands to incorporate corrections/changes at later stages. The later the stage the more difficult, time consuming and expensive it is to make changes. Factual errors, inaccuracies, abbreviations, paragraphing, references – all need to be clarified before the printer begins his work.

The typeface, layout and chapter headings all need to be communicated to the press. But before this, the text itself has to be satisfactory.

We would like to point out that light medium and heavy copy editing may all be carried out simultaneously by the experienced copy editor.

Activity 3
Change into active voice:
Twenty milliliters of fluid were put into a flask which was then stirred and readings taken after ten, twenty and thirty minutes. Finally the whole was discarded and then fresh fluid taken.

Why do you think this is written in the passive voice?

(Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.)

8.9.1 Briefing the Production Team

By now you would be aware of the general size and shape of the final product, the target reader and the selling price or desired production cost. You will therefore need to give instructions to the printer and designer as to the typeface, whether there are footnotes or end references, if any parts of the book, (the preface for example) are yet to arrive, whether there are indentations in the text, the nature, number and type of illustrations if any.
Use copy editing symbols, like proof reading symbols that are universally understood. The procedure for copy marking is also well laid out. Corrections/changes are made in the body of the text using copy-marking symbols. As distinguished from proof reading symbols, remember, copy marking is done in the body while proof reading corrections are made using proof reading symbols in the nearest margin with a mark in the text to indicate where the correction is to be carried out.

**Remember:**
- Copy marking-body of text
- Proof reading-nearest margin

### 8.9.2 Preparing a Specimen Page

It is a good idea to prepare a representative sample for the designer to follow. This sample would have "solutions to all the general typographical problems that the printers will meet in this book" says Judith Butcher. Butcher suggests that sample pages could have a first page including headings, page number, a chapter opening, all the types of sub-headings, footnotes and having quotations. Alternatively, in case you have a sample of a book which seems satisfactory to you, you can instruct the printer-designer team to follow it closely. This would include paper, cover, illustrations, the works.

After you have looked at the language, you will also need to decide on pagination, chapterisation, headings and sub-headings. These editorial issues apart, your job involves production issues as well. Since you are the person who will have seen the first chapter of the book, you will be more qualified to discuss with the printer and designer whether the author would like the book to achieve and work in coordination with them to achieve those effects.

### 8.10 SUMMING UP

In this unit we introduced you to three levels of copy editing, dividing them into elementary, medium and heavy. By now you must be having a good idea of the various responsibilities that a copy editor has to undertake. Copy editing, then, is interacting with author and press/printer and all the while being conscious of the need to produce a book or journal that is readable, attractive and reliable.

### 8.11 AIDS TO ANSWERS

**Activity 1**

Did your list include convenient size, colourful illustrations, good printing, error-free text, good quality paper?

**Activity 2**

Your computer would NOT have indicated that these are meaningless sentences: ‘booking’ and ‘looking’ apples being meaningless terms. This is because the computer is not programmed to THINK whereas the human being instructing the computer, which is after all a machine, can make sense of written texts.

**Activity 3**

I put twenty milliliters of fluid into a flask …

Do you see how odd this sounds? This is because the scientific activity being described here is more important than the person performing it. Therefore it is better to use the passive voice here.
8.12 FURTHER READING

6) Lecture notes of B D Mendiratta, HOD, Printing Technology, Pusa Polytechnic, Pusa