

INTRODUCTION

Words. I love words. They are informative, curious, humorous, mysterious, tragic, academic. ~~It~~ doesn't matter whether they are used in fiction or nonfiction, essays or poetry. ~~words~~ create an important sense in our lives.

As a reader and reviewer of books for the *New York Journal of Books* prior to their recent closure, I often see words that drive me to read on: ~~words~~ that fit together like a lovely jigsaw puzzle to create an interesting story, ~~or~~ a strong protagonist, ~~or~~ words that explain a curious concept, like "quarks."

But I sometimes find myself reading words that stop me short. When I read, I expect to be entertained, engaged. ~~When~~ that doesn't happen, I question if the author and editor expressed and met one another's expectations. Expectations are not predictions. ~~They~~ might not be asked and answered using that specific word; they might be implied rather than spoken. They require work on the part of both parties: ~~the editor and the author~~ need to share their expectations as well as question those of the other before the project begins. Once expectations are identified and resolved, the difference between the shelf-sitter and the page-turner will begin to evolve.

Establishing a successful relationship between the author and the editor depends on transparency between both parties. And what does 'transparency' mean? Both parties should ask the questions that will affect their relationship, and the answers should be clear and concise. As ~~Jon Harrison~~ points out, "Of course, we should be clear right from the outset that author and editor are on the same side; they are, or should be, a team working toward a common goal."¹

1. *Author and Editor Together: Building the Best Manuscript*, 4

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The search for an editor can be helped ~~by using~~ editing groups such as the Editorial Freelancers Association, Scribendi, or Upwork—organizations that gather a multitude of editors under one umbrella, allowing the author the opportunity to gather relevant information with just a few keystrokes.

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I would be remiss if I did not comment on a variety of editing options available to the author, including editing software such as Hemingway Editor, Grammarly, Autocrit, etc. The level of human interaction with editing software, however, is non-existent. This is not to say that editing software does not offer an initial step up to actions such as proofreading and grammar checking, but it cannot replace the initial and ongoing relationship between editor and author.

My goal for this ~~chapter~~ is to share my insight from both ~~positions and~~ give both the author and the editor a picture from the other side. To this end, I discuss a series of topics that are important, as they address expectations for both participants. There is no particular order for discussing these expectations, since each holds its own level of importance.

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So, let us begin this journey ~~...~~

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The experienced author's expectations will be a bit more detailed. "How will you edit my manuscript, how long will it take, what can I expect back from you, and what will it cost?" This writer may be a returning client, in which case he will be familiar and comfortable with the process and the editor, and for the most part, the cost.

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In either case, the author will still expect his work to be handled professionally and with care.

PROCESS

The editing process may be a maze of sorts—it is a complex activity to accomplish (editor) and may be a complicated one to understand (author). The editor must comprehend the story set before her, while the author must untie the Gordian Knot returned to him.

Editor

The first step is to determine if the process will be a simple proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation, or a copyedit that will include proofing as well as technical flaws, or still yet, a line edit that gets into creativity, style, and language. Without knowing the story, the editor must rely on a conversation with the author to determine which edit is most appropriate, and the project cannot move forward until both parties agree to the best approach.

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"or a developmental edit with substantive suggestions about overall structure" or something similar?

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Once this has been determined, the next question is: electronic or hard copy edit? In today's day of electronic supremacy in everything we do, most editors will work with electronic editing equipment such as the Track Changes function found in Microsoft Word™, Pages™ on Mac, Google Docs, and other word processing software programs.

Author

We already know that authors can't edit their own manuscripts, but authors can be picky about some stranger messing around with their work. They ~~can be~~ reluctant to take criticism about what they've written, how they've written it, what makes sense, and what doesn't make sense.

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If the author does not understand a particular question or comment, he should give serious thought to those comments because only he knows the story from beginning to end. He should question the suggestion, not assume the editor is right. The author should never be afraid to question why an editor is suggesting a particular change. More importantly, the author should not be afraid to reject any suggestion that just doesn't work or he does not understand, even after a conversation.

MONEY

Let's get right down to the nitty-gritty of the editing discussion—what's it gonna cost?

Editor

The professional editor will expect the conversation over money to be a delicate one, and she will recognize any signs of discomfort from the author.

While we might not want to put a price tag on our editing, the truth of the matter is that editing is not, should not, and cannot be done for free. If an editor is willing to edit a manuscript for free, the author should be very, very sure that ~~he knows what he~~ is getting at no cost. Professional editors put time and effort into working with authors, and while negotiating a price may be in order, it is hard for an editor to put that price tag on her experience and reliability.

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When establishing deadlines, the editor's response will depend on a variety of things including the length of the manuscript, nonfiction or fiction, the depth of the edit requested by the author, and other projects on his or her desk. The type of edit requested—copyedit, line edit, developmental edit, etc.—should be clarified at this time in order for the editor to determine a reasonable deadline for completion as well as cost.

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6. EFA booklet *Building Successful Freelancer-Client Relationships*, 19

An experienced editor will most likely have a general idea in mind of the time required to complete the project once these questions are answered. A reliable editor will not take on a project just to make money, and she will know her limitations in terms of time. If the editor is very interested in the project, she will want to work with the author to fit it into her schedule and be able to establish realistic completion dates.

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Author

The deadline date will most likely come out during the conversation, but if it is not clear, he should ask or state his expectations for completion. Once the editing begins, the author doesn't just while away the hours doing nothing. There is marketing to target, a synopsis to write, query letters to prepare, and agents or publishers to search for, not to mention starting a new book. In order to tie each of these things together, the author will expect a reasonable deadline for the edit to be completed.

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A new or inexperienced author will most likely not have any idea of the difference between proofreading, copyediting, and a developmental edit. If the author does not understand

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