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Editing in America

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Editing in America
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Introduction

As I am fond of saying, I originally began editing because a friend of mine asked me to edit one of the novels he was working on. As a favor, I took a look at it, and much to my surprise very quickly found myself enjoying the process of commenting, correcting, and otherwise working with him on his book. It came as a surprise because I had never to that point considered that writing or editing would be something that I would enjoy, and I had actually been working until then as a software developer.

But once I worked with him, and continued working with him, I realized that if this was a path I wanted to pursue that I would need to educate myself formally on the practices of writing and editing. Lacking this education, I feared I would encounter hurdles and pitfalls that I would otherwise be unable to handle. And that is when I applied for the MAPW program at Kennesaw State University.

I learned upon joining the program that many of its students were aspiring writers and teachers of writing, but I met no one else who started the program with an interest specifically in editing. This was the beginning of my education into who editors were and where they resided, as I learned that editing, which is widely titled copy editing, is usually pursued not from a writing degree, but a journalism or communications degree as an undergraduate.

Still, the MAPW Program courses were very valuable to me as I explored different avenues of writing in the composition and rhetoric, applied, and creative courses. But I found myself still very curious as to who editors were and what skills and proficiencies, and in general what educational background, they possessed as professionals. Ultimately, I wanted to know what I needed to do to consider myself a professional editor. At this point I had already started

working as a freelance editor for a number of clients in a variety of fields from power companies to authors in Europe writing horror stories.

But this question was what drove me to begin investigating the world of professional editing, and it is how I began to question who editors were and where they came from academically. The formulation of this research project came about as a result of investigating this question and reading the works of those who have published on this topic. To that point, I found scarcely anything that would shed light on my question. Though there has been a great deal of writing on Editing in general, the vast majority of it comes in the way of advice columns and books, or "tips and tricks" of the trade, rather than any significant discussion on professional editing and the direction of the profession. That is not to say that nothing is published on this subject, just that it is difficult to find as it is often obscured by the rather large number of other published works that offer little more than passing advice on "how to be a better writer."

What I did find related to professional editing was often pessimistic. What I learned, most importantly, was that my concept of editors, the idea of who they were and what they did, was ultimately wrong. I viewed editing at that point in a very traditional sense, in that an editor was someone who, by and large, proofed manuscripts or other documents and commented on the language and grammar presented within them. This was the kind of work I was doing at this point, and it was how I identified as an editor as well. But my reading revealed that traditional editing had been under strain since the inception of word processors, and that professional editors, of all kinds, were not often well appreciated for what they offered.

My greatest exposure to the professional field of editing was through the MAPW program's course on Professional & Academic Editing. Aside from this, I also had experienced this profession while working on my own book editing projects. As I learned from this course

and from courses on Desktop Publishing and Technical Writing in the MAPW program, editing was very quickly becoming something non-traditional and I could easily see how it could move beyond editing text alone and evolve into something close to total document evaluation.

So I again wondered, where do editors stand today? And this was the foundation of my research. I wanted to know whether or not editors, specifically copy editors, are experiencing changes within their field, and if so, what will become of them? But my problem was finding a place to start.

The biggest issue I faced was that there was so little published directly related to this question that I needed to find firmer ground to stand on so that I wasn't required to speculate on what I found. What I knew, and what I could find, was that copy editors are often plagued by feelings of under-appreciation and low job-satisfaction. I also knew that many felt that technology was a root cause of copy editors feeling like management was undervaluing their position. Ironically, technology has also probably created the largest demand for copy editors since the inception of the printing press, but that is only being discussed in greater frequency now.

Most of the research I could find was published in the 1990s and early 2000s. There have been some more recent articles, but instead of relying on only a few published works, I instead tried to build a trail of historical evidence that would ultimately show where the industry had been and where it was going, attempting to demonstrate that the issues this research sought to address were not new, but that new light needed to be shined on them.

Ultimately, I am not sure I entirely succeeded in what I set out to do. I believe I may have at least added perspective on the influence technology has had on the perceptions held by those in and outside of the field of copy editing. As well, I believe I have answered the

significant question I set out to learn more about, and that is whether or not the process of professional copy editing has changed in the last thirty years. More specifically, I wanted to know what influence technology has had on the role of copy editors in modern publishing, and to what extent copy editing evolved from its traditional roots.

Below are the results of my study, along with my discussion of the project and the survey I presented to members of the American Copy Editors Association, or ACES. I owe a great deal of thanks to my Capstone Committee, Dr. Sergio Figueiredo and Dr. Margaret Walters, who went above and beyond in helping me understand both what I wanted to ask and how to go about answering my questions, as well as presenting the project. Without their input and support, this project would not have come to fruition.

Definition of Copy Editing

It is prudent to first attempt to define copy editors and copy editing as a profession, and there is no better way to begin than through the work of Amy Einsohn. In her book, *The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communication*, she describes the necessary functions of professional copy editors. Very basically, she says that copy editors serve three constituencies: the author, the publisher, the reader. In service of each of these parties, the copy editor's goal is to help produce an error-free publication. The work of the copy editor is only one step in the publication process, but according to Einsohn this role consists of six major responsibilities: mechanical editing; correlating parts, or fact checking; language editing; content editing; permissions; type coding. While not all copy editors perform the same functions to the same degree, by and large professionals perform most, if not all, of these functions on a day-to-day basis.

Ann Auman, Frank Fee, and John Russial also offer a definition of copy editing in their 2002 article, "Noble Work, but Undervalued: The Status and Value of Copy Editing in Journalism Schools." While Einsohn addresses the role of the copy editor at large, referring to the copy editing role in the publishing process along with general responsibilities, Auman, Fee, and Russial describe the copy editor in terms of the emphasis placed on specific skills associated with that work taught by major institutions. While their article is at this point more than a decade old, their definition of copy editing as being "traditional word-editing skills, headline writing and layout and design" is both succinct and effective (143).

When the researcher hereafter refers to copy editors and copy editing in this research, he is referring to professionals who work for Einsohn's three constituencies and perform at least the roles described by Auman, Fee, and Russial.

Background and Literature Review

Directly related to the intent of this research, the article, "Why Copy Editors Matter,"

published in 2014 by Sylvia Hunter discusses at length the role of the modern copy editor. And

while Hunter's article is not ultimately pessimistic, her statements regarding the invisibility of

copy editors is echoed by the work of other researchers such as Susan Keith and John Russial.

To be clear, Hunter explains how copy editors perform the entirely necessary function of quality

control for academic journals, and that their role in the publishing process is to prevent the

publication of egregious, or even outright libelous, errors. Hunter draws upon several examples

from both her own career and stories told to her by other copy editors of how egregious errors

can (and almost did) severely undermine the credibility of the author and the publisher. She

agrees that copy editing is a significant and important role in the publishing industry. But her

argument is being made because, as she points out, when copy editors do their jobs well their

work is meant to be invisible. Because of this invisibility, Hunter states some academic journals

have decided to remove copy editors from their publication process altogether. This is not a

decision shared by all academic journals, of course, but it has happened with some. Hunter also

states that the invisibility of copy editors is sometimes only ever lifted when they miss something.

There is little reward for averting a potential disaster, but when something goes wrong, even if

it's something the copy editor has no control over, it is usually the copy editor who takes the

blame.

The significance of this article for the researcher was that it reveals a perception of copy

editing and copy editors, which is this notion of invisibility. Hunter's article speaks of the

importance of copy editors, and makes a case for why copy editors need to be more vocal about

the value of their role in the workplace, but it was her description of how copy editors are

perceived in the workplace that stuck with me. This notion is further supported by other researchers, such as John Russial, Susan Keith, and Andrew Zahler. The former previously wrote about the possible disappearance of the copy desk in news rooms, while the latter two researchers discussed the historical dissatisfaction of copy editors in the work place.

While dated, John Russial notes in his 1998 article, "Goodbye Copy Desks, Hello Trouble?" that many newspapers had begun to shift its copy editors to different areas, such as topic teams or design and presentation desks. In some cases, newspapers such as *The Wichita Eagle* eliminated the copy editor as a distinct operation (1). Russial worries that the elimination of the copy desk from major news organizations will diminish the quality of the material produced. His point is well taken, when he states, "a job classification, such as copy editor, represents an institutional commitment to a set of practices" and that "by creating the position, the organization says it considers these tasks important." For Russial, and for us, the question then follows, "will these tasks be considered as vital if the job category is eliminated" (6)? Russial argues that the idea of reengineering newsroom positions in order to increase efficiency is not necessarily wrong, but that, with regard to copy editors, its effectiveness relies on whether or not three key assumptions related to copy editing remain valid:

- That copy-editing and headline-writing skills are vital in maintaining editorial quality.
- That not everyone in the newsroom has those skills, is interested in developing them, or is even capable of developing them.
- That the skills can be best developed, applied and nurtured in specialized operations known as copy desks. (5)

While Russial's second point, that not everyone in the newsroom would be capable of developing the skills necessary of a copy editor, is questionable in so far as it suggests the talents

of copy editors are strictly innate to the individual, rather than learned. This point is arguable, but Russial seems to believe that these assumptions remain valid, and that redesigning newsrooms is ultimately a seductive concept, but it may not apply well to the copy desk, namely because copy editing is traditionally a highly specialized practice that suffers when professionals are asked to generalize, or rather work outside their area of specialization. For Russial, the real danger is that the option of reengineering away the copy desk may ultimately undermine the quality of major newspapers, which would be a step in the wrong direction. To be clear, Russial is also not necessarily discussing the total disappearance of copy editors from the newsroom. Rather, he is focused on the deconstruction of an institutional practice and reorganization of that practice into other areas of the publication / news reporting process. His concern, though, is that this reorganization will ultimately have a detrimental effect on the quality of news being published.

It would be very difficult, in fact, to argue that copy editors are disappearing from publishing. In fact, projected growth for editors, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), published online in 2012 by in its Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), states that employment for editors, at 115,300 jobs in 2012, will show little change between 2012 and 2022, declining by only 2% over that time. The OOH also states that job growth is most likely to occur for editors in online media, while traditional editing jobs in print will continue to decline. The OOH points out that competition for these jobs will be particularly strong due to declining employment within the publishing industry, while editors who have skills with online media and electronic and digital tools will have greater advantage over those who do not. Importantly, the report also asserts that editors will continue adding value to the publishing industry through their role in providing revisions of drafts that will create consistency in style and voice. While 2012 is

not necessarily current in 2015, these statistics are published every few years, and suggest that despite any decline present in copy editing for traditional publishing, the professional copy editor is still in demand, and that at least in 2012, more than half of the 115,300 employed editors worked in the publishing industry.

Russial's article, despite its age, maintains relevance because it demonstrates that the discussion of the value presented by copy editors has been talked about for almost two decades. This is not a new issue, and the conversation surrounding the importance and shifting role of copy editors is ongoing. It is also important to note that Russial's worry may have been ultimately unfounded as developments in technology, including increasing reliance of social media and internet sources for a 24 hour news cycle over the last twenty years has placed greater emphasis on supporting these outlets within news organizations. Our modern reliance on rapid news publication has also undoubtedly put a great deal of strain on modern copy editors and one possibility is simply that it is more cost effective for a news outlet to correct mistakes made in copy after it has been published than to push all of its material through a limited number of copy editors. Another possibility is that the "business" of the news industry is rapid publication, and news organizations are always trying to be the first to publish a story. Combined with the knowledge that the number of editor jobs has remained almost unchanged, and is projected to change only very slightly over the next ten years, it is likely that the workload on the modern editor is higher than ever.

It is only natural that there would be a shift away from print media as the Internet and online publishing rapidly grew in popularity since the time of Russial's article. But Russial's point remains quite valid, in that he is discussing the institutional commitment to a set of practices, and worries that such commitment will ultimately falter if the organization no longer

values those who work within that practice. Russial is concerned about the future, and that future is now.

While researchers like Russial and Hunter attempt to intercede on behalf of American copy editors, many are attempts to address the skills or "best practices" used by those already in the profession. Many articles deal with questions related more specifically to the importance of editing in general, or sometimes specifically within a given field. These articles can seek to convince readers that editing is a good idea, such as "Commas, Christians, and Editors" by David Henige. Or they can explain why, for example, editing encyclopedia entries is rewarding, such as "Editing Encyclopedias for Fun and Aggravation" by Jeffrey Ian Ross and Frank Shanty. Many seek only to provide a how-to guide of best practices for writers or editors in a specific field, such as "Technically Speaking: Best Practices for Copy editing the Web" by Erin Brenner.

It is from these articles that the impact of technology on editing practices can be observed, such as editing for internet publications or formatting for electronic readers. But there are only a few, if any, reports that deal with the actual conditions faced by and changing roles of editors, and specifically copy editors, today. At best, academic journals will make available their editorial and publishing statistics, like those available from the *American Economic Review*, published in reports such as "Report of the Editor: American Economic Review" by Robert A. Moffitt, or articles which attempt to grapple with the ethical aspects of editing, such as "Newspaper Copy Editors' Perceptions of Their Ideal and Real Ethics Roles" by Susan Keith. The latter informs us of the perceptions surrounding editorial positions at major newspapers, but only from the perspective of editors as active guardians of published media.

Amy Einsohn's book, *The Copy Editor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications*, provides a current outlook on the role copy editors play in the

publication process. Einsohn's book offers expert advice on contemporary copy editing practices, and she also describes some of the changes copy editors have experienced due to the emergence of technology. For example, she states that "today a few copyeditors still work on hard copy, but most sit at a computer and key in their work—a process variously called *on-screen editing, electronic manuscript (EMS) editing,* or *online editing*" (4). Still, she goes on to state that even in the presence of modern technology, copy editors are still required to work with "excruciating care and attentiveness" (4).

However, there are studies that demonstrate that this sentiment of under appreciation for copy editing has been an ongoing issue for the profession since the mid-1980s, and that little has changed in the decades since. Susan Keith tracks this change in her 2005 article, "Copy Editor Job Satisfaction Lowest at Small Newspapers." She demonstrates this trend by first discussing prior published research that, in 1989, "depicted copy editors as 'disillusioned gatekeepers,'" and stated that "43% of the 191 copy editors among the 1,200 journalists surveyed said they would be unhappy if they held the same job in five years" (9). While she also notes that this percentage rose somewhat in 2002 and that a majority of copy editors are at least "fairly satisfied" with their jobs during this time period, her own study found that there is still troublingly low job satisfaction among copy editors working for smaller newspapers around the country. Of the 470 usable responses to her survey, Keith found that "only 23% of the copy editors in this study strongly agree[d] they were satisfied with their jobs" (11). Keith concludes by noting that the jobs of copy editors are apparently "mostly stick and little carrot" (14), citing the Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory[1] for analyzing two extrinsic and two intrinsic areas in which copy editors are least satisfied. According to Keith, these extrinsic and intrinsic areas are schedule

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[1] Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, also known as the two-factor theory, simply states that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are independent of each other, and that different factors contribute to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

and salaries, and advancement and prospects of doing the same work in five years, respectively. However, the salient point of this study is that the low job satisfaction of copy editors, at least in the newsroom, is a common concern.

It is significant to point out that Susan Keith's data is, at this point, somewhat out of date. However, Andrew Zahler's article "One-Third of Copy Editors Dissatisfied with Their Jobs," published in 2007 suggests similar results. In particular, that the workload placed on copy editors has a significant, negative relationship with job satisfaction. Zahler's study, which also surveyed members of the ACES through their membership e-mail, found that more than a third (39.7%) of survey respondents "would be dissatisfied in the same position in five years" (31). As well, Zahler found that workload was negatively correlated with both job and performance satisfaction (28).

With the advent of more powerful and diverse technologies, it is not unreasonable to assume that specialized roles in major news organizations have been reengineered into more diverse and efficient roles. The question remains, what is the current status of the modern copy editor? Research done by Diane Brown and Lee White attempts to grapple with this sort of question.

Brown and White's 2005 article, "Book Editors in Australia," offered valuable insight into the changing landscape of the book editing industry in Australia, and helped to define who book editors were as professionals, and what context surrounded their professional work environment. Their study assessed the survey responses of 19 experienced Australian book editors in order to contextualize the perception of professional book editing, and to assess the changes that have occurred within the industry over the last twenty years. Their survey results, though limited, determined that "the traditional editorial role of mediator and author-nurturer has

been reduced to negligible proportions," and that the bulk of a book editor's responsibilities is now copy editing (7). Ultimately, Brown and White concluded that book editing in Australia "represents an increasingly small niche that offers employment to a dwindling number of professional editors" (7). However, they also conclude that editing in areas such as corporate, knowledge-based industries, government, and non-government organizations is an "ever expanding field" (7). The significance of this study is in their approach to understanding the challenges faced by book editors in Australia, and in their attempt to redefine the status of the profession.

Two years after publishing the previous article, Brown, along with Marilyn Dorman, also published an article entitled, "Editors' Knowledge and Skills in the Twenty-first Century" in which the authors discuss how emerging technologies have radically changed the scope of editorial responsibilities within modern publishing. In this article, Brown and Dorman acknowledge that "without question, the scope of editorial work and the role of the editor have expanded with every new medium," and that these expansions occur as each new medium, and the technology associated with it, "stimulates the editorial imagination about how documents will be read, and suggests alternative modes of presentation from single-source content" (76). In this more recent study, Brown and Dorman survey a sample of sixteen editors, both freelancers and in-house, who work in Australia. They asked respondents to report information on multiple aspects of their work experiences and their expectations on what aspects of their profession have changed. While the authors do not attempt to answer questions related to the changes taking place within the specific contexts of editors within the myriad fields that fall into the context of editing, this study does demonstrate how emerging technologies have compounded the roles and responsibilities of editors. They observe, through the results of their surveys, that editors have

begun to take on the role of content creators in various fields, including responsibilities that were once strictly relegated to designers and typesetters. Brown and Dorman conclude their study by stating, "The editor's role will transform, even transgress editorial boundaries, as more publishing moves into electronic organization and dissemination, offering an ever expanding field for the Australian editor working in global, knowledge-based economies" (83).

The two surveys presented by Brown, along with White and Dorman, call into question the evolving role of the editor in modern society. While these two articles deal with this subject within the context of the Australian publishing world, it stands to reason the results of these surveys might readily be applied to the overall trends taking place within the international community. Technology is fast changing the face of publishing, and expanding editorship into new mediums and diversifying the media available to readers, largely through the Internet. However, these surveys, while informative of the changes taking place in editorship, do not specifically deal with the emerging trends located in other countries, namely the United States, nor do they address the challenges described by Keith, Zahler, and Brown and White.

The present research project is an attempt to provide the same sort of groundwork when discussing copy editing in the United States, as the traditional image of the copy editor does not seem to fully describe the roles and responsibilities associated with this profession anymore. Further, the ultimate goal of this study is to provide a grounding point when discussing modern copy editors working in the United States, and to provide perspective on how their role is evolving, if at all.

Methodology

This research used a survey of twenty questions which were linked via email to members of the American Copy Editors Society (ACES) email list. The survey was posted on December 1, 2014, and closed on February 15, 2015. The survey was hosted by SurveyMonkey.com, and results were collected through the site before being transferred to Microsoft Excel for analysis. Some analysis was also done using SurveyMonkey.com's built-in analysis tools. As well, it is important to note that respondents were volunteers from a self-selected list, and do not necessarily represent the entire population of copy editors. The survey questions are attached at the end of this report in Appendix C and include the same spelling error in Question 4 that participants received.

Responses were collected through SurveyMonkey.com, and results were calculated by reviewing responses individually. For questions that were not open-answer, responses were collected directly from the response list. Open-answer questions were reviewed and categorized by the researcher based on the responses given. Some responses were discarded when responses did not answer the question given.

This research was also approved by the Kennesaw State University Institutional Review Board, with Dr. Sergio Figueiredo serving as the project's Principal Investigator. Documents that appear in Appendix A, B, and C were submitted to the KSU IRB prior to approval of this research.

Survey Questions and Responses

Question 1: "Please Indicate Consent"

Question 1 asked potential respondents to consent to participation in the survey and informed them that such participation was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 268 individuals responded to this question, with 265 consenting to the survey and only 3 opting out of the survey, meaning 98.8% of those who choose to read the survey agreed to participate in the study. Strangely, two of the three respondents who choose to not consent to the survey were able to continue beyond the first question and answered several questions later on in the survey. This should not have happened, because the logic of the questioner should have directed them to an exit statement immediately following their response to the first question. The responses of these two were omitted from consideration as they did not originally consent to the survey.

Question 2: "Please Indicate Your Age"

Despite 265 individuals agreeing to participate in this anonymous survey, only 141 choose to answer the second question. The age range for respondents is 26 to 72 years of age, with an average age of 49 years of age.

Age Frequency
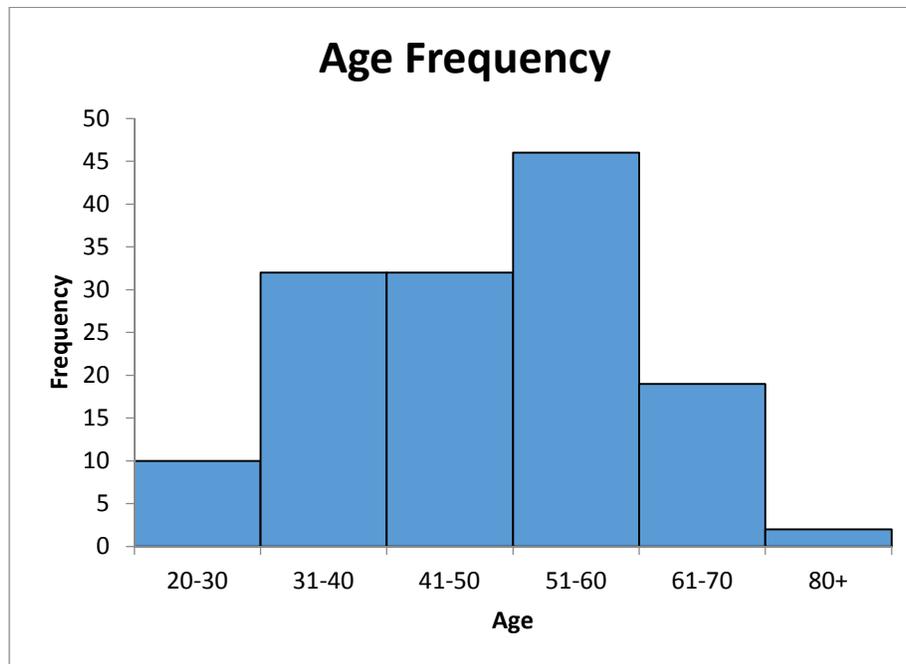
Question 3: "Please Indicate Your Sex"

A total of 142 participants answered this question, with 29 (20.5%) identifying as male and 113 (79.5%) identifying as female.

Question 4: "Have you previously worked as a coyp [*sic*] editor?"

This question included an unintentional typographical error that came about during the creation of the survey. Of the 142 respondents who answered this question, 123 (86.6%) indicated "Yes" and 19 (13.4%) indicated "No."

Question 5: "Do you presently work as a copy editor?"

With 142 respondents, 119 (83.8%) indicated that "Yes" they presently work as a copy editor, while 23 (16.2%) indicated "No."

Question 6: "If the answer to question 5 is No, please explain what role, if any, you have in the communications industries at present:"

While this question asked for responses from only those participants who previously answered "No" to Question 5, 36 participants chose to answer this question. Of these, 14

responses were made by participants who answered "Yes" to the previous question. The 22

participants who answered "No" to Question 5 provided a range of responses including freelance

work, internal communications, web content blogging, and professors. Interestingly, some

respondents who answered "No" to Question 5, indicating that they do not presently work as a

copy editor, stated in Question 6 that they currently work as a copy editor. As well, some

respondents who answered "Yes" to Question 5, indicating that they do presently work as copy

editors, also answered Question 6, stating that they work as a copy editor. Because the responses

to this question were so varied, they have been attached at the end of this report in Appendix E.

Question 7: "How many years have you worked in the communications industries?"

Respondents represent a wide range of work experience, indicating between 1 and 47

years spent working in the communications industries. However, of the 140 respondents who

answered this question, only 10 respondents indicated having less than 6 years of experience

working in the communications industries.
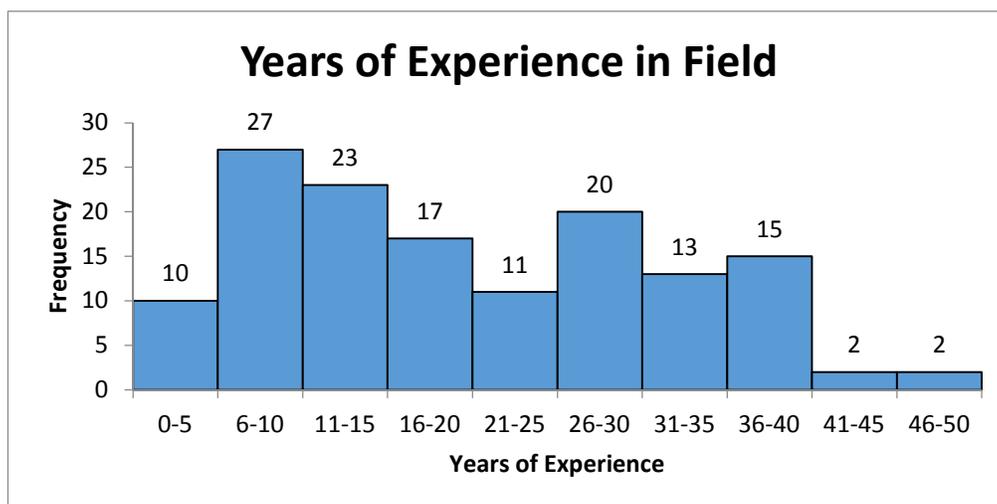
Question 8: "What is your current professional title?"

A total of 141 respondents provided their professional titles. Like the previous questions,

this question served as a means of gauging who the respondents were within the professional

community and what role they occupied in the publication process. While the titles provided were varied and numerous, only seven of them did not seem to directly indicate a position related to editing.

Question 9: "As a professional in the communications industries, what are the skills qualification, or competencies you use on a daily basis? Please include as much detail as possible:"

Question 10: "If you were to temporarily hire someone to manage your responsibilities, what skills, qualifications, or competencies would be necessary for them to fulfill your job requirements?"

Question 9 and Question 10 asked participants about the skills and competencies they use on a daily basis from two different perspectives. These questions were intended to illicit a response that reflects the respondents perception of their work and job requirements. They ask first what the participant views as their responsibilities, and second what someone else would need to fulfill the same role. While 134 and 133 respondents answered Question 9 and Question 10 respectively, 44 (33%) of the answers to Question 10 were merely redirects to the responses given for Question 9, which is to be expected. Those that were not redirects answered in much the same way as response to Question 9, with respondents emphasizing skills related to organization, industry knowledge, proofreading experience, and so on.

Question 11: "Describe your workplace within the communications industries, and your role in this workplace. Please include as much detail as possible."

Respondents to this question provided information about the atmosphere and physical layout of their workplace, describing their organization and how they fit within it. Responses to

this question were as varied as the job titles provided in Question 8, but offer perspective of the organization level of respondents' workplace.

Question 12: "Do you work with, or have you previously worked with, one or more copy editors?"

Only 13 (9.3%) of the 139 respondents to this question answered "No," indicating that the majority (126 or 90.7%) presently or have in the past worked together with copy editors.

Question 13: "How do you perceive the role of copy editors in the communications industries?"

Question 14: "How do you perceive your role in the communications industries?"

Like Question 9 and Question 10, these questions were intended to illicit responses that illuminated the respondents' perceptions of the role of copy editors in the communications industries. Not all respondents who answered Question 13 elected to answer Question 14, which contained 132 and 129 responses respectively, and like Question 9 and Question 10, some of those who answered Question 14 choose to state simply "See Question 13" as their response. A total of 57 (44%) of respondents to Question 14 indicated that they feel their role is essential in the industry or their workplace. Conversely, only 22 (17%) of respondents indicated a negative outlook on their role within the industry. The remaining 50 respondents to Question 14 discussed their role in their field directly, without any strong indication as to how they felt about that role.

Question 15: "Has your role as a copy editor, or in communications industries, significantly changed since you joined the profession? If so, how?"

Question 16: "In your time as a professional in the communications industries, have you observed any significant changes in these industries? If so, please describe those changes in as much detail as possible."

These two questions sought to engage respondents on their role as professionals in the communications industries and offer their perspective on how that role has changed, if at all. Question 15 is asking specifically if the respondent's role has changed, while Question 16 asks whether or not the respondent has observed changes to the industry in general. For Question 15, only 23 (17.3%) of respondents stated that they had observed little to no change in their role as copy editors in the communications industries, leaving 110 (82.7%) of respondents to agree that change in some form has taken place.

Of the 121 respondents to Question 16, only 5 (4.1%) stated that they have observed no changes in the communications industries over the course of their career, leaving 116 (95.9%) of respondents to agree that change in one form or another has occurred. One issue with these questions is that they asked respondents to offer explanations on complex issues. As one respondent pointed out in response to Question 16, "Some of these questions are far too general. Don't have time to compose an essay." Others stated that books can, and have been written on this subject.

The goal of these questions was not to have respondents detail every change that has taken place to the communications industries over the last forty years, or to argue what those changes are. Rather, these questions sought to illicit the perspective of those currently working in the industry, to determine *their* perception of those changes, rather than present an analysis of the objective, observable changes which certainly have occurred.

Question 17: "Have advances in electronic software and hardware altered the role (or need

for) copy editors? Please explain:"

In this question, 127 respondents gave their perspective on the influence of technology in

their profession, specifically whether they felt such advances has altered their role in the

workplace. Of those, 108 (85%) agreed that technology has had an influence on their

professional role, while only 19 (15%) felt that their role has not been influenced by technology.

Question 18: "In your role(s) in communications industries (currently and or previously),

how much do/did you earn annually?"

This question asked respondents to indicate their salary while working as a copy editor.

Unfortunately, perhaps due to the ambiguous nature of the question's wording, not all of the 131

responses collected were readily analyzed. However, 108 (82.4%) of the responses were able to

be categorized yielding the results presented in the graph below.
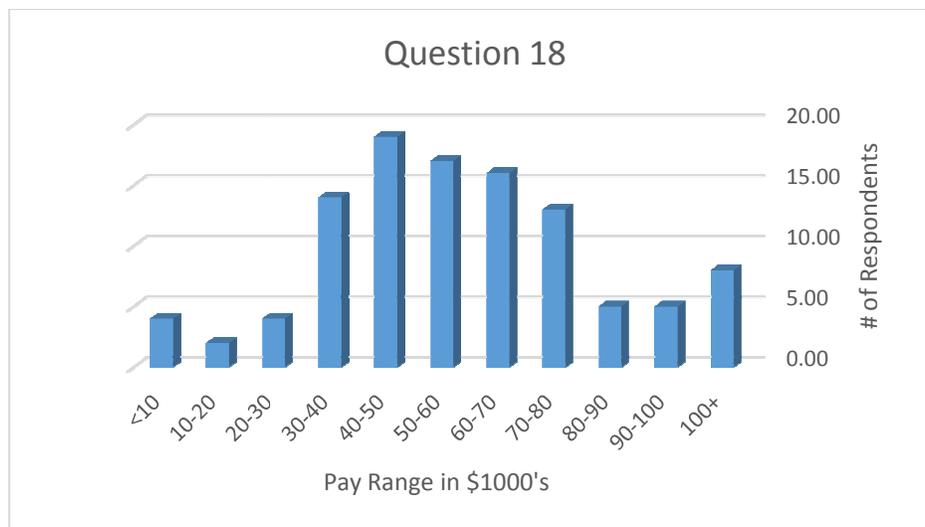
Question 19: "In your opinion, is/was this compensation appropriate? Please explain."

This question asked participants to comment of their own perception of what they were

paid. Again, 131 participants responded to this question and 97 (74%) of those respondents

agreed that their compensation was appropriate for the work they did, meaning only 34 (26%) of respondents felt they were not adequately compensated for their work.

Question 20: "What advice would you offer those seeking to enter the copy editing profession? Please explain."

This question was intended to illicit a response from participants regarding how their perspective of the future of copy editing. Overall, the 131 respondents of answered this question offered positive advice, while only 19 (14.5%) recommended avoiding the profession.

Problems Uncovered in this Survey

This survey asked several Yes-No questions that also asked participants to expand or elaborate on their responses. In hindsight, one thing this survey failed to account for was a middle ground to these questions. These Yes-No questions were presented in the form of open answer responses, in order to better facilitate the collection of varied and potentially illuminating responses beyond a simple binary choice. Unfortunately, this also led to many questions yielding vague or sometimes indeterminate answers. When asked, for example, whether or not participants believed the compensation they received for their work was adequate, some participants responded with highly vague comments that amounted ultimately to "It depends." The value of these open-ended responses, though, is in creating a more complete perspective on the current state of copy editing in America. Though it sometimes made assessments inconclusive, it is still valuable to know that the professional community is divided on an issue in ways that we sometimes do not expect.

While these non-binary responses are not inappropriate, they made the task of assessing majority opinion for some questions very difficult, as the researcher needed to go through each responses carefully in order to try and gauge the overall position of each participant. In some cases, the researcher was able to determine a meaningful category to assign to the response; for other questions this was not possible. The following response to question seventeen, "Have advances in electronic software and hardware altered the role (or need for) copy editors? Please explain," was useable: "I think it has heightened the need for copy editors because writers now must work even faster to get copy to readers. Copy editors must ask questions quickly and correct items in real time." While the respondent does not describe in any detail what technologies are responsible for change being described, this response is clearly a direct answer

to the question as the respondent is describing how these changes have altered the work activities and job demands placed on copy editors. However, another respondent stated only, "The need for copyeditors still remains." This statement, while indirectly offering perspective on the respondent's view of the importance of copy editors, does not actually answer the question, so it becomes difficult to categorize this statement with others, such as the first example, that are more direct. We can possibly infer that this respondent agrees that advances in software and hardware have altered the role/need for copy editors only because the statement could be inferred to mean "despite the changes, the need for copyeditors still remains," but I elected to ignore responses like this that either do not directly respond to the question or are too vague that the researcher would need to speculate in order to categorize the response.

In the future, follow–up surveys would alter the question format to better account for these issues. Providing scales and quantifiable categories for respondents to choose from, while also leaving space for open–ended responses. This would have the effect of increasing the length of the survey, but discreet choices would enable more efficient analysis and categorization. Instead of asking participants to state their current compensation as an open ended response, simply providing a range of choices would limit the sometimes varied and indeterminate responses while also allowing for easy analysis of the outcome. For example, question 7 asked, "how many years have you worked in the communications industry?" The responses to this question were typed in, when it would have been more useful had respondents been given a range of choices from which to select. This would have enabled more efficient and meaningful categorization of responses. Likewise, question sixteen asked "In your time as a professional in the communications industries, have you observed any significant changes in these industries? If so, please describe those changes in as much detail as possible." This question should have been

broken into two questions, the first being a binary Yes/No choice in which respondents indicated whether or not they have observed any changes, while the second question provided a place for respondents to explain their answer in greater detail. This would have allowed the question to be more quickly assessed, while still leaving the explanations open for further consideration. On the whole, the questions given in this study were successful in providing context for the perceptions of copy editors in the modern workplace, but future studies would be greatly improved by making these changes to the survey format.

On the other hand, it would be prudent for future studies to separate out the binary Yes-No portion of these questions from the open–ended segments. Instead of asking participants to respond with Yes-No, and then elaborate on that response in one question, future studies should present participants with discreet options first, then ask participants to elaborate on that statement in a follow–up question. While conducting future surveys in this way may limit some responses by forcing participants to choose between narrow categories, it creates a more readily assessable context to gauge results by, while the follow-up responses should still leave open the possibility of clarifying each participant's position.

Discussion

Of the 268 individuals who participated in this survey, only 144 (54%) chose to answer beyond the first question; only the responses of those 144 will be used in the following analysis. However, some participants chose to skip questions in the survey, but a majority of participants chose to fully answer the survey, with Question 16 having the second lowest response rate with 121 responses for 84% of the 144 participants. Excluding question 6, an average of 135.3 (93.9%) participants responded to each question. The question that received the fewest responses was Question 6, "If the answer to question 5 is No, please explain what role, if any, you have in the communications industries at present." Where Question 5 asked, "Do you presently work as a copy editor?" Only 37 responses were collected for this question; however, this is larger than the number of participants who answered "No" in the previous question. Those extra respondents used this space to respond to the questions in a variety of ways. Five respondents used this space to point out the typo in Question 4 which read, "Have you previously worked as a coyp editor?" This error was unintentional on the part of the researcher and may have led some respondents to either skip or misinterpret this question. One respondent, for example, replied to Question 6 stating, "Well, I never was a coyp editor. See q. 4."

Another respondent used the space available in Question 6 to comment on the vague nature of the survey's definition of copy editor, remarking that "it is not clear whether you're asking about full-time in-house positions or any type of copyediting." Both of these oversights may have influenced the responses provided by participants.

Because the total responses vary from question to question, percentages for each question are based on the total number of participants who chose to answer that specific question. This is

only a significant issue with Question 12, where only 139 participants answered rather than the 142 who answered beyond Question 1.

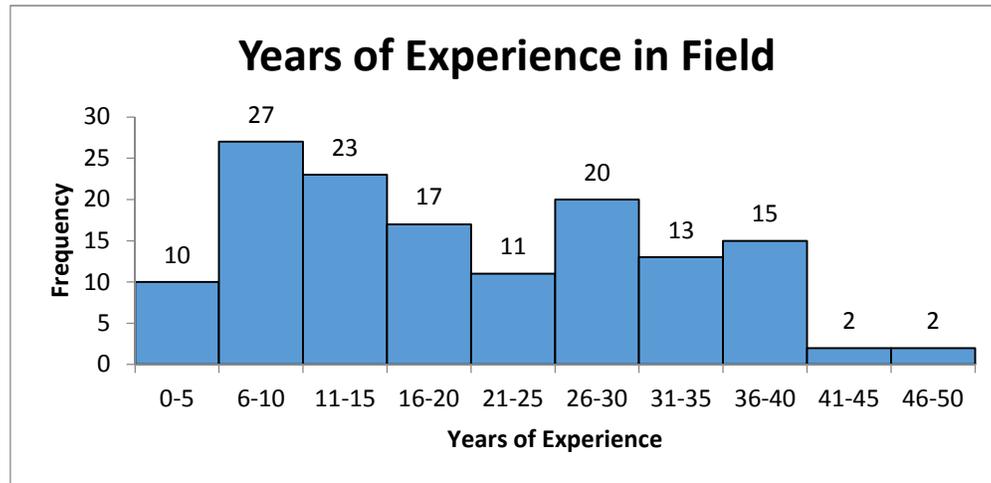Of the participants who responded beyond the initial statement of consent, 113 (79.6%) were female, with the remaining 29 (20.4%) identifying as male. A majority of the participants, 123 (86.6%), indicated that they have previously worked as a copy editor, while only 19 (13.4%) have not. Likewise, 119 (83.8%) of respondents currently work as copy editors, while 23 (16.2%) do not. Suffice to say, the majority of respondents to this survey identified as presently working as copy editors in some fashion. As well, 91% (126) of respondents indicated that they have in the past, or currently, worked with one or more copy editors, while only 9% (13) indicated that they have not. Only four respondents indicated that they neither previously nor presently work as a copy editor. Of these four, two are looking to work in the field, one is a communications editor, and the last is a senior consultant in marketing and communications.

The age range for respondents is 26 to 72 years of age, with an average age of 49 years of age, and is visible in the frequency graph provided.
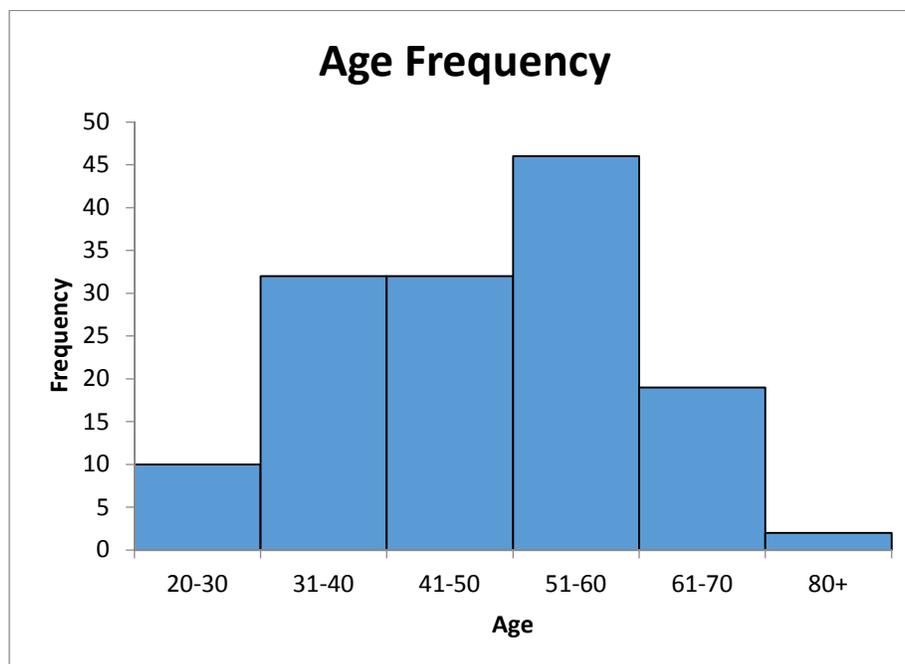
Respondents experience in the communications industry ranged from 1 year to 47 years. However, only 30 respondents have less than 10 years of experience in the communications industry.

Years of Experience in Field

A histogram titled "Years of Experience in Field" with the y-axis labeled "Frequency" (ranging from 0 to 30) and the x-axis labeled "Years of Experience." The bars show: 0-5: 10, 6-10: 27, 11-15: 23, 16-20: 17, 21-25: 11, 26-30: 20, 31-35: 13, 36-40: 15, 41-45: 2, 46-50: 2.

The first, perhaps most vocal, theme present in the discussion of modern copy-editing is that copy editors feel generally underappreciated. What seems to be the general consensus among those in the profession is that individuals who understand the importance of copy editing appreciate copy editors; those inexperienced with them do not understand the importance of copy editing.

The second consistent theme is that copy editors are being underappreciated and ignored, or that their positions in newsrooms are changing or being removed entirely. This trend is interesting because, from the view of most copy editors, such changes are counter-intuitive. As Susan Keith observed, the value of quality assurance in this case is greater than simply presenting a professional looking copy, as egregious errors not only diminish the quality of a work, but can also lead to misrepresentation of information with potentially disastrous consequences. From this perspective, the removal of that function seems to naturally undermine

the credibility of the organization as a whole. This trend also seems to coincide with the

emergence of technological changes to the communication industry and media publication.

It seems common sense to suggest that technology has been a continual influence on copy

editing as a profession, at least since the introduction of the word processor. Out of 127

responses to Question 17, "Have advances in electronic software and hardware altered the role

(or need for) copy editors? Please explain," 108 (85%) responded in the affirmative, indicating a

strong majority of respondents feel that technology has, at least in some way, altered the

profession and its role. Only 19 (15%) of respondents indicated a decisive "No" when asked this

question. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that regardless of changes to the role of copy

editors, they are still needed. The changes described by respondents are both negative and

positive. Negative outlooks are similar to this one which states that "The advances in electronic

software and hardware has [*sic*] (unfortunately) decreased and almost eliminated the role of copy

editor. Professionals write and publish their own work, which often is rife with inconsistencies

and incorrect grammar." Others are more optimistic about the changes, citing advances such as

the Internet and page design tools as means of doing their jobs better and faster. Fact checking

in particular was frequently mentioned by respondents as being greatly enhanced by the Internet.

One respondent also pointed out that the significance of copy editors has been expanded by these

emerging technologies, in particular the Internet, because broader and greater audiences means

that the potential damage done by embarrassing errors is also greatly increased. This respondent

also stated, "The digital age has made it possible for anyone to write and be read by a huge

audience. People have no idea how their ideas come across when their writing is full of errors. I

tell people all the time, EVERYONE needs an editor. Everyone."

Oddly, while 85% of respondents to Question 17 indicated that technology has influenced their position and responsibilities, only 54 of the 134 respondents (40%) to Question 9 mentioned the use of technology in the qualifications or skills required for their position. This number could be skewed in this case, as the researcher qualified responses by searching for terms or descriptions that either directly stated or otherwise strongly implied the use of technology. Statements such as "graphic design" were taken to suggest technological use while "design" in general was not. A statement was also considered to include technology if it made any mention to skills or experience using software, digital devices, the Internet, or computers in general.

A similar though somewhat different issue is that of a prevailing feeling of under-appreciation. While this was not an issue this research initially sought to address, it is one that came out through the responses collected from respondents. For example, Question 13 asked participants, "How do you perceive the role of copy editors in the communications industries?" The majority (57%) of the 132 responses indicated an overall positive perception suggesting, among other things, that copy editing is a vital part of the publishing process. One participant stated that copy editing is the "Last bastion of defense against libel, errors and poor writing. Guardian of credibility. Creator of headlines that tease and inform." This is perhaps an expected response, considering it is only natural for those currently working in a profession to value what they do and their role in a given industry. But just under half (43%) of participants had a negative outlook on copy editing and how it is currently being perceived. Many participants stated that copy editors are undervalued, or that the role is endangered and disappearing.

One explanation for this difference is that Question 13 can be interpreted in different ways. Many of the respondents who had positive things to say appeared to be answering the question with regards to how they personally feel about the role of copy editors. Those who

responded negatively answered from the perspective of how they believe the role is perceived by others. Question 14 rephrased this question to read, "How do you perceive your role in the communications industries?" Only 129 participants responded to this question, compared to the 132 who responded to Question 13, but only 15 (12%) had a negative perception of their own role, while a vast majority (88%) believed their role in their industry to be vital. With that in mind, it is possible that the responses to how copy editors are perceived in their role may have been more negative had Question 13 asked specifically about how participants believed others perceive their role in the industry.

Question 19 asked participants, "In your opinion, is/was this compensation appropriate? Please explain." Of the 131 participants who responded to this question, 97 (74%) indicated that their compensation was appropriate for their work. This is significant because it suggests that those working in this field do not necessarily use income as a measure of value in their workplace. This is reflected in the responses of some participants, such as one who stated that

> I know the money I make is probably less than most, but I work for a small,
> family-run business. They pay us what they can, In [*sic*] return, my work is truly
> appreciated. I've actually had reporters thank me for making their work better. I
> get the impression that doesn't happen often.

It also suggests that most participants feel well compensated for what they do, despite feeling undervalued. The issue of value and appreciation was, again, not something sought in this research. But addressing how copy editors perceive themselves, and how others perceive copy editors, is a major goal of this research, so it is important to address this issue as it has arisen.

The final question of this survey asked respondents to offer advice to those seeking to enter the copy editing profession. Of the 131 participants who chose to answer this question, and

while 112 (85.5%) respondents offered positive advice, 19 (14.5%) had a negative perspective. As these were open–ended responses, the researcher only considered a response negative if it included direct negative language. For example, one respondent wrote:

> Don't do it. Publishing is failing. Newspapers are failing. TV has never seemed to give a shit about fact-checking or editing. The Internet is a Wild West situation and who knows how it will shake out. I would recommend that if you have an eye for editing, you probably have a latent ability for computer programming, which is basically learning a second language and problem-solving and puzzle-building. Learn to code and make a living.

In another example, one respondent also wrote, "Don't. Whatever the future of the news business, 'copy editing' per se is doomed. Be flexible, be a writer/photographer, be a digital specialist, be something else."

These negative positions were offset primarily by pieces of advice that sometimes reflected a negative perspective on copy editing, but were not necessarily negative themselves. For example, "Make sure you have a broad range of skills. You will need to be a writer, copy editor, top line editor, online writer/editor, and even a photographer to make yourself valuable today." Statements like these were considered positive, as any negative connotation is implied rather than stated outright.

That said, many of these statements, like the previous one, suggest that incoming professionals diversify their skill set, and be prepared to work in multi-faceted roles. One respondent suggested that new professionals "Develop a broad set of skills. Just being a great editor is not enough. Learn new technologies and develop skills that are relevant and valuable to a wide range of employers." Others recommended moving away from journalism and news, and

into areas that require specialized knowledge, again reflecting the sentiment that new copy editors look beyond the traditional role of copy editing in order to increase their own value as professionals.

Respondents also suggested a wide range of practices for new or incoming professionals such as taking as many classes as they can, mastering the basics of grammar and punctuation, and staying on top of emerging trends. They suggest reading constantly, and participating in editing events and certifications. Respondents also noted that newcomers should learn to integrate more technical knowledge into their skill set such as HTML and web–based coding. Participants also recommended learning page design and photo editing skills. Interestingly, some respondents asked newcomers to evaluate the perspective of who copy editors are and what they do. One respondent, for example, said:

> Realize that you are so much more than a 'copy editor.' You are the last line of
> defense. You are that writer's insurance policy. How can you make this person's
> message not only free of errors but also crystal-clear and succinct? Finally, be
> flexible and expect the unexpected!

Finally, it is interesting to note from responses to Question 7 that it would appear individuals are leaving the industry after a period of 6-10 years. At the very least, there is a noticeable decline in professional editors as work experience increases. This does not necessarily mean these individuals are leaving the industry, as they are perhaps moving into non-editing roles within the same field. But it does show that after 6-10 years of working as an editor, there is a distinct decline in individuals who choose to continue working in this capacity.

Conclusions

Past research has shown that copy editors have often faced issues of feeling ignored or underappreciated as well as lower job satisfaction than other professionals in the communication industry. The intention of this survey was not to attempt to resolve or ultimately discern a solution for the issues copy editors face on a day–to–day basis, or those that have plagued the profession for numerous years. However, the results of this survey do provide an interesting perspective on where the profession stands today, and how those within the profession view both themselves and their professional environment.

Overall, a majority (88%) of respondents who have worked as copy editors view their role as both important and meaningful within their field. But it is also true that a significant percentage of respondents (43%) do not feel their work is appreciated. There is also a strong sentiment that the news organizations, in particular those in printed media, are moving in a direction that does not include traditional copy editing.

What is interesting is that 74% of participants still feel as though they are being adequately compensated for their work, suggesting that feelings of appreciation and value in the workplace are not necessarily tied to compensation.

The purpose of this survey was to create a more up-to-date context for the state of copy editing in the United States. Who copy editors are and what they do, along with the challenges they face is an issue that has been discussed for well over 20 years. But recent studies seem to address only one facet of this profession at a time, rather than trying to take a snapshot of where it stands as a whole. This research attempted to provide that snapshot by asking those who work, or have worked, as copy editors to describe their experience in the profession, and offer their perspective on where it is heading.

Significantly, the general sentiment is that the profession is changing, with 85% of respondents indicating that technology has had and is continuing to have an influence on their position and responsibilities. As mentioned above, what is striking about this number is that it is significantly higher than the 40% of respondents who mentioned the use of technology as being a skill or qualification necessary for their job.

The perception is that technology has, or is, changing the role of the modern copy editor. And it seems common sense that it would, with new software for document design and desktop publishing becoming widespread and frequently updated, it stands to reason that these tools would fall into the hands of those who are responsible for managing the quality of content being produced. But it remains that even when copy editors think about their role, they do not think about the technology they use.

While it is possible that some respondents are in a position where these technological influences have minimal impact on what they do, it is unlikely that any of them go without the use of a computer or computer software to do their work on a daily basis. This suggests that how we view the role of the copy editor, what skills and knowledge should be, is somehow different from how we view the practice of copy editing.

Further Study

One respondent made a significant statement that was frequently reflected by other participants, "I think some of our best copy editing is being done by people who no longer are called copy editors." This participant went on to remark about how those who still hold the title of copy editor are being placed under increased strain in the workplace, but this first statement speaks to an interesting concept, and generates a significant question. Is it possible that the term "copy editor" has become inadequate to describe the role professionals who manage communication? Or does it mean, as Amy Einsohn suggests, that the definition of the copy editor, and our perception of that title, must be updated by taking into account these new roles and uses of technology?

At first glance, it seems easy to say that copy editing is composed of a set of skills that are readily applied regardless of the tools or technologies available to professionals. Participants to this survey have also remarked that their professional role has expanded to take on more responsibilities, in part because of new technologies and in part because of increasing demands for larger quantities of published work. But this does not mean that the answer to this question is simply "no."

Consider that copy editors, as pointed out by respondents to this survey, are in many ways the gatekeepers of quality and consistency in published material. If they do not themselves construct the internal or external message of their organization, then they surely enforce it. As copy editors are asked to provide greater perspective and utilize more tools to perform this function, it stands to reason they may find their role evolving while still requiring them to utilize the same skill sets that have become traditional to the profession.

From a different perspective, copy editors are the curators of the company message. They ensure more than clarity and consistency of that message, they effectively craft it themselves by evaluating the relevance of stylistic choices made by their organization. While they are not necessarily the writers of content, they are the gatekeepers of publication and corporate branding, and this should be a valuable position as the copy editor is effectively ensuring the overall brand of the company is being utilized effectively.

This role presumably exists in the form of a head editor for most organizations today, and these would be the people responsible for making the larger decisions regarding style, word choice, and corporate image. But what is significant here is that all copy editors are effectively performing this function already, and it is this function that makes them so crucially important. If the traditional perception of copy editing is difficult to appreciate in the modern workplace, then it is possible that copy editors need to alter their own view of what they do in order to better communicate the value of their role. Copy editors are perfectly capable of crafting the message audiences receive, they are likewise capable of crafting the image of who they are and what they do to better fit the expectations of a modern workplace.

While this conclusion is beyond the scope of the present survey, it is an issue that bears looking into. By moving more into the position of style managers and content creators who assess more than just the text of a document but also its style and design, copy editors are systematically taking over the responsibility of defining the companies they work for to their audiences. This move is potentially a powerful one and should not be overlooked. It seems entirely possible that, instead of resisting the changes taking place in the industry, copy editors today can take advantage of them by positioning themselves not strictly as line editors, but as facilitators of the corporate brand image.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Request for Approval

Faculty Advisor Routing Sheet

(Submit this page with student research applications only.)

All student research at KSU must be supervised by a faculty advisor. In order to ensure that the advisor has reviewed the IRB application materials and agrees to supervise a student's proposed human subject research project, **this routing sheet must be submitted by the faculty advisor along with the application materials** to irb@kennesaw.edu.

By checking the boxes below, the faculty advisor for this project attests the following:

☒ I have personally reviewed each of my student's IRB application documents (approval request, exemption request, informed consent documents, child assent documents, survey instruments, etc.) for completeness, and all documents pertaining to the conduct of this study are enclosed (consents, assents, questionnaires, surveys, assessments, etc.)

☒ I verify that the proposed methodology is appropriate to address the purpose of the research.

☒ I have completed a CITI training course in the ethics of human subject research within the past three years as have all researchers named within this application.

☒ I approve of this research and agree to supervise the student(s) as the study is conducted.

Faculty Advisor Name: Sergio C. Figueiredo, Department of English

Date: 7 Oct. 2014

FILE   TOOLS   VIEW   irb-approval-request-revised [Compatibility Mode] - Word

Kennesaw State University
Institutional Review Board

Approval Request for Research with Human Participants

To ensure a more timely review of your study:

➢ Go to http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb/application_instructions.html and review the instructions for submitting an IRB Application.

➢ **Answer each question on this form.**

➢ **Check spelling and grammar.** This is a protected form. You must cut and paste your answers into the question blocks or unprotect the form to run the spell check feature in Word. To unprotect the form, select the Developer tab, select the "Restrict Editing" tool, select the "Stop Protection" button, run spell check. When you have finished checking spelling and grammar, select the "Yes, Start Enforcing Protection" button, and save your document. The form is not password protected, so there is no need to enter a password when prompted.

➢ **Ensure consent documents contain all of the required elements of informed consent** (see http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb/forms.html for examples of consent forms, cover letters, assent for minors, and online consent documents). If required elements are missing, your documents will be returned for revision.

➢ **Reference all materials cited** (you may do so within the body of this form or in a separate document).

➢ **Submit the following documents to irb@kennesaw.edu.**

❖ IRB Approval Request
❖ Consent documents
❖ Survey instruments
❖ IRB training certificate for all researchers (unless CITI course is completed at KSU)

Refer all questions to the IRB at (678) 797-2268 or irb@kennesaw.edu.

Status of Researcher: ☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☒ Student ☐ Other (explain): _____

Title of Research:

| Editing in America |

Proposed Research Start Date: 11/15/2014 *   **Proposed Ending Date:** 1/15/15

The official start date for research is the date the IRB approval letter is issued. Studies should be submitted well in advance of the proposed start date to allow for processing, review, and approval. Research activities may not begin prior to final IRB approval.

Research is Funded: ☐ Yes* ☒ No

*Name of Funding Agency

| |

By submitting this form, you agree that you have read KSU's "Assurance of Compliance" (http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb/policies/assurance.doc) and agree to provide for the protection of the rights and welfare of your research participants as outlined in the Assurance. You also agree to submit any significant changes in the procedures of your project to the IRB for prior approval and agree to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Primary Investigator

Name:

| Don William Fruman |

Department:

| Department of English |

| Telephone: | Email: |
| 404-509-7866 | dfruman@gmail.com |

Co-Investigator(s) who are faculty, staff, or students at KSU:

Name: **Sergio C. Figueiredo** Email: **sfigueir@kennesaw.edu**	☒ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student
Name: Email:	☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student
Name: Email:	☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student
Additional Names (include status and email):	

Co-Investigator(s) who are NOT employees or students at KSU:

| Name: Email: Home Institution: |
| Name: Email: Home Institution: |
| Additional Names (include email and home institution): |

FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS OR NON-FACULTY STAFF. This study, if approved, will be under the direct supervision of the following faculty advisor who is a member of the KSU faculty:

Faculty Advisor

Name:

| Sergio Figueiredo |

Department:

| Department of English |

| Telephone: | Email: |
| 609-980-3602 | sfigueir@kennesaw.edu |

1. Prior Research

Have you submitted research on this topic to the IRB previously? ☐ Yes* ☒ No

*If yes, list the date, title, name of investigator, and study number, if known:

See http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb/application_instructions.html for detailed explanations of questions 2-8.

2. Description of Research

a. Purpose of research:

> To define and contextualize the status of the modern copy editor with respect to the changing expectations and evolving technologies that have influenced the profession in recent years. Copy editing, as a profession, has historically been marginalized within the workplace. Yet more than ever, with the continuous evolution of technology, the expectations of and demands on copy editors is higher than ever. The goal of this research is to determine a) the state of copy editing as a profession; b) how, if at all, the profession has evolved with new technologies; c) what qualifies an individual in the modern workplace as a "copy editor"

b. Nature of data to be collected:

> Opinions and advice from participants related to the state of the copy editing profession. Participants will be asked to contextualize their experience with copy editing and how it has changed since the early 90's. Participants will also be asked to list qualifications they believe are necessary for those entering the profession today.

c. Data collection procedures:

> Surveys will be conducted through a third party survey system, Survey Monkey, with links and confidentality agreements emailed to participants through the ACES mailing list. Survey responses will be collected by the researcher through Survey Monkey.

d. Survey instruments to be used (pre-/post-tests, interview and focus group questionnaires, online surveys, etc.):

> Online Survey

e. Method of selection/recruitment of participants:

> Participants will be members of the American Copy Editor's Society (ACES), and only those respondents who have experience with Copy editing will be selected for use in this study.

f. Participant age range: **21**   Number: **70**   Sex: ☐ Males ☐ Females ☒ Both

g. Incentives, follow-ups, compensation to be used:

> There is no penalty for not participating in this survey, and incentives to participants are minimal. Participants are encouraged to participate by acknowledging that their participation contributes to a greater understanding of their field and area of work. Their participation will help define the current state of the copy editing profession.

3. Risks

Describe in detail any psychological, social, legal, economic or physical risk that might occur to participants. *Note that all research may entail some level of risk, though perhaps minimal.*

☐ No known risks (if selected, must be reflected within consent documents)

☒ Anticipated risks include (if selected, must be reflected within consent documents):

> As the participants will be asked open-ended questions, it is difficult to predict what could be revealed by their responses, it is therefore possible that participants could reveal confidential information, either about themselves or their places of work. Information that could be damaging to participants or organizations will be excluded from the research completely, and potentially harmful information or sensitive information will be deleted and such participants will possibly be removed from the study. In the consent form attached at the beginning of the survey, Participants will be advised that participation is optional, and that they can choose to not answer any or all survey questions.

4. Benefits

University policy requires that risks from participation be outweighed by potential benefits to participants and/or humankind in general.

    a. Identify benefits to participants resulting from this research (reflect within consent documents):

> Help define and contextualize a profession that is present in all industries but poorly understood.

    b. Identify benefits to humankind in general resulting from this research (reflect within consent documents):

> Help identify the importance of maintaining quality copy editing in industries where the role of copy editors is being redesigned.

5. Informed Consent

All studies must include informed consent (see IRB approved templates). Consent may require signature or may simply require that participants be informed. If deception is necessary, please justify and describe, and submit debriefing procedures. What is the consent process to be followed in this study?

> As this study is intended to be anonymouse, consent for this research will be obtained via an informed consent cover letter provided for participants prior to viewing the survey questionnaire.

Online Surveys

Will you use an online survey to obtain data from human participants in this study?

☐ No. If no, skip to Question 6 below.

☒ Yes, I will use an online survey to obtain data in this study. If yes:

    a. How will **online data** be collected and handled? Select one and add the chosen statement to your consent document.

        ☒ Data collected online will be handled in an anonymous manner and Internet Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program.

☐ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner (identifiers will be used) but Internet Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program.

☐ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner and Internet Protocol addresses **WILL** be collected by the survey program.

b. Include an "I agree to participate" **and** an "I do not agree to participate" answer at the bottom of your consent document. Program the "I do not agree to participate" statement to exclude the participant from answering the remainder of the survey questions (this is accomplished through "question logic" in Survey Monkey).

Ensure that the online consent document is the first page the participant sees after clicking on the link to your online survey.

Although you may construct your own consent document, see the IRB approved Online Survey Cover Letter template (http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb/forms.html#consentdocs), which contains all of the required elements of informed consent that must be addressed within any online consent document.

6. Vulnerable Participants

Will minors or other vulnerable participants be included in this research?

☐ Yes. Outline procedures to be used in obtaining the agreement (assent) of vulnerable participants. Describe plans for obtaining consent of the parent, guardian, or authorized representative of these participants. For research conducted within the researcher's own classroom, describe plans for having someone other than the researcher obtain assent so as to reduce the perception of coercion.

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```

☒ No. All studies excluding minors as participants should include language within the consent document stating that only participants aged 18 and over may participate in the study.

7. Future Risks

How are participants protected from the potentially harmful future use of the data collected in this research?

a. Describe measures planned to ensure anonymity or confidentiality.

> As this study does not require or seek to collect any confidential information from its participants, any confidential information collected during the survey, anticipated or otherwise, will be deleted upon completion of this research.

b. Describe methods for storing data while study is underway.

> Survey results will be stored on a secure, encrypted webservice (Survey Monkey), and stored locally on a private laptop and will not be transferred or shared between other computers.

c. List dates and plans for storing and/or destroying data and media once study is completed. Please note that all final records relating to conducted research, including signed consent documents, must be retained for at least three years following completion of the research and must be accessible for inspection by authorized representatives as needed.

> **Survey results will be stored electronically on the researcher's private laptop and on privately on the Survey Monkey website. Records related to particpants, including consent forms, and the study will be kept for a period of three years after the completion of the project. Afterwards, documention pertaining to the study will be destroyed.**

d. If audio, videotape, or other electronic data are to be used, when will they be erased?

8. Illegal Activities

Will collected data relate to any illegal activities? ☐ Yes* ☒ No

*If yes, please explain.

Is my Study Ready for Review?

Every research protocol, consent document, and survey instrument approved by the IRB is designated as an official institutional document; therefore, study documents must be as complete as possible. Research proposals containing spelling or grammatical errors, missing required elements of informed consent (within consent or assent documents), not addressing all questions within this form, or missing required documents will be classified as incomplete.

All studies classified as incomplete may be administratively rejected and returned to the researcher and/or faculty advisor without further processing.

End of document ■

Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Training Completion Report

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)
HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT
Printed on 10/04/2014

LEARNER

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INSTITUTION   Kennesaw State University
EXPIRATION DATE 08/19/2017

STUDENTS CONDUCTING NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK RESEARCH

COURSE/STAGE: Basic Course/1
PASSED ON: 08/20/2014
REFERENCE ID: 13589142

REQUIRED MODULES	DATE COMPLETED
Kennesaw State University	08/02/14
Students in Research	08/20/14

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator

Collaborative Institutional
Training Initiative
at the University of Miami

Appendix C: Consent Cover Letter

Title of Research Study: Editing in America

Researcher's Contact Information: Don William Fruman, 404-509-7866, dfruman@gmail.com

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by Don William Fruman of Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Description of Project

The purpose of the study is to provide context for the changing role of the copy editing profession in the United States.

Explanation of Procedures

This survey will be conducted electronically, via Survey Monkey. Participants will be asked to answer several survey questions, as well as to provide some basic, non-identifying demographic information such as job description, gender, and age. This study should take about 15 minutes to complete.

Time Required

Completing the survey should take no more than 15 minutes.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no known risks anticipated because of taking part in this study. Your data will be submitted to a secure, encrypted online survey service (Survey Monkey). Only the researchers working on this project will see your data. All survey responses and references to specific places of work or organizations will remain confidential unless required by law. Stored data will be deleted after a period of 3 years after the study is completed.

Participation in this study is optional, and you can end your participation at any time by telling the person in charge. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

You may choose not to respond to any or all items in the survey questionnaire.

Benefits

Although there will be no direct benefits for taking part in this study, participants may appreciate contributing to this research, and providing valuable information concerning the evolution of the Copy Editing profession and the changing roles of Copy Editors in the American communications industry.

Confidentiality

The results of this participation will be anonymous. You will not be asked to provide personal identifying information for this study. All information collected will be stored securely with the researcher, and any personal identifying information will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation

Participants are assumed to be over the age of 18, and will be asked to confirm if they are working in the profession of copy editing via a yes/no question at the start of the survey. If the answer is no, they will be asked to explain their role in the communication industry, in order to provide context for their responses. That said, this survey is primarily interested in responses from copy editors, and will disregard responses from participants who are no, or have not previously, worked in the copy editing profession, unless their responses pertain directly to this profession in a meaningful way.

Statement of Understanding

The purpose of this research has been explained and my participation is voluntary. I have the right to stop participation at any time without penalty. I understand that the research has no known risks, and I will not be identified. By completing this survey, I am agreeing to participate in this research project.
_____

THIS PAGE MAY BE REMOVED AND KEPT BY EACH PARTICIPANT

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, #0112, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (678) 797-2268.

Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire

1) Please indicate your age:
2) Please indicate your sex: (1) Male; (2) Female; (3) Other: _____
3) Have you previously worked as a copy editor? (Y/N)
4) Do you presently working as a coyp editor? (Y/N)
5) If the answer to question 4 is No, please explain what role, if any, you have in the communications industries at present.
6) How many years have you worked in the communications industries?
7) What is your current professional title?
8) As a professional in the communications industries, what are the skills, qualifications, or competencies you use on a daily basis? Please include as much detail as possible.
9) If you were to temporarily hire someone to manage your responsibilities, what skills, qualifications, or competencies would be necessary for them to fulfill your job requirements?
10) Describe your workplace within the communications industries, and your role in this workplace. Please include as much detail as possible.
11) Do you work with, or have you previously worked with, one or more copy editors?
12) How do you perceive the role of copy editors in the communications industries?
13) How do you perceive your role in the communications industries?
14) Has your role as a copy editor, or in communications industries, significantly changed since you joined the profession? If so, how?
15) In your time as a professional in the communications industries, have you observed any significant changes in these industries? If so, please describe those changes in as much detail as possible.
16) Have advances in electronic software and hardware altered the role (or need for) copy editors? Please explain.
17) In your role(s) in communications industries (currently and/or previously), how much do/did you earn annually?
18) In your opinion, is/was this compensation appropriate? Please explain.
19) What advice would you offer those seeking to enter the copy editing profession? Please explain.

Appendix E: Responses to Question 6, from participants who indicated "No" to Question 5

Copy of Editing in America   SurveyMonkey

Q6 If the answer to question 5 is No, please explain what role, if any, you have in the communications industries at present:

Answered: 22   Skipped: 1

#	Responses	Date
1	Professor	12/16/2014 7:04 PM
2	I'm more of a story editor at the AJC, but I am still a copy editor at heart.	12/7/2014 6:00 PM
3	writing, web content, blogging, social media maintenance	12/5/2014 9:45 PM
4	I'm looking to work in the field, as well as to strengthen my writing/editing for current work in public relations. Also, I am sorry to tell you this, but you have a typo in Question #4 which is a bit ironic!	12/5/2014 9:42 PM
5	Writer, multimedia communications	12/3/2014 3:09 PM
6	University journalism instructor	12/3/2014 10:32 AM
7	I'm the director of content management at a firm.	12/2/2014 11:21 AM
8	Marketing Editor	12/2/2014 10:00 AM
9	Administrative Support, aspiring copy editor	12/2/2014 9:20 AM
10	Manager of newsroom	12/2/2014 7:32 AM
11	freelance work- in between clients	12/2/2014 6:46 AM
12	Academic	12/1/2014 10:49 PM
13	managing editor, weekly paper; job involves copy editing	12/1/2014 10:01 PM
14	Internal communications	12/1/2014 9:34 PM
15	Job hunting at present	12/1/2014 9:32 PM
16	I currently work as a copy editor. I may presently switch to another role.	12/1/2014 7:54 PM
17	Online editor at newspaper	12/1/2014 6:44 PM
18	Writer in the marketing and communications department of a financial institution. My job does include some editing and rewriting, though we also have a dedicated staffer for most copy editing.	12/1/2014 6:37 PM
19	Graduate student in media management	12/1/2014 6:21 PM
20	Part-time proofreader of advertising copy	12/1/2014 6:17 PM
21	Professor of journalism	12/1/2014 6:12 PM
22	I'm a higher-level editor and strategist.	12/1/2014 6:07 PM