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IT'S MORE THAN THERE, THEIR, AND THEY'RE:
THE ROLE OF THE BOOK EDITOR IN DECADES PAST, PRESENT DAYS,
AND THE AGE TO COME

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ABSTRACT

Today's book editor finds him or herself in a matchless moment of publishing history. Over the course of the last century, the demands of the job have shifted to compliment the ever-growing changes in our society, and they will only continue to change as we embark upon a future of technological advancement. Such revelations beg the question: What does it mean to be an editor in the publishing world today? What did it mean one decade ago, three decades ago, or six decades ago? How have the requirements of the job altered over time, and how are they transforming now? What do those currently immersed in the industry predict the career will look like just ten years into the future? What is the necessary skillset for someone interested in entering the industry in its current state? Drawing from historical and editorial theory research and interviews with current editors and professionals in the industry, this thesis aims to engage with, analyze, elucidate, and celebrate the career of the editor at a most unique point in its history. In depicting how editors manage their complex roles as supporter, advocate, marketer, copyreader, modifier, designer, and businessperson, readers will gain an introspective and widespread overview of the career path through the lenses of the past, the present, and the future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EPIGRAPH

"To write is human, to edit is divine."

— Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is a magnificent day in New York City. You look to your left and spy a sharply dressed individual sipping a latté and staring introspectively upwards. A large collection of papers lay open on the café table. Perhaps she's wearing a modern pair of glasses, or he's sporting a nifty watch. An air of sophistication, culture, and intelligence exudes from his or her being.

A phone buzzes to life on the table, and a pleasant conversation ensues.

"Hello, Molly. It's great to hear from you. I'm actually working on your manuscript at this very moment, and I believe I've had a revelation."

There is a nervous pause, a quick rechecking of papers, and then: "What if we changed Carl to Carla? He's such a supportive presence in your protagonist's life, and there seems to be a lack of female characters in your novel. While I know it would take plenty of reformulation on your end, I'm confident this change would improve the marketability of your work. It also creates the possibility for a romantic relationship later in the series. What do you think?"

The lightbulb sparks above your head and you, of course, understand. Your chic café neighbor is a book editor! What a life, you sigh with envy.

"You love the idea? Why, that is remarkable to hear. Your enthusiasm for my suggestion is so rewarding. I look forward to receiving a new draft in a month's time. Thank you, Molly, and happy writing!"

The editor sets the phone aside and resumes work on the manuscript. The leisurely pace of the process strikes a chord with you. You ponder the lovely life of reading all day, the

excitement of meeting with authors and other influentials, and the freedom to tell people they are

wrong—and get paid for it. The career of the book editor, you decide, is too good to be true.

And you, dear reader, would be indisputably correct.

Don't take the misunderstanding too harshly; the role of the book editor has been

romanticized to the point that, to some, it doesn't seem like actual work. Reading all day and

marking copy for improvement are the chief assumptions of what an editor's labor entails, but as

we will discover together, reading and marking copy is what editors tend to squeeze into their

free time—meaning evenings, weekends, and even vacations. The day-to-day life of an editor is

hectic, jam-packed, stressful, and diverse. Often, no two days look the same.

In contrast to the anecdote above, consider the man or woman who sits at a desk,

reassuring a disgruntled author who has phoned to say she disagrees with most of the major

suggestions the editor has put forth for her novel. As the author talks, the editor scans through a

slew of emails, checks the list of tasks for the day, and pencils in a lunch appointment with an

agent who is in town. He or she listens attentively and attempts to soothe the writer, all the while

moving the conversation along in hopes of arriving on time for the morning department meeting.

Beside piles of mail to send, letters to read, pamphlets for an upcoming conference, and a fresh

stack of galleys to review, a cold mug of coffee sits at arm's length, forgotten in the midst of the

day's demands. Sipping lattés and painless conversations are the stuff of dreams.

While the process may change from decade to decade, the multifaceted role of the editor

exists to support, critique, question, and encourage authors to put forth the best possible versions

of their work. Still, the revered career is hard to pin down, and especially so now that we have

entered the digital age. Today's professional editor finds him or herself in a matchless moment of

publishing history. Over the decades, the job of the editor has shifted to compliment the ever-

growing changes of society and technology. Just within the past few decades alone, the market

for eBooks, the rise of social media and its influence on connecting with the public, the evolution

of self-publication, and the unparalleled access to information that generations before us have not

known have all made their mark on the publishing industry.

Considering these transformations begs the question of what it means to be an editor in

the publishing world today. What did it mean a century ago and how have the requirements of

the job shifted over time? How are those expectations changing now? What do those currently

immersed in the industry anticipate the editing career will look like in the future? What is the

necessary skillset for someone interested in entering the industry in its current state? Drawing

from extensive research and interviews with editors presently in the industry, this thesis aims to

historicize the role of the book editor in an effort to answer those very questions.

First, we will address the bygone era of publishing and survey the role of the editor in the

early twentieth century. For an intimate look at the editor's past, we will also examine the

experience of two exemplary individuals. What did their lives look like, and how did their

experiences shape the editing career as a whole? What rules and theories guided their work?

What was their place in the industry? In drawing from these lives, we will reach a better

understanding of where the career of editing has been, as well as how it has influenced the

present day industry.

Next, we will look at how editors manage their complex roles as supporters, advocates,

marketers, copyeditors, modifiers, designers, and businesspersons in today's world. What are the

clear differences between editors of the past and of the present, and how has the role evolved? To

what degree do modern culture and technology influence the editor's life? How does one even do

what an editor does? Such questions will guide our discussion of the editor's career in the present.

Finally, taking what we have learned, we will envision where the editor is headed. What impacts have e-books, digital publishing, and the ever-increasing pace of business had on the publishing world, and how are those trends expected to continue? What opportunities will advancing technologies offer the editor? How will aspiring editors break into the field, and what training will be necessary to do so? What skills will the editor of the future need to possess? Will editors even exist? Keeping these questions in mind, we will challenge our understanding of the editor and project what the career will entail in the publishing age to come.

Examining the vocation from three perspectives—past, present, and future—will render a multifaceted image of the editor. By no means will this impression be all-encompassing of the editor's experiences; rather, it will provide a distinct overall snapshot of the career, its requirements, and its functions. Together we will unravel misconceptions, unearth editorial gems, learn what makes the editor tick, and ultimately discover why the true editor's life is marked by elements significantly more rewarding than frothy drinks or literary dialogues.

Chapter 2

The Past

At the onset of the twentieth century and well into the 1900s, the book publishing industry made countless remarkable contributions to the canon of American literature. Writers and poets alike brought fresh ideas, revolutionary opinions, unparalleled sentiments, and reimagined concepts to the humming world in which they lived. Today, we regard writers of that period—Aldous Huxley, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and countless more—with an almost mythic awe. Their brilliance seems unattainable to the modern writer, their lives are romanticized, and their writings are respected as genius. And yet, the works we now revere as classics could not have touched society without the patient, guiding hand of an editor.

In discussing the career of book editing, it is crucial to consider who the editors of the twentieth century were, as well as how they went about discovering and enriching such monumental texts. Examining their motivations, their judgment, and their techniques provides a deeper appreciation of where editing has been and how it has developed over time. The fact that twentieth century publishing in the United States yielded such foundational texts also merits attention. Editing did not simply *exist* during this time; it was not merely *good*. The editor's labor produced fruit and renown, so much so that books bearing their invisible fingerprints are studied, circulated, and taught to this day. Such success begs the question: How did editing function in this time period?

Indeed, the close relationships formed between editors and their authors remains one of the most distinguishing elements of this era of publishing. While the rising popularity of book agents had already begun to complicate or diminish the rapport between editors and their authors (Tebbel 87), the early to mid-1900s was perhaps the peak age of publishing in which strong editor-to-author relationships were customary across the industry. While they still occur in today's world, these friendships are rare. Before the merging of many small companies into a handful of publishing powerhouses, the male-dominated book business (Thompson 101) was conducted on a much smaller scale and across an array of publishing firms. As a result, editors were much less pressed for time and resources, and were therefore able to give sincere attention to their writers. As we will discover, many American classics can be traced back to meaningful connections between authors and their dedicated editors.

The link between editor and author remained important into the 1950s and 60s, after which agents steadily gained the upper relational hand. In *Book Business: Publishing Past Present and Future*, former Random House editorial director Jason Epstein remembers his office as a "second home" for himself and his authors, and claims "editors almost never held meetings but exchanged news and gossip or asked for advice when we felt like it, often from authors who happened to be in the building. In many cases, these authors became our lifelong friends" (5-7). Like editors in the early 1900s, editors enjoyed a familiar bond with their authors as recently as fifty years ago. By no means were these editor-to-author relationships perfect—like the erratic relationship between Maxwell Perkins and Thomas Wolfe—nor were they notably close for every writer engaged; still, there was an expectation from house to house that writers would come to know their editors well.

With more time to cultivate meaningful relationships, editors also had the capacity to dedicate hours of thought to the revision and manuscript editing process. Nearly all of the editorial procedures—from copyediting to proofreading—were completed in-house, and the primary editor on the project could dedicate him or herself to reading each manuscript and proof page thoroughly (Tebbel 113). Furthermore, in this era, the primary editors would often function as a project's sole Editor—spelled with a capital "E". These men completed most, if not all, of the editing for a manuscript, from letter-by-letter copyedits to overarching developmental work. Whereas today there are several types of editors who work on a project prior to publication, the past saw *at most* a handful of editors contributing to a book. In those days, editing was a tight-knit, robust process that challenged the writer and led to stronger, clearer, and all around superior works.

Another critical facet of the past era of book publishing was its emphasis on literary devotion. While history shows that publishing is a consistent, steady market, people do not typically enter the industry in hopes of receiving a grandiose paycheck. There is money to be made, certainly, but the majority of publishing professionals do not reap excessive monetary rewards for their work (Targ 28). With this in mind, publishers and editors of the past seemed to be less concerned with the end gain and more concerned with the literature they were offering to the world—a view especially clear in comparison to how the industry is run today (Sharpe viii). As an editorial director in the current industry shares, "The job is to *make* great books, yes, but more critically the job is to make great books that *sell*" (Stocke). An affinity for the written word was the past editor's key attribute, and the freedom earlier editors had to choose what they published (Thompson 101) found its origin in their inherent dedications to quality writing. Considering today's industry publishes more material than ever before, the circulation of

mediocre work—disseminated in the name of bringing more to print or out-publishing the next company—is unavoidable. Moreover, literary brilliance may often take the back burner for the sake of managing a company's time or resource well. While publishing quality literature remains important in today's industry, the driving business factor may be sales, more so than substance—an important distinguishing detail between the past and present publishing ages.

In comparison to our modern industry, the publishing era of the past was marked by personal editor-to-author interactions, measured manuscript revision, and a dedication to literature over business. John Tebbel sums it up best in his book *Between Covers: The Rise and Transformation of American Book Publishing*:

> While publishing may never have been quite the 'profession for gentlemen' it was widely believed to be, it *was* a unique kind of business. Its chief ingredient was a love of the printed page, of the book. People in publishing liked the feel of the book in the hand, and they were almost all inveterate readers, from the publisher himself on down. The joy of finding a manuscript that was deemed worthy of publication was shared by everyone involved. When readers felt the same way, those who had made it possible were delighted. If it failed in the marketplace, there was some sorrow, but seldom regret for having published it. Authors and editors often formed close relationships, and many stayed united for years. Publishing, in short, was like a small town where everyone knew everyone else and felt a kinship that was not to be formed in ordinary commercial enterprises. (462-463)

With such an overview in mind, there remains a deeper question of the editorial mechanics of this bygone era—which is, perhaps, the origin of most romantic visions of book publishing (and it truly *was* an extraordinary time in the literary world). While it is important to

observe industry trends and tendencies, the day-to-day work of the editor, along with his

methods and struggles, is missing from the summary snapshot. For this reason, it is necessary to

jump into the literary trenches alongside some of the greatest editors of the times. This section,

dedicated to providing an understanding of where editing has been in the past century, will

devote itself to the careful study and analysis of two of the most famous editors of the twentieth

century—namely, Maxwell Perkins and Saxe Commins. To gain an in-depth look at the role of

the editor in the past, we must go to the editors themselves.

Maxwell Perkins

The world of publishing has seen its fair share of notable individuals and magnificent

personalities, from contemporary figures like Robert Loomis, known for editing Maya Angelou's

work, to Max Brod, friend of Franz Kafka and posthumous editor of his writing; from Sarah

Josepha Hale, who worked in editing for over forty years and penned "Mary Had A Little

Lamb," to Lincoln Schuster of Simon & Schuster publishing company; from famous magazine

editors like founding father Benjamin Franklin, to controversial *Playboy* creator and editor-in-

chief Hugh Hefner. Yet perhaps the most renowned editor our country has known, one whose

methods and skills remain revered to this day, is the legendary fiction editor Maxwell Perkins.

Perkins held the professional title of editor for thirty-six years, right up to the time of his

sudden death in 1947. While he has been esteemed as "the most respected, most influential book

editor in America" (Berg 3) and as "a giant and a virtuoso of his craft" (Howard 59), Perkins's

record speaks for itself as he is famous for editing classic American authors like F. Scott

Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe. Yet the cause for his repute extends far

beyond these celebrity associations. Perkins's ability to negotiate with and enthuse his authors, his sharp mind, his keen judgement, and his gift for establishing solid friendships with his writers are the true grounds for his reputation of unparalleled success and renown.

After graduating from Harvard with a degree in economics and spending two years as a reporter for the *New York Times,* Maxwell Evarts Perkins began his career at Charles Scribner's and Sons in 1910 as the advertising manager. It was not until 1914, after almost five years at Scribner's, that Perkins was promoted to the editorial department, thus launching his career as one of the grandest individuals to master the editorial profession.

Perhaps the origin of his legendary status can be traced back to a day in 1918 when a manuscript, which all other editors at Scribner's had rejected, appeared on his desk. In contrast to his coworkers, Perkins felt that the novel, written by a young man in the service, held great potential (Berg 13). And so, he fought for it. He encouraged the author to revise and rewrite the work, and twice Perkins brought it before the editorial board, only for it to be rejected ("Maxwell"). He persisted in belief of the novel's prospects and his own ability to support and challenge its writer, and even went so far as to submit it to other publishing houses for review. After the author's third attempt at rewriting the manuscript with Perkins's guidance, the determined editor brought the book before his coworkers for a final decision. At last, Scribner's caught a glimpse of the potential Perkins had immediately recognized and agreed to offer the writer a contract for publication.

The young author in this instance was none other than F. Scott Fitzgerald, and the manuscript, originally entitled *The Romantic Egotist*, became his famous debut novel *This Side of Paradise*. The book officially appeared on shelves March 26, 1920 and "unfurled like a banner

over an entire age" (Berg 19). Critics and the public at large venerated Fitzgerald for his work, and fame soon followed.

The vital role that Perkins played in the publication of Fitzgerald's first book reveals a great deal about editorial practices of the past. As we have discussed, editors in the early to mid-twentieth century were driven primarily by a love of literature. While this publication account certainly displays Perkin's editorial finesse in terms of his tenacity and distinct judgement, even more does it speak volumes of his zeal for Fitzgerald's work. Simply put, he would have never contacted the author after the manuscript's first rejection, nor would he have brought subsequent drafts to a competing publisher's doorstep, if sales potential alone compelled his labor. Indeed, he had enough conviction of the book's worth that he was willing to make an exception in the marketability department. Perkins was not motivated to accept the novel for money or fame, but for the sake of the manuscript's quality. He believed it deserved publication—even if it was not by his house—and his excitement over the novel is evident in his long fought-for acceptance letter to Fitzgerald:

I am very glad, personally, to be able to write to you that we are all for publishing your book, "This Side of Paradise." Viewing it as the same book that was here before, which in a sense it is, though translated into somewhat different terms and extended further, I think that you have improved it enormously. As the first manuscript did, it abounds in energy and life and it seems to me to be in much better proportion. I was afraid that when we declined the first manuscript, you might be done with us conservatives. I am glad you are not. The book is so different that it is hard to prophesy how it will sell, but we are all for taking a chance and supporting it with vigor. (Wheelock 20)

Money did not motivate Perkins on the front end of the deal, and it did not disrupt Scribner's decision on the back end of the transaction, either. Though he could not predict how *This Side of Paradise* would fare in the marketplace, Perkins published the novel because he and his house found it worth sharing with the world.

In his time as an editor, Perkins managed to master one of the greatest tensions of the profession: mediating between his authors and his publishing house. Editors dwell in the in-between realm, the place where authors avoid interaction with the publisher and the publisher enjoys freedom from responding to the every whim and comment of its authors. Because the editor acts as the liaison, the representative of both parties, and sometimes as the referee, he or she must find the middle ground in each publication where both the publishing house and the author benefit. Perkins's ability to skillfully maneuver this space has been referred to as his "editorial double vision," meaning that "he retains his idealistic regard for the author and sympathizes with his aesthetic pursuits while continuing to bear in mind the practical problem of ensuring that those pursuits are profitable for the publisher" (Van Hart 10). Perkins had the judgement to determine what would sell and what was worth working with in order to *make it* sellable, yet he also understood when to make an exception and publish a writer's work even if the public's response was unpredictable, as was with the case of Fitzgerald. He knew when to critique a scene or a chapter that could harm the book as a product, as well as how to steer writers away from clichéd plots that were passing fads. His editorial double vision was one of the distinct characteristics of his editorial approach. Take, for example, this excerpt from a letter to poet Allen Tate, a writer previously published by another house who had submitted a manuscript to Scribner's:

…everything would be very simple indeed if it were not for these detestable practical

questions that cannot be eliminated. I am not referring to the mere matter of a contract,

for that too would not be difficult, but there is also the serious question of an author

dividing his work between two publishers. I think your letter shows that you have

considered that, and you would not intend that it should always be divided. And I only

raise the question because you should. Our policy has always been definitely to publish

for an author rather than to publish individual works, and it has also always been opposed

to taking steps to detach an author from another publisher. I am not asking you to discuss

these questions with me, but I thought I ought to explain our position, although I do not

wish to do that even, in any way that will be embarrassing to you, and I need hardly say

that—like any publisher—we should value your name on our list. (Wheelock 66-7)

The letter places the publication decision on Tate as it makes clear Scribner's intent to become

his exclusive publisher. Perkins kindly communicates Scribner's position on publishing writers

who have been previously committed to other houses, expresses his thoughts in a non-offensive

manner that actually bids Tate to make the choice for himself, and finishes his discussion with a

warm compliment. Here, Perkins holds Tate to Scribner's standards while also venerating his

work and expressing a desire to publish it.

Perkins was not a man who breathed down writers' necks, held their hands as they

worked through a manuscript, or let them trample him with their strong passions and bold

creativity. Just as he handled the balance of representing Scribner's to his writers and his writers

to Scribner's with tact and ease (Van Hart 7), he vehemently rejected using his position to further

his own ideas or agenda:

Max Perkins was unsurpassed. His literary judgement was original and exceedingly

astute, and he was famous for his ability to inspire an author to produce the best that was

in him or her. More a friend to his authors than a taskmaster, he aided them in every way.

He helped them structure their books, if help was needed; thought up titles, invented

plots; he served as psychoanalyst, lovelorn advisor, marriage counselor, career manager,

money lender. Few editors before him had done so much work on manuscripts, yet he

was always faithful to his credo, "The book belongs to the author." (Berg 4)

Perkins's goal in any editorial endeavor was to allow the author's ideas, themes, and voice to

shine through, from the first draft to the final publication. He held the conviction that the job of

the editor was not to write, rewrite, or change an author's work; rather, an editor's duty was to

inquire, to imagine, to brainstorm with the writer, and to critique so as to let the author come to

newer and grander conclusions on his or her own.

An incredible example of the effectiveness of his contributions is documented in a letter

to F. Scott Fitzgerald concerning the novel that would become *The Great Gatsby*. Perkins praised

the author for the magnificence of his writing, but quickly moved into a challenging yet

benevolent tone, writing "I could go on praising the book and speculating on its various

elements, and means, but points of criticism are more important now" (Wheelock 38). The editor

poses questions explicitly about readers' understanding of Gatsby compared to their knowledge

of other characters in the novel. Perkins suggests adding physical distinctions and fostering a

more gradual suggestion of Gatsby's past. He mentions some general ideas, like potential

interactions that may help Fitzgerald understand his thought process, though Perkins asserts his

faith that the author will take his remarks and fix the issues in an original and compelling

manner.

As part of his personal approach to editing, Perkins made himself available to his writers

and wore different hats according to what they required on any given day. He wrote hundreds of

letters to his authors throughout his lifetime, many of which have been published as collections

since his death ("Maxwell"). The editor sensed when his authors needed hard honesty and when

they needed encouragement. For instance, during a depressive lull in Fitzgerald's career, Perkins

wrote him a letter that "burst with optimism in every line" (Berg 43); perhaps not coincidentally,

the author returned to the pen soon thereafter. Perkins invested in each writer as a friend, rather

than as someone paid to make as much profit off of his or her writing as possible, and, as a

result, he nurtured deep and lifelong friendships with many of the authors he collaborated with.

It was through his friendship with Fitzgerald that Perkins was introduced to another

young writer in 1924, an American living in France who had been published by Ezra Pound and

wrote for the *transatlantic review*. At Fitzgerald's suggestion, he wrote to the man for copies of

his writing, but Perkins, beginning work on what was to be *The Great Gatsby*, would not read

anything of Ernest Hemingway's until it arrived in the mail nearly two months later (Berg 87).

When the publishing house intending to print Hemingway's satirical novel *The Torrents of

Spring* backed out on the publication, Fitzgerald wasted no time in passing along the information

to Perkins—who then wasted no time in extending the best offer he could negotiate with

Hemingway for publication rights (Berg 93). Hemingway accepted the proposition and soon sent

Perkins *The Torrents of Spring*, along with a draft of *The Sun Also Rises*—and Hemingway

joined the ranks of those who would be famously associated with the great Maxwell Perkins.

The attention and thought given to the language in *The Sun Also Rises* provides another

glimpse into Perkins's meticulous craft. Unlike his fellow editors at Scribner's, Max was

confident in Hemingway's novel in all ways but one: the "profanities and unacceptable

characterizations which Perkins knew could result in the book's suppression and in libel suits"

(Berg 97). Perkins respectfully broached the subject with Hemingway and explained both his

hesitations and the reasoning for them. As a result, Hemingway combed through the final proof

of the novel, ruminating over every profane word and suggestion before, ultimately, cutting most

of them from the text (Berg 98). Again, this example reveals Perkins's "editorial double vision,"

which enabled him to tend to both the author's and the publisher's best interests; the publisher's

interests were served by the dissemination of quality books that made a proft, while the author

benefitted in that his or her work was actually *published* and marketed to the world. It seems

Perkins picked his battles wisely, yet was not shy in voicing his necessary criticism and

concerns—even when it could potentially frustrate the author. *The Sun Also Rises* was published

in 1926 and, much like *This Side of Paradise*, it went on to be a great success for Charles

Scribner's and Sons.

At this point in his career, Perkins had discovered two classic American authors whose

work would affect the Canon of American literature forever. In the fall of 1928, he met the third

literary prodigy who would be closely associated with his editorial career. After hearing about

the man from a friend, Perkins sent a truck to pick up his manuscript since he had been told the

text was sizeable—"from 250,000 to 380,000 words long" was the author's estimate, which was

recorded on a note he had attached to the load (Berg 128-29). Perkins at first sent the text along

to another editor, but was soon drawn back into the book by his own curiosity and interest. In

typical Perkins's fashion, the editor wished to see the brilliant monstrosity published and wrote

to its author, Thomas Wolfe, to extend the opportunity to go through the revision process

together, piece by piece. Wolfe was touched by Perkins's sincere interest to the point of tears

(Berg 131) and, after many cuts and alterations, *Look Homeward, Angel* was published in 1929.

The relationship between Perkins and Wolfe was one of the most significant editor-to-author relationships Perkins cultivated during his career. At times, he worked intensely as his editor; at other times, he cared for the writer as would a dear friend. Perkins encouraged Wolfe to write again after he officially declared his resignation as an author (Berg 166) and supported him at times when his sanity was questioned. Indeed, even their professional rhythm was unlike any other Perkins had established:

> Wolfe was neither prepared nor willing to edit his own material, and he depended heavily
> on Perkins's objective editorial perspective when revising his manuscripts. Over time,
> Perkins became more directly involved in Wolfe's writing than that of any other author,
> and their partnership eventually developed collaborative overtones. In an unprecedented
> arrangement, the pair would often work side-by-side in Perkins's office to prepare a
> manuscript for press. Though little epistolary evidence remains to corroborate claims
> regarding the nature of their working relationship, Perkins maintained that he never
> added anything to Wolfe's writing, and he insisted time and time again that he never cut
> Wolfe's prose without the author's consent. (Van Hart 36).

This method of working together came to incite the relationship's downfall when criticism about Wolfe's presumed dependence on Perkins challenged the author's literary talents. The blurred lines of this collaboration marks an interesting time in Perkins's career. The conviction that an author's work is entirely his or her own—Perkins's famous stance—found itself tested in the heat of Wolfe's authorial work. Subsequently, some of the only negative light shed on Perkins's editorial career remains the question of his level of involvement in Wolfe's writing. Wolfe eventually parted ways with Scribner's and Perkins, which deeply upset the editor. In one of their final letters as associates, Perkins wrote, "I am your friend and always will be, I think, and

it grieved me deeply that you should even have transacted the little business that needed to be done, through an intermediary instead of face to face… I hope we may soon meet as friends" (Wheelock 133). This humility demonstrates the heart behind Perkin's professional life; he truly valued his relationships with authors and desired to maintain friendships even after business relations were severed.

While the most notable were Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Wolfe, Perkins worked with many authors throughout his time as an editor, including individuals like Erskine Caldwell, Sherwood Anderson, J.P. Marquand, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, and James Joyce. Just in his lifetime, his name became one of renown among the literary community and beyond. In 1944, Malcom Cowley's profile of Perkins appeared in *The New Yorker*, much to Perkins's chagrin (Berg 427), and Scribner's subsequently received an onslaught of manuscripts from authors hopeful to work with the genius editor. Perkins's successful career came to end early in the morning on June 17, 1947 when he passed away from pleurisy and pneumonia. Passionate as ever, Perkins had attempted to go to work the day prior after spending his weekend reading some manuscripts he had brought home for his days off (Berg 448). The world will never know how long Perkins intended to sustain his career, but it can be said that he worked diligently for his authors and for his publishing house until the very end of his life.

Maxwell Perkins's contributions to the world of publishing and the American literary tradition at large are of an incomparable magnitude. Indeed, he changed the discourse of the career entirely by inserting himself and his style into history. In the nearly seventy years since his death, his editorial prowess still distinguishes him as one of the best editors the world has seen, and "even today most book editors do somewhat the same job as Maxwell Perkins, but in the same sense that most basketball players are doing something similar to what Michael Jordan

is doing" (Howard 59). Though he was modest in his achievements and hoped the world would give their full attention to his authors' talents rather than his own, Perkins's critical discernment, his determined attitude, his high regard for the artists he worked with, and his persistent patience as an editor altered the world of book publishing and helped shape the industry into what it is today.

Maxwell Perkins had a career that spoke for itself, and his exceptional handling of the role of the editor has earned him a revered legacy. Yet Perkins was one man, and one man in a sea of literature can only work so hard and so long. Indeed, the early 1900s saw many more incredible works than just those that passed through Perkins's office. While he rose as a symbol of the publishing age of the past, there were others who made names for themselves in the editorial profession—other men who went above and beyond the job description to foster works and writers who changed the American literary tradition.

Roughly fifteen years after Perkins began his job at Scribner's and Sons, another man was in the midst of building his own editorial career, one that—unbeknownst to him—would also result in great reputation and renown. The life of Saxe Commins, a kind and intellectual man, provides yet another in-depth look at the role of the editor in the past, and his famous career further reveals the function of editing in the early twentieth century.

Saxe Commins

Let's talk about Saxe, baby. Saxe Commins was a dentist-turned-editor who worked primarily at Random House from 1933 until his death in 1958. Throughout his lifetime, he collaborated with such notable writers as William Faulkner and W.H. Auden, yet he was also

known for his interactions with historical figures like Albert Einstein and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Like Perkins, Commins's career was distinguished by the close, inspiring relationships he

formed with his writers, shown clearly in their correspondences—many of which his wife

published after his death. Yet unlike Perkins's career, which grew out of his own initiative,

Commins stumbled into his editorial role by the suggestion of none other than famous playwright

Eugene O'Neill, a man who was one of Commins's most significant and longstanding authorial

friends.

Although he went to school for medicine, Commins had always enjoyed literature. He

sought to surround himself with writers in the midst of his scientific professional life, which is

how he met individuals like James Joyce, Hart Crane, and Margaret Anderson. Through these

efforts, Commins also befriended Eugene O'Neill, an already-established playwright and one of

his dentistry patients who quickly became a valued friend. After Commins's marriage to Dorothy

Berliner in 1927, he closed his practice and the couple embarked on a year-long journey abroad.

During the newlywed's time in France, Commins received a letter from O'Neill, which requested

the man travel from Paris to Guéthary to advise him concerning some of his writings (Commins

7). There, the men worked, sometimes late into the night, on what would become the famous

play *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

This encounter, among others, stayed with O'Neill, and upon Commins's return to the

United States in 1929, the playwright recommended his friend for an editor position at his own

publisher, Horace Liveright (Commins 11). At that time, Liveright was facing the chaos of

executive staff changeovers, so Commins worked as an editor at Covici-Friede for one year

before transferring to Liveright's in 1930. Upon his arrival, he was given full editorial

responsibility for O'Neill's work. It is critical to notice that Commins did not train to become an

editor, nor did he pursue a related field of study during his college years. Rather, Commins had a devoted interest in literature and a keen eye for language, both of which convinced O'Neill—and clearly proved to Liveright—that he was worth hiring despite his dentistry background.

During his busy time at Liveright, Commins worked on many manuscripts, including Sherwood Anderson's *Beyond Desire* and *Death in the Woods*, as well as Horace Kallen's *Individualism* and Theodore Dreiser's *Tragic America*. When Liveright's financial instability led to its closure, Commins and O'Neill sought a new publisher together, and the playwright even "wanted it stipulated in writing that no arrangement to publish his plays could be made unless the agreement included a clause which guaranteed [Commins] a job as his editor" (Commins 26). Many publishers sought the duo's engagement, and finally both men signed a contract with Random House in the summer of 1933. Despite being relatively new to the editorial trade, it was shortly after his move to Random House that Commins "soon demonstrated that he was one of the best editors in the business" (Tebbel 257).

One of Commins's first authors was Gertrude Stein, a playwright and novelist who had been engaged with Random House before Commins's arrival. After working on the final stages of Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, the partnership stuck, although no exceptionally close bond between the two has been documented. In spite of this, Commins labored over her writing with professionalism and sense—an occurrence that reveals how meticulously and seriously he considered his editorial work. In a 1944 pre-publication report of Stein's *Wars I Have Seen,* Commins writes:

> To read through her entire manuscript is an experience similar to taking the drop-by-drop water torture. Repetitious sentences hammer on the brain with a monotonous thud that makes you want to scream in agony, and if you are searching for content

analytically, the most that anyone can read at a time without shrieking with nervous

exhaustion is ten to fifteen pages.

   The professional thing to do is examine this book without prejudice and try to

arrive at some fair conclusions about the contribution in thought that Gertrude Stein has

to make. Here is the evidence, stripped of all stylistic considerations. (Commins 30)

In this report, Commins goes on to provide an overview of the text, to explain its strengths and

weaknesses, and to consider how it would be received by the public. This example of his

approach to editing reveals Commins's ability to look past his own perceptions and tastes in

order to fairly consider a manuscript for which he was responsible. It also shows his keen

judgment in recognizing the issues in a manuscript that are fixable or beyond repair. The skill of

taking a step back from one's personal opinions enables an editor to more reasonably evaluate an

author's work, from the decision to buy the book, onward. As is evidenced by this glimpse into

his labor, Commins navigated the space between his thoughts, the publisher's capacities, the

public's desires, and the author's feelings with a relatively objective eye, which ultimately

contributed to his success. In this example, we see that the editor's job requires more mental

faculties than just a knowledge of English and grammar; Commins had a certain character—one

of patience, judiciousness, and thoughtfulness—that contributed to his editing as much as his

awareness of the public and his grammatical aptitude.

   While Commins's career is particularly famous for his associations with certain writers,

he developed warm relationships with practically all of his authors over the course of his

lifetime—again, a common occurrence or expectation for the editor of the past. In between a

variety of projects in 1937, Commins visited the White House and edited five volumes of

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's addresses, press conferences, and other works, which led to

personally signed copies for both Commins and his children. In 1940, Commins began editing

Lewis Sinclair's work, who would "turn to Saxe in those moments of great despair in his writing

and when other personal problems arose" (Commins 93). Commins even influenced authors he

was forced to turn down by his publisher! Indeed, suggestions he made to Maurice Valency in a

rejection letter in 1957 ended up influencing the final published version of his book *In Praise of*

Love (Commins 172-73). Even the legendary Theodore Geisel—known as Dr. Seuss—worked

under Commins's genius and wrote to Commins's wife after his death saying, "'He was probably

the only editor I ever had who ever taught me anything'" (Commins 98). Clearly, Commins

forged relationships not just to gain friends or connections, but to grow the writers he knew. A

good editor knows that a manuscript is only as good as its author, and Commins acted on the

belief that the editor's job was not just to produce good books, but also to better the writers

themselves.

Commins's social aptitude and editorial prowess resulted in a bounty of meaningful

relationships, and, as was customary with other editors of his era, he invested in making genuine

connections with his authors as much as he dedicated himself to improving their works. Yet his

relationships were not always easy. An example of Commins's good-natured spirit despite

opposition is revealed in a correspondence between he and author Robinson Jeffers. In a series of

letters from 1947 to 1948, Commins and Jeffers slowly reach a compromise concerning

controversial political views and specific phrases the poet expresses in his work *The Double Axe.*

Commins first appeals to Jeffers in the context of rethinking or restyling his overt, bold opinions:

> As I said, I am writing this letter on my own responsibility, and with the hope, for the
>
> sake of your book and the effect it will have, that you can temper these references before
>
> we think of beginning composition. Please understand that this is in no way, and I can't

make this too emphatic, an attempt to intrude upon your rights as a free artist. It is meant

to be the friendliest of suggestions, made with the hope that you can be persuaded to my

strongly personal view…. Please give this your most serious thought, and write me

privately about your own feelings, as you would to an old friend. (Commins 126)

In spite of Commins's polite urging, Jeffers chose to maintain most of the unambiguous and

provocative language in *The Double Axe*, to which Commins responded by proposing a

"Publisher's Note" to clarify Random House's disagreement with the poet's views. Commins

kept the publisher's best interests at the front of his mind and did not let Jeffers win his

manuscript decisions easily. Indeed, Jeffers's response to Commins's note idea was less than

enthusiastic, though he agreed all the same, writing, "As to the suggested 'Publisher's Note'—it

will certainly make every reader think of politics rather than poetry, and is therefore deplorable.

But put it in, by all means, if it is a matter of conscience" (Commins 129). In the end, their

negotiation yielded both a Publisher's Note, from Commins, and a Preface in response to the

Publisher's Note, from Jeffers. The exchange between these two men throughout the editing

process clearly depicts the editor's duty to two parties: the publisher and the writer. Commins

knew some of Jeffers blatant opinions could reflect poorly on Random House, as well as on the

writer himself. He addressed the problems directly and sought to find a solution that benefitted

both parties—all the while maintaining cordial relations with the author, who was also his friend.

Though it caused some tension and the two men ultimately did not agree, Commins found a way

to temper the issue and move forward with the publishing process.

Perhaps the most notable of authors Commins counseled during his lifetime was William

Faulkner, a writer who had already gained renown before coming to Random House in 1936.

These men collaborated diligently on Faulkner's books, even retreating to Commins's home

during the day to write in uninterrupted silence (Commins 199), and brought forth such works as

Absalom, Absalom!, *The Hamlet*, *Intruder in the Dust*, and *A Fable*. But, true to his editor's

personality, editing Faulkner's writing was not the only work Commins completed for the

author. When Faulkner received the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature, Commins took down

Faulkner's measurements over the phone and bought him a suit for the presentation ceremony

because the writer did not have one for the occasion (Commins 196). When Faulkner's life

seemed to get the best of him and drinking himself into oblivion became the answer, Commins

called his wife from work, saying "'I'm bringing Bill home with me,' he said. 'He needs a quiet

time with us" (Commins 223). The editor housed his writer for multiple nights, during which

Faulkner regained strength and began writing *The Town* on the typewriter in their study. To

Commins, being Faulkner's editor entailed nurturing the whole man—not just the man's words.

Their relationship demonstrates how Commins remained fully committed to his writers, even

when it went beyond the pencil and the page. In many cases, his editorship was inseparable from

his friendship.

　　While Commins's closeness with his writers was crucial to his productivity as an editor,

he possessed many other skills that contributed to his overall brilliance, especially his knack for

writing useful queries and encouraging praise. The correspondence between Commins and Paul

Elliot as they worked on his book *The Last Time I Saw Paris* provides a glimpse into Commins's

suggestion-giving style. He writes:

> There is a danger in this chapter of just being encyclopedic and doing some injury to the
>
> unity of Part I by the inclusion of wonderful material but a little afield…. My point is that I'd
>
> rather see this chapter touch only the peaks, as it does, than to make it a display of general
>
> information on subjects that in themselves are damned interesting. However, you must be the

arbiter and there is time to include a section on dressmaking or anything else when you get

the galleys. (Commins 38)

This excerpt shows Commins considering the chapter in the context of the whole book; bringing

attention to his concern and relating it to the book's overall quality; making a revision and giving

a justification for the change; and, finally, reminding the author that it is his decision as to

whether or not he will follow through with Commins's recommendations. His tone is not

condescending or critical, but rather reasonable and supportive, and the fact that he puts the

choice in the author's hand illustrates Commins's belief that the writer is the true owner of the

book.

Commins had a sharp, questioning mind, which aided him in perfecting his authors'

books. And just as his queries were valuable, so his compliments were enthusiastic. In this same

correspondence, he wrote Elliot that he was "so obsessed by everything in the script…. I am

convinced that all your readers will feel the same way" (Commins 39). In this exchange,

Commins warms the author with encouragement and acclaim—an event that builds the author's

trust, companionship, and confidence. Both revision and reinforcement are needed to bring a

work to fruition, and Commins deployed both with wisdom and sincerity.

Still other factors furthered Commins's renown, including his devotion to working hard

and being precise. Many manuscripts that passed through his hands were pored over, line by line,

and he made himself entirely available for collaboration, whether it meant traveling to his writers

for days or inviting them into his home. What's more, Commins invested time and energy into

learning about what he was editing in order to do a fine and accurate job. When recovering from

an illness in 1952, his wife tried to "dissuade him" from editing a seven-hundred page

manuscript during his recovery by questioning what he actually knew about Christian

philosophy, which was the topic of the book on which he was working. She writes, "Saxe looked at me and quietly replied, 'I'm learning'" (Commins 134). A staunch dedication to learning is necessary for the editor to have an understanding of a *reader's* understanding, to have the ability to offer relevant suggestions to the author, and to recognize any disjointedness in a text. Even in sickness, Commins knew this. Many facets of Commins's personality and work ethic led to his success, and his person demonstrates that being an excellent editor is not an acquired skill, but an acquired *storehouse* of skills accompanied by a continued penchant for knowledge.

Saxe Commins's dedication to his editorial trade did not waver, even as his life came to a close. In 1958, he was hospitalized for a heart attack, and "on the afternoon before his death he remembered a correction that should be made and called Random House to deliver it" (Tebbel 258). Just as he had made clear before, no ailment could weaken the call of his manuscripts. Commins's impact on the world of editing is immense, perhaps mostly in the realm of his steadfast loyalty to his work and his writers. And yet again do we see distinguishable characteristics of this era of publishing play out in Commins's life: from holding strong editor-to-author relationships and enjoying a seemingly unlimited amount of time with each manuscript, to his deep love of quality literature and the greater sense of freedom from dictation by the business division of publishing. Commins rightfully earned the accolades he received in his lifetime and in the years since, and his memory is one of not just being a words man, but of being a true writer's man.

A Bygone Era

Both Maxwell Perkins and Saxe Commins led prodigious, long-term careers as editors, and their labor garnered praise and fame for many of the writers who came through their offices. There is much to learn about being a reputable editor from these men, and studying their day-to-day practices—from querying to negotiating—imparts nuggets of wisdom that are near impossible to find elsewhere. While Perkins and Commins were fine individuals to examine closely, we must take a step back and consider what their lives and experiences, on the whole, say about the job of the editor in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Recall that one of the distinguishing factors of editing in this time period was the editor's tendency towards meaningful editor-to-author relationships, or friendships. This fact rings true in both Perkins's and Commins's case. The depth of the relationships they formed while sitting in the editor's chair clarifies the nature of their role: it was not to be *just* a spellchecker and a literary critic, but also an enthusiastic, trustworthy friend. The editor was not a cog in the system, but a personal guide through the entire process of publication.

The job of the editor was also a position of enjoyment. With regard to Commins, it was his interest in reading and offering feedback that earned him a reputation with Eugene O'Neill, who became his connecting reference to an editorial job. For Perkins, he did not have a degree geared towards publishing, and yet, it is the industry he had a passion for, so he started an advertising job in a publisher's office and worked his way up to an editorial role. In both of their lives, passion trumped experience—they had the interest and determination to learn, which eclipsed their lack of a publishing background. They loved good books, so they channeled their appreciation into a career. Though it was tremendous work, it was also pleasant work.

In all, the job of the editor in the past was no job at all—it was a lifestyle. It demanded a full-time dedication to the publishing world and those who lived in it—mentally, intellectually, and emotionally. The editors of the past did not commit to 9-to-5 positions; rather, they agreed to give their friendship, their opinions, their time, and sometimes even their homes for the sake of bringing books to print. Indeed, Perkins and Commins were editing manuscripts and finalizing changes up until their respective deaths— a level of faithfulness to one's work that would seem almost lunatic, except that both men cherished their work. They did not toil for the sake of output, but for pleasure. They gave their lives to the trade, knowingly and freely.

As we have moved through the decades, the editor's role has inevitably evolved with society. While it remains a challenging position, the majority of modern editors consider editing their career and not their lifestyle, sun up to sun down—even when it bids them work late into the night. There are many reasons as to why the editor's demands have increased while its delight remains a romantic vision of the past. Though the present career path is grounded in practices and beliefs from the bygone era of publishing, many aspects of today's society have inevitably reshaped the editor's function and work—factors such as the economy, globalization, and the Internet, for instance. With these matters in mind, let us move beyond the editors of the twentieth century and into our next investigation of the editor's role: the editor of the present.

Chapter 3

The Present

A lot can change in and within a century. From radio to color television, typewriters to personal computers, and horse and buggies to hover boards, our world has seen unfathomable transformation over the course of the last century. Our family structures, work forces, national priorities, entertainment, and communication methods have been altered drastically as a result of twentieth century and early twenty-first century events. Some life paths have become practically obsolete while others have flourished, and still others, created. While all careers go through periods of adaptation, most experience change much more than once. The career of the editor is no exception.

Who is the twenty-first century editor, and what does he or she look like? How has the editor's day-to-day work changed from what it was one hundred, eighty, or even fifty years ago? What concerns guide their practice, and how do they relate to their authors and publishers? This part of our discussion seeks to answer these questions—and many more. Though change in the publishing industry has been a slow and measured process, the present trade exists as a result of transformations that began in the 1950s and have continued to this day.

Perhaps the starkest change in publishing is a distinct and amplified emphasis on the bottom line. While publishing houses have always been businesses, money has become an increasingly dominant drive behind many editorial endeavors and decisions—much like it has in every other sector of our competitive, globalized world. As smaller, family-owned publishing

houses merged into conglomerates throughout the mid- to late twentieth century, "the imposition

of the corporate mentality on a business diametrically opposed to it in the past" (Tebbel 464)

became more and more commonplace. And considering the big names in American publishing

today can be accounted for on the fingers that a single hand provides—Hachette Book Group,

HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, Simon & Shuster, and Penguin Random House—the trend

has only continued. As of August 2016, it's estimated that the combined market shares of these

five companies account for roughly 80 percent of trade publishing in the United States

(McIlroy). This massive grip on the market suggests corporate publishing is here to stay.

While the days of publishing literature for the sake of honoring fine writing have not

vanished, the general mentality of publishing has certainly shifted. Good books are a priority, of

course, but our present age finds the industry "suffering from one of the most violent upheavals

in its history, in transition from a modest, gentlemanly pursuit to a mass-market, high-profit-

oriented industry" (Simons 121). While independent houses across the nation attempt to maintain

a personal approach to publishing and have greater freedom to publish the work they find

admirable (Thompson 161), many books on the market have been produced by companies with a

corporate mindset. Richard Marek, now a veteran editor of the industry, frames this new age of

publishing in terms of its effect on the output of quality literature:

For the craft of acquiring good writing is a disappearing one. "Bring us big books,"

proclaim the heads of the publishing conglomerates. "Big books by 'big' authors." By this

they mean books that will make money; if they'd wanted to say *good* books, they'd have

done so. And the promising writer, the careful, subtle user of symbol and metaphor, the

elegant stylist, is in danger of no longer being published.

Copyediting, too, is in decline. Since "big" books are expensive, and the publishing houses have to recoup the money they've laid out as quickly as possible, "good" schedules (meaning short schedules) are more important than good English….

We are in an age of what E.L Doctorow called "network publishing" (it's no surprise that most of the conglomerates have television or movie arms) where what matters is money, not craft. (Sharpe viii)

Placing money at the forefront of publishing has affected many aspects of the business, and the hectic life of today's editor finds its root in either saving money or making significantly more of it. For instance, one professional proofreader who spent years as an editorial assistant at a New York publisher said in an interview, "when my boss hired me, she told me she needed an assistant who wouldn't be 'looking at the clock' all the time" (Rudolph). She was forced to overextend herself in order to function at the normal level of business, consistently took work home, and ghost edited for her boss because *her boss* was even busier than she. Because there are so many books to bring to print, editors of today are regularly pressed for time—and a lack of time affects the rest of the editor's work, from authorial relationship building to thoughtful querying.

The corporate mindset portrayed in this story contrasts with the experiences of editors at smaller or independent publishing houses. One editor at an independent publisher shares her different experience in this way:

I would say that being a smaller, non-NYC publisher sets us (literally) apart and gives us lots more leeway in terms of creative choices and brand. Part of that is being smaller—we publish fewer books, and so we consciously strive to make each one as special and well-executed as possible—but part of it is also our ability to adapt more nimbly to trends

without concern for an overarching corporate identity. At [our publishing house], at least,

we also work hard to retain and grow our authors as part of our team, and have the luxury

of giving each author and each book more editorial and publicity/marketing attention

(and budget) because we're not stretched thin over many books. (Thornburgh)

Due to its non-corporate mentality, this publishing company is able to dedicate more time to

fostering quality books overall, and the editor particularly notes the freedom to give more

attention to marketing books and building relationships with authors. Without an "overarching

corporate identity" to uphold, the books published—while fewer—have been carefully and

thoughtfully tended to.

Though corporate America seems to have taken a seat at the head of the book publishers'

table, it *remains* the book publishers' table. Quality work continues to be disseminated and

money is being made; there is no question that book business persists in offering to the public

wonderful works across a variety of genres. Yet while all publishers once regarded the book as a

work of art, still some big publishers today may regard the book as "simply another kind of

article to be marketed" (Tebbel 464). As a result of such mindsets, bringing an extraordinary

piece of literature to print despite its low sales potential would be deemed obtuse in our present

industry, whereas Perkins had no qualms in doing so. In an age when quantity often trumps

quality, publishers most often dedicate time to those books that will advance their agendas in the

marketplace. Thus, we see the majority of books chosen for print based on their marketability;

stylistic timbre or peculiar significance remain important, but they cannot overpower a book's

potential popularity on the shelves.

One of the major outcomes of this paradigm shift in publishing is a greater attention

given to marketing and publicity, a fact that has slowly imposed itself upon the editor's

traditional job description. With a greater emphasis on the end goal, publishing houses have dedicated more time, energy, and resources to promoting their products in hopes of achieving greater economic reward. This idea comes not only through consideration of the overall evolution of book business, but also from the perspectives of those working in the industry. A comic book proofreader, who worked in the editorial field nine years before securing her current job, said she finds today's editors

> have to be more and more adept at marketing, publicity, and sales than they've had to be in the past. The most successful imprints in the industry right now are the ones that have the lowest publicist-to-book ratio. They're the ones that encourage their editors to really own the promotion of the books they work on. The editors I see (and saw) succeeding are the ones who worked closely with marketing and publicity departments to make sure their books were getting the care and attention they deserved, and the *best* editors were the ones who came up with marketing and publicity ideas themselves. (Rudolph)

The editors of this era, then, do not work only within the texts they purchase; they also work outside of them to ensure their success. In true editor fashion, they stand behind their books—in terms of content *and* sales potential. They must negotiate well and fight for their projects within the many departments of a publishing house.

Even as early as the mid-twentieth century, duties relating to marketing had started to impinge upon the industry in a way that forced editors to work beyond their job descriptions (Epstein 107). And the impetus to be involved with every aspect of book production persists. Indeed, laboring over a book is all for naught if consumers choose not to purchase it—and in a market that sold 2.71 billion books in 2015 (Association of American Publishers), helping a book stand out may take plenty of effort. The editor as marketer must understand the profitability of

the books in his or her possession, discern which ones have the most potential, consider how and when to fight for each book's publicity, and perhaps even devise marketing or promotional strategies on his or her own. Editors are no longer just book people and people people—they must now be market people, too.

With greater responsibility comes greater time constraint, which is yet another distinguishing factor between the editor's role in the past and present. In an essay by Samuel Vaughan addressed to authors everywhere, he confesses "one would expect the editor to spend his day looking for writers, as well as reading and editing their work. He does not" (42). Whereas Maxwell Perkins had the freedom to spend hours tweaking and revising in his office with Thomas Wolfe, editors of this day and age rarely find time to do the very thing their title suggests, and one professional shared "that in four years working editorial jobs in New York, I rarely *edited* anything" (Rudolph). Men like Perkins and Commins had to wear many hats during their time, but their cap collections did not interfere with their book work.

While today's editors still don many a different hat, their time actually spent editing, critiquing, and wrestling with text each day is astoundingly small, if existent at all. In his essay "What Is An Editor?" William Targ reveals that "the editor usually reads manuscripts 'on his own time,' which means away from his office. He reads nightly, weekends, holidays…. Manuscript reading is rarely done in one's office except in emergency situations" (Targ 6). Editors split their time among an almost unbelievable variety of tasks and duties: checking mail and email, preparing for meetings, networking and convening with agents, pitching books, keeping an eye on the industry, negotiating contracts, attending to last-minute or pressing production matters, responding to agent and author calls, working with designers, sampling proposals, calculating budgets and expected sales for projects, brainstorming book ideas,

coordinating with printers, organizing deadlines (and addressing those who fail to meet them), constructing presentations, and more. While this typical workday may not reflect every editor's experience, which depends upon the type and location of the publishing house, it highlights the remarkable number of possibilities for his or her schedule. Although surprisingly in want of reading and red pencils, the life of the present-day editor is never dull.

One of the most striking transformations of the industry in the past few decades has been the waning relationship between the editor and the author. In colloquial terms, one would say the literary agent has finally "arrived." Instead of a close bond between the writer and his or her editor, today sees the agent as the liaison between the artist and those in the publishing business, as well as the cause for a "steady deterioration of the author-editor relationship" (Tebbel 463). Though frequently romanticized, the previous epoch of publishing demonstrated the productivity (and sometimes genius) of a sincere relationship between author and editor; recall, for example, Maxwell Perkins and F. Scott Fitzgerald, men whose relationship was as important as the work they produced. In comparison, "today if an author spent the night on my office couch he would be evicted by the security staff. Authors no longer arrive unannounced. They are screened by the guards in the lobby and given name tags to wear on their lapels" (Epstein 19). Authors do not have the freedom to pop in, roam around, or relax in the corners of their editors' offices; they are voices on the other end of the line, occasional office visitors, and writers of emails. Simply put, the two parties do not associate like they used to, and authors have gone from being friends to colleagues and content-suppliers.

As agents have inserted themselves into the rapport between author and editor, they have also taken over certain aspects of the editor's work. As we have discovered, the editor's workload has grown heavier and more extensive with time. Agents have responded to this

change by taking on the tedious, time-sucking job of finding good writers and great works, and "editors have, in effect, outsourced the initial selection process to agents" who must "wade through the slush piles of letters, emails and manuscripts, trying to find the occasional gem among the mind-numbing quantities of unsolicited dross" (Thompson 74). Speaking of her job's overlap with the editor's work, a literary agent of 15 years shares, "we are both looking for new talent and then help to shape the work to make sure that it has the most potential in the marketplace. Whereas I need to sell a project to publishers, editors need to then 'sell' a project to their team in-house" (Somberg). Here we see it is the agent, and not the editor, who finds manuscripts; though the editor must convince his or her house to commit to the project, the agent is the one who first discovers the work. In this sense, it seems the editor has taken one foot out of the acquisitions process as he or she has placed one foot in the production and completion phase of each book—though that is not to say editors do not have any prerogative over the books they publish. Editors' tastes remain important, which is why agents spend a considerate amount of time learning about editors in the industry and accordingly appeal to specific editors when a relevant book comes into their possessions.

Again, this portrait of the editor varies from house to house, especially when considering the size of the establishment and, naturally, the type of editor in discussion. An interesting aspect of the editor's life is that there is no concrete definition of job tasks for the general term or for its offshoots, many of which we will unpack shortly. Instead, the entailments of a managing or a line editor could look completely different from one publishing house to another. As a result, how an editor deals with his or her writers ultimately depends upon the type of editing or work that he or she does. That being said, the image of an editor who exercises greater reliance on agents is prevalent across the industry, and agents flourish in the realm of big and small

publishing. Still, it is not inclusive of the editor's experience everywhere and is not meant to

discount the many editors who still maintain warm relationships with their writers. Nevertheless,

the overall thrust of the industry over time has been away from authors as intimate friends and

toward the use of agents as a means to connect and communicate with authors. Even with the

meaningful relationships that exist today, they are certainly not to the degree of renting vacation

homes together.

Book publishing today would be unrecognizable to men like Saxe Commins and Maxwell

Perkins, and the editor's role would perhaps confound them; whether good or bad, it is the

undeniable truth. Today, an affinity for books is not required to get much of a publishing

company's work completed, and "regardless of one's passionate zeal for beautiful letters and the

dissemination of learning, business principles must prevail" (Targ 16). Though some may

believe "the most noticeable aspect of the transformation is that much of the fun has gone out of

publishing" (Tebbel 462), perhaps it is rather a lack of time and resources to *maintain* the same

level of fun in publishing that has changed. Whatever the verdict on the pleasure of the work, the

modern publishing world—morphed and molded by time, technology, and history—prevails in

an unprecedented era of this rich and dynamic industry.

Who is an Editor: Titles and Types

As the publishing industry and the editor's position have changed, the editor's job has

splintered. There have always been different types of editors, but where there was one primary

editor who handled most of the work on a book one hundred years ago, today's books are the

products of many men and women's editorial toil. Indeed, a publishing house does not simply

have "editors"; it has acquiring editors, copyeditors, line editors, developmental editors, proofreaders, and more. The grand, enviable role has fractured into different labels and task groupings:

> The Editor, too, is dead, having been replaced by a lowercase cadre of agents, acquisitions editors, production editors, freelance copyeditors, and marketing and sales directors pitching books to superchain bookstore buyers. But there remains the *function* of the Editor, hovering like a ghost over the proceedings…. The Editor lives again whenever an agent persuades an author to broaden her thesis; whenever an acquisitions editor takes a manuscript home for the weekend to suggest rearrangements and cuts; whenever a production editor pays a copyeditor a few extra dollars to provide some missing corrective tissue in an author's discourse. (Norton xi)

The Editor is not one, then, but many—a many that must unite each contribution to a book to honor the thorough and spirited tradition of the Editors of old. Though many types of editors exist today, often the boundaries are blurred from one job to the next, and one title may encompass the work of many others, depending on the house.

To clarify who the editors of the present are and what they do, we will dissect the most common editorial labels and discover what typically distinguishes one from the other. While there are no absolutes in these job descriptions, they are meant to provide a broad snapshot that emphasizes the particular nuances of each title.

The Managing Editor

We will begin with the role of the simplest description: the managing editor. This job title may sound convincing, but the managing editor is truly not an editor at all, at least in the traditional sense of the word. Managing editors typically do not work much with books—rather, they take on more of a managerial role, as the name suggests. He or she supervises the work of the editorial team, keeps tabs on the department's overall progress, and "oversee[s] the production process but do[es] not actually read the manuscripts as they come in" (Judd 13). Managing editors are not found consistently across the industry, and often their duties are blended into other roles. The need for such a person depends on the rhythm and size of the publishing house, and even of the editorial department within a house. The managing editor serves an organizational purpose with a focus on the bigger functioning picture.

The Acquisitions Editor

The acquisitions editor is also known as the senior editor, the editorial director, or the general editor. This man or woman is responsible for buying books and for continually bringing new content to his or her house. They are attuned to the industry, compelling in conversation, champions of networking, and keen with their buying decisions. As one Chicago-based editorial director put it, "they do key work positioning a work for the marketplace, and they're constantly scouting the universe for their next great read. Most great acquiring editors I know have a constant internal dialogue that repeats 'is there a book in that?' Acquisitions editors tend to have more in common with salespeople than with production editors" (Stocke). These editors do not just know books well—they know the people who buy the books, too.

Their work fuels the publication process and, thus, is never complete. Sometimes they will suggest ideas based on their house's needs or on their perceptions of and knowledge about the market. They are the main contact point for literary agents and typically the person such agents want to cultivate relationships with. Depending on the publisher, acquisitions editors can play a beginning role in the book's revision process as they "help the editor make the decision to publish, and suggest improvements in the content or approach" (Judd 12); some of these editors stay strictly true to their purpose of obtaining projects, while others may exercise more freedom in attending to their books after acquisition. Especially today, there is a trend of acquisitions editors resembling "The Editor" most vividly, and in smaller houses, they may serve as the copyeditor for a book, as well. In terms of impact,

> this editor is the company's arbiter of "beauty and truth," acts as the corporate
>
> gatekeeper, and plays a substantive role (often the dominant one) in acquiring, selecting,
>
> and supervising the editing manuscripts [*sic*]. These editors make decisions. They open
>
> the "gate"; they anoint a writer with "Holy Chrism" and transform him or her as if by
>
> wizardry into an author. An acquisition editor accepts and rejects proposals, outlines, and
>
> manuscripts. (Greco 124)

The invisible, proverbial wall between an author's work and its publication, then, is quite assessable—and it looks exactly like an acquisitions editor. Without their work, there would not be anything to edit or publish. Acquisitions editors are critical to the lifecycle of a book and the work cycle of a publishing company.

The Developmental Editor

The developmental editor is responsible for helping authors refine, reorganize, clarify, and ultimately *develop* their writing. Often, his or her work occurs at the outset and early stages of the editing process and can involve assisting acquisitions editors in their buying decisions. They review books under consideration and create methods of revision and suggestions for change in an effort to illuminate both the level of work that will be required if the book is purchased, as well as its overall potential. Developmental editors "engage in sustained acts of two-way empathy—toward these authors and their prospective readers. I become, in fact, the authors' first and most attentive reader, their first critic—and perhaps the only one who will offer his insight confidentially, while there's still time for them to make adjustments to the text" (Norton xiii). As someone who is consulted for big content-related decisions and creates visions for manuscripts, the developmental editor holds immense power.

If acquisitions editors are on the fence about a potential project or cannot place their finger on the problem they sense *could* exist, the developmental editor steps in to offer insight, feedback, and suggestions. Sometimes, this looks like recreating a book entirely—as in, the author thought his or her book was about one topic, but through careful consideration was found to be much more suited to another. Sometimes, it looks like reorganization, from a sentence and paragraph level, to even whole chapters. Developmental editing entails extensive reading and note-taking, heightened attention to detail and overarching themes, information tracking throughout a text, outlining, writing, and fact-checking. These editors tango between dissecting an author's work, keeping in mind the public and the times, and providing reliable suggestions for revision, either to the author or to consulting editors.

The Technical Editor

Technical editors work within scientific, technological, mathematical, political, financial, and medical fields of publishing with "any specialized subject that address a specific audience, has its own jargon, and whose approach is objective" (Tartuz 4). They serve many of the same literary functions as developmental, line, and copyeditors in that they encourage quality and clear writing, but their day-to-day work sees many more graphs, charts, tables, illustrations, lists, and other visual components. The technical editor's focus is not as much books as it is research, official documents, instructions, manuals, "online help, online tutorials, user interfaces, videotapes, slide shows, speeches, and technical marketing brochures" (Tarutz 11). While some may resist this type of editing for its lesser creative opportunities, others enjoy its reliable and neutral nature. There are no plots or characters to develop—instead, there is critical, sometimes life-altering information that needs to be true, lucid, and well-presented. Though technical editors are not considered contributors to the American literary tradition, their labor persists as necessary and crucial.

The Copyeditor

Perhaps more so than any other title, the copyeditor evades definition. At one house, there may be designated copyeditors who go through manuscripts with fine-tooth combs; at another, the acquisitions editor or those with other titles simply rope copyediting into their job descriptions. This is one of the primary titles that varies from company to company and has a large freelancing population, yet the underlying principle of the job remains constant: cleaning copy. Copyeditors are the observant, detail-driven workers on a manuscript who attend to

grammar, spelling, plot inconsistencies, house style, sentence structure, and literary devices. Depending on the job circumstances, a copyeditor may also do substantial editing or rewriting (Judd 16). The duties of a copyeditor fluctuate from house to house, which is why it is necessary for someone with this title to confirm expectations with his or her employer, especially for those who are freelance copyeditors.

This editor moves through a manuscript word by word in an effort to catch any and every mistake. He or she must have a profound knowledge of language, a hardworking attitude, and a keen eye, for "attention to detail is what separates copyeditors from other editors. A good copyeditor is endlessly fussy, a nit-picker who will always take the time to look up a point of style for the umpteenth time until she is absolutely sure she has got it fixed in her head" (Sharpe 18). The copyeditor is the writer's quality assurance machine, which examines every linguistic minutia of the manuscript before sending it off to the next person in the editorial process. A copyeditor's work is paramount to publishing a trustworthy manuscript, so he or she "must have an eye for detail and a passion for accuracy in dealing with detail: of this the fabric of his working life is made" (Bridgwater 87). Copyeditors whose only job is to produce a spotless work typically see a manuscript once, whereas other editors may see the many drafts and rewrites of a work as they develop and change the manuscript. Those who agree to do more substantive editing may labor over a manuscript many times.

Copyediting is fundamental to the editorial process, whether handled by a designated copyeditor or not. For smaller or less significant writings that may not need developmental or technical editing, copyediting remains necessary. When you cringe upon finding a typo in a published work, either online or in print, you exercise your copyediting muscles—and

demonstrate that its neglect is painfully noticeable. The copyeditor's labor is crucial for the production of a clear, orderly, and integrous written work.

The Line Editor

The term "line editor" is sometimes used interchangeably with "copyeditor" for the reason that many of their duties overlap and may even be the same. One house may consider its copyeditors to be line editors, while in other houses there is a distinction. The significant difference between the two, when there is a difference, is that line editors do more developmental work *along* with copyediting and "normally the [line] editor is not as alert to mechanics and fine detail as a copyeditor is" (Judd 13). However, as we saw before, copyeditors will frequently do substantive editing without receiving another title, which perfectly demonstrates the blurred lines of editorial occupations.

The Proofreader

The proofreader is not technically an editor (Sharpe 19), yet he or she still contributes to the editorial process and, thus, deserves attention. The bluelines are the final draft of a manuscript before it goes off to print, so proofreaders are those who inspect this draft for errors before publication. At this stage in the process, changes are expensive to make; for that reason, "the proofreader is only looking for typographical errors or actual mistakes, not ordinary niceties" (Judd 15). The proofreader must use judgement in his or her decisions, deciding if a change is actually worth the cost to the publisher. Proofreading is an excellent step toward a job

as a copyeditor, yet as technology advances, this occupation is perhaps most in danger of becoming obsolete.

The Editorial Assistant

A role with outstanding demands and potential, the editorial assistant is the typical entry-level position for those interested in the publishing world. As a common theme has suggested, this title, too, varies from house to house and carries with it much more responsibility than the "assistant" nature of the title suggests (Santino 124). The editorial assistant may be strictly secretarial, which includes scheduling, making calls, organizing, taking meeting minutes, managing deadlines, writing emails, and the like. On the other hand, an editorial assistant position could be an editor's job without the prestigious label seeing as, over time, the editorial assistant can begin to build a list of his or her own—which means taking responsibility for his or her own "list" of books to edit and publish.

As far as qualifications go, a Philadelphia editor recalls her time as an assistant required "a toolkit of basic writing and communication skills—strong copywriting ability, good critical judgment, and the ability to articulate my opinions succinctly and clearly—as well as basic administrative ability (filing, payment tracking, shipping, and other more assistant-like duties)" (Thornburgh). Essentially, editorial assistants need to have the skills of an editor but the attitude of a humble worker, prepared to refine their relevant knowledge and advance their superior editors' agendas. And while their work is diverse and trying, the payoff takes patience; another editor shares "I can no longer count the number of promising young editors I know who've quit the industry because they were still working as someone's assistant at 30 years old" (Rudolph).

Progressing from an assistant editor to a *true* editor takes time, tact, and proactivity—and even then, it unfortunately may not be enough if the house does not have the resources or staff openings to offer a promotion. As one editor shares about her editorial assistant experience,

> I was also acquiring books of my own—the only way to stop assisting other editors, at the big houses, is to build enough of a "list" of your own that your company makes you an editor. I know assistants who have been working for a decade and who are acquiring and editing more books every year than the editors they work for, though they aren't getting promoted because their employers can't afford to hire and train new assistants. So *just* building a list isn't enough to get out from under the assistant rock, these days.
>
> (Rudolph)

The editorial assistant is a supportive, perceptive, and ever-willing person who bolsters the work of his or her house, and when rewarded, usually graduates to a formal editor position.

The Freelance Editor

Freelancers are most often copyeditors, proofreaders, or indexers who work on their own time and for themselves. Instead of seeking employment from a certain house or company, a freelance editor builds his or her own network of agents, authors, and outsourcing publishing companies and has the freedom to accept and reject whatever manuscripts come their way. Freelancers can work from home in their pajamas, in the coffee shop down the road, in the local library, or anywhere else they can find access to their required materials (which, in this day and age, almost always includes the internet). Freelancers set their own hours and their own rates. The catch? Building a solid reputation and a reliable system of clients.

Many freelancers are veterans of the publishing industry who have struck out on their own after learning from a career in book business, and sometimes they will even bring previous clients with them to their freelancing career (Sharpe 163). Some are full-time workers who edit on the side. Whatever the rhyme or reason behind the decision to freelance, it demands discipline, networking, and experience. Nowadays, publishing companies are more and more often cutting costs by outsourcing their work to dependable freelancers, so this job category is significant in the context of the modern editorial role. While the Editorial Freelancers Association currently has 2,500 active members, a 2016 article from Forbes shares that "94% of the ten million jobs created in the US between 2005 and 2015 are temp or freelance," and "only 34% of US workers today are freelancers" (Muhammed). Considering this information about job trends overall, freelance editing undoubtedly holds potential for the future.

Advancement in the Field

Moving through the ranks of the publishing world is a long and arduous process, which usually begins at the editorial assistant level. As we have seen, it may take years, or even decades, before an editorial assistant is promoted to a higher level in his or her house. Greater autonomy may become possible with time and practice, since, after learning the ropes of the industry, editorial assistants can often take on their own projects. Still, a new title or a raise may be a long time coming.

The best way to push forward in the publishing industry is to soak in as much knowledge and experience as possible. Current editors stress the importance of internship, bookselling, and copyediting experience, and according to one production editor currently working at an

independent press in Minnesota, "entry-level positions give you *access* to people who have more experience than you: don't take that for granted! Learn everything you can from those around you; you learn a lot just by being around the action, even if you're not directly involved in it yet" (Valadez). If you know what you are doing, and you do it well and in a timely fashion, people are going to notice—and when the time comes that a higher-level position is available, you will have already proved and exercised your qualifications to those around you.

Finally, advancement takes action. The best editors are the ones whose brains are always working and whose bodies are always moving so as not to miss any opportunity. Lazy editors do not succeed, and lazy editorial assistants will just be fired. The editor's work is true labor, and it requires diligence, attention, and devotion. As one seasoned editorial professional put it, "publishing attracts smart people. You won't move ahead just because you're smart, or because you personally have immaculate taste. Rather, you move ahead because you're constantly in motion, constantly communicating, constantly looking for what's next" (Stocke). Editors must be perceptive go-getters, and the sooner a young editor recognizes this fact, the better the editor he or she will be.

No matter the type of editor or variations on the editorial role, there are certain qualities, skills, and characteristics that most every editor needs to do his or her job well. These are what I like to call the editor's "toolbox," which is what an editor must have in order to do his or her job well.

The Editor's Toolbox

To be an editor, you must be many things; to be a great editor, even more. Many dynamic factors pull together to create a productive editor, but what exactly are they? We have already seen the important role of experience in the development of an editor, and, indeed, exposure to the industry is invaluable and vital to understanding the editor's work. Yet education, personality, knowledge, and relational aptitude also contribute to an editor's success. Some qualities are innate, while others can—and must—be learned. The fact of the matter is that no one becomes an editor overnight, but rather one grows into the role as time and experience allow.

If we look at an editor today, there are common threads connecting his or her life and personality with those across the industry boasting the same title. While some of the traits may have changed from the past century, the editor still employs similar tools and virtues that he or she did in the past era of publishing. Together we will unpack and examine the toolbox of today's editor and, in doing so, better clarify the demands and value of the role.

Personality

Being an editor begins with personality, and there are qualities and traits that one simply *must* possess to achieve success in this role. He or she should be patient, diligent, organized, resilient, curious, disciplined, detail-oriented, intelligent, perceptive, appreciative of learning, flexible, compromising, persistent, confident, tactful, creative, nurturing, willing to work hard for little to no recognition, strategic, driven, observant, tenacious, communicative, skilled at time management, sensitive, persuasive, judicious, discerning, composed of pure gold, never wrong,

and perfect—well, perhaps not the last few. Oh, and all of these traits work best when paired with a sense of humor.

As you can tell, being an editor is no small emotional or mental task. It requires character and constant character building. Indeed, "editing takes time because thinking and feeling takes time" (Vaughan 44). And even when editors do not *feel* like being patient, or judicious, or curious, or flexible, they must be—fake it 'til they make it, as they say. Yes, editors engage language and the written word, but that language and those words are connected to living, breathing, emotional humans (some more emotional than others). Whether it means dealing with the disgruntled cover designer down the hall or with the delicate author at the other end of an email, editors must exercise certain personality traits to achieve their desired outcomes. This feat comes most effortlessly and least painfully when the editor has some inborn semblance of patience, judiciousness, curiosity, flexibility, and so on.

Personality stands as its own tool because it is essential *and* innate. For the most part, we are born with certain qualities and traits that make up our personalities. While we mature and learn over the course of our lives, our personalities remain relatively constant; it's not a part of us that we can easily alter as we do our clothes or our skillsets. One editorial director demonstrates this belief in his high regard for proactivity, saying "to my mind, the most important trait a budding editor has is proactivity. I very specifically say 'trait' rather than 'skill' there. The best tend to have it or not. It's not really a learned thing" (Stocke). Indeed, we cannot learn to have certain personalities in the same way that we learn how to mark or correct an error. Another experienced editor puts it this way:

It's hard to overestimate the value of a positive attitude, being able to work well with others, being willing to go above and beyond to complete a task, and being reliable and

responsible. I can teach a new hire how to edit over time. I can't always teach someone

how to be responsible and to take ownership of their assigned tasks. (Valadez).

If one does not have an ingrained sense of responsibility or proactivity or curiosity or so on, he

or she will probably have a more difficult time becoming an editor than one who already shows

those qualities.

Many have embarked on the editor's career who do not possess a personality suited to the

work; these souls either conform to the attitude that the job and its people demand, or they quit to

find a profession that pays more, offers better hours, and does not require calming grown men

and women over the phone as they bemoan an impending deadline. Being an editor is a

consistently demanding duty that requires much more emotional, mental, and sometimes

physical exertion than the average nine-to-five occupation, and such dedication alone takes a

unique temperament. The first tool of the editor's toolbox is of no small significance:

personality is key. Without the right one, editors will be fruitless.

Linguistic Knowledge

Here is a no-brainer for you: editors must have an expert command of the language they

are being paid to edit. An editor needs to understand grammar rules inside and out—not just for

themselves, but also for the sake of explaining errors to authors (in hopes that they do not make

the same mistakes again). An editor must know not *just* that something is wrong, but also *why* it

is wrong—and know it well enough to persuade the reluctant or puzzled author to make the

necessary change. He or she must be able to at least recognize when a word looks off and know

where to look to confirm its spelling (if its correct spelling is not already known). They are

familiar with the debate of the Oxford comma, and they know the difference between an em dash and an en dash. An editor understands syntax, literary devices, semantics, house style, silly preferences and deviations, and more. It is simple, yet profoundly central to the quality execution of editorial tasks. Of her necessary skillset as an editor, one woman said she "had to have excellent sentence-level grammar and syntax skills, good judgment about implementing or stetting freelancer corrections, and I had to be a proofreading and copyediting expert. That required knowing, for example, the *Chicago Manual of Style* backward and forward" (Rudolph). Thankfully, many style guides, which we will discuss shortly, are available for consultation and education on the diverse accepted rules across the industry. A deep and professional comfortability with the English language distinguishes editors from *all* people, let alone from the people in the next department over. Without this expert knowledge and awareness, editors simply cannot be what they claim to be.

And, surprise! A good editor is not *just* a good editor, but also a talented writer. An understanding of the English language must also manifest itself in written documents, not only in indicative marks on a manuscript. An editor's written work goes far beyond emails, presentations, and formal letters, and one editor shared that "editors are constantly called upon to provide copy: flap copy, back cover copy, catalog copy, title information sheet copy... the list goes on" (Thornburgh). Editors edit, yes, but they also write.

Along with being competent to recognize the mistakes before them, editors also must know how to employ professional shorthand to mark and correct the errors they discover. Widely accepted copyediting and proofreading symbols exist to draw attention to small problems, such as capitalization, punctuation, typeface, and spacing; and to larger edits, such as section movements, alignment, and deletions. These symbols are easy to find with basic research, but it

takes time and effort to ingrain them in one's mind. The old idiom "practice makes perfect"

holds true for this point of editing. Having the knowledge to both spot an error *and* correct it are

essential tools of the editor's trade.

Education

Talk of knowledge brings us to education—what does an editor do before they intern or

take an entry-level position at a publishing house? While we have emphasized that experience is

the crux of success and advancement in the editorial world, of course education plays a role. The

past era of publishing did not require any specific type of degree, considering economics and

dentistry degrees were adequate for men like Perkins and Commins. In the current industry,

many editors have English undergraduate degrees or liberal arts degrees, though "special

expertise, in addition to general knowledge, can help further an editing career. Until the recent

past, the stereotypical book editor was a liberal arts major, perhaps with a graduate degree in

English literature. But in this era of specialization, editors now come from many different

disciplines" (Sharpe 128). So, a background in most anything will do—especially for those

seeking a career as a technical editor. Still, an English degree may be the most traditional way of

gaining a firm grasp on the English language. Graduate programs and degrees also exist for those

seeking editorial careers, yet as it has been said, nothing beats hands-on experience, either

through an internship, an apprenticeship, or even a starting career with a literary agency or a

bookseller.

Less formal educations are also important to being an editor in today's world. Though someone may not be a computer science major, computer skills are becoming increasingly relevant to publishing companies. One Minnesota-based editor noted that

> being adept in core computer applications is even more important now than it was when I
> started, though, including the basics, of course—Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel,
> Adobe Acrobat, possibly Adobe InDesign. But being adept in social media can matter
> too, as well as having some skills and using databases or content management systems. If
> you are an advanced user of any program that seems relevant to the position, shout it
> from the rooftops. (Valadez)

Basic computer programs and social media sites have become entwined with an editor's daily business, so a working knowledge in both of these realms also proves useful. Whether in science or history, a degree or a publishing certification provides the necessary edge for an aspiring editor to get his or her foot in the door. After that first experience, it will continue to be skill and experience that qualifies the present day editor. While an educational foundation may line the editor's toolbox, it is ultimately where that education takes them that is most important.

Market Awareness

Along with knowing how to edit their projects, editors must have an acute understanding of how their books fit into the grand scheme of the marketplace. This holds from the acquisitions process, onwards. Sometimes a book belongs to a niche genre with a small but loyal group of followers; sometimes it is the next novel from a bestselling mystery author. Sometimes the writer affects the marketability of a book, such as celebrity authors, and often the obscurity of

an author's name can hurt a book's prospects. Editors must know what types of books they edit

best, as well as how those books will sell in the end. Understanding current market trends is

crucial; anticipating future trends, even more so. A book is not published for an audience of one,

but rather for a select readership of a distinct size. And what is the market but a giant collection

of readers with purchasing power? Editors must have a confident working knowledge of those

audiences who align with their house list.

An understanding of the book market has become increasingly important for editors over

the past century, as we have discussed. No editor will be successful if he or she fails to look

beyond the mechanics of a manuscript in order to prepare it for the world's eyes. One editor-

turned-proofreader claims

> You have to be a very discerning reader, and you have to have a crystal clear
>
> understanding of the market and your company's place in the market; and your imprint's
>
> place in the company; and your place in the imprint. You have to envision a niche for
>
> yourself within your particular environment, and then you have to relentlessly seek out
>
> books that fit into that niche. (Rudolph)

A knowledge of the market covers everything from overall market affairs right down to the

intricate specifics of the genre one edits. This type of aptitude takes diligent learning, constant

vigilance, and time; indeed, no one comprehends the book market in its entirety after a few

evenings. Staying up-to-date with sources—such as news stories, book bloggers, and

booksellers—aids an editor in developing a working image of what sells, when it sells, how it

sells, and, hopefully, why it sells. One longtime editor in the industry believes his experience in

selling books best prepared him for the duties of his editing career, saying, "I learned more of

what I needed to know working in bookstores than I did in college. Being around the books,

experiencing the different kinds of books people are interested in, and getting a sense for the transactional aspects of publishing—the part where a reader chooses to purchase a book—was instrumental in setting up a career for me" (Stocke). Clearly, the prominence of market knowledge should not be underestimated. It exists as a critical instrument in the editor's toolbox, one that feeds the editor's decision-making throughout the publishing process.

Business Skills

Having an awareness of the market is a crucial, specific element of a larger set of skills, so important that it merits its own discussion. Business aptitude is another key tool that an editor must employ to get through his or her day-to-day work. In his essay about the editor's work, Gerald Howard writes, "I perhaps overemphasize the point about book editing, even at the highest level of practice, having a lot to do with money and promotion and gamesmanship and overall business sense because these are the aspects of the craft that the public least understands or cares to recognize" (61). If someone believes that to become an editor is to toss mathematics or economics to the wayside, he or she has been awfully misguided.

As we have said, book publishing is a business—and where there is a business, there is money. Editors must possess the ability to manage and stay aware of company budgets, negotiate authors' royalties and other payments, calculate profit and loss estimates for manuscripts, and deal with the other various financial demands that arise in bringing a book to print. Editors must also have expertise when it comes to legal transactions. Book contracts are legal documents that bind both the publisher and the author; editors must know what they are offering, as well as what they are agreeing to, when finalizing these official papers. And since publishing also concerns

intellectual property rights and copyright law, an editor must be extremely mindful of these regulations. In all, an editor is a book businessperson. He or she must have budgeting competency and a growing knowledge of financial and legal matters to keep the publishing house honest and profitable.

Social Skills

There exists a misconstrued image of the editor, and that is one of a man or a woman in solitude with many manuscripts before them. While the process of marking copy is very much between the editor and his or her pen or keyboard, editing itself has an incredible amount to do with relationships—with authors, with agents, with fellow departments, and with others in the industry. For this reason, a robust set of social skills is another tool that editors must employ daily, even hourly, to complete their work.

Though we have discussed the deterioration of the editor-author relationship, rest assured that it is not entirely defunct. Authors certainly communicate with their editors; however, they probably do not maintain close friendships with them as was done in the publishing era prior. In fact, "an editor and an author can work together smoothly if they remain a little distant. A touch of distance may be an asset" (Vaughan 48). Distance allows room for truth, and editors can be most honest—and perhaps most insistent on improvement—when they are not focused on maintaining a personal relationship as much as maintaining a level of literary quality. And maintaining these professional relationships still require effort and balance; while relationship dynamics may have changed over time, the necessity of editor-author interactions has not.

While the roles may have drifted apart, all is not lost for the relationship. In fact, the

dialogue between an author and his or her editor is crucial to a manuscript's development. The tact and gentleness these discussions require can be emotionally frustrating, uplifting, exhausting, and even all three at the same time. It has even been said that

> The toughest part of the editor's job is playing psychiatrist to a third-rate writer: that's 'overtime' work. Trying to provide comforting words to an otiose novelist whose latest book has been destroyed by a reviewer—that's no fun. Taking an ego-tripping author's tantrum (or his agent's) in stride should justify time-and-a-half pay. (Targ 19)

Here we see that the difficulty of the editor's job lies not in the grammar rules or the deadlines, but the people! Sometimes the discussions between editor and author are for clarification, sometimes they are for scheduling, and sometimes, as a present-day editor at a Philadelphia press shares, "when my authors burst into tears over their copyedits, I stay on the phone with them and talk them down" (Thornburgh). Even today, editors can take on a nurturing role for their authors when the moment or time demands it. Editor-author relationships vary across the spectrum of personalities and genres, yet they remain a vivid aspect of the modern editor's role.

The editor-author relationship is also crucial because, when it comes down to it, the editor is the book's number one advocate—which sounds cheesy, but is quite true. While agents dedicate themselves to the best monetary outcomes for the author, it is the editors who devote themselves to producing the best book. Indeed, the editor has committed him or herself to the author's work, much more so than the author's spouse, best friend, or child ever could. He or she has chosen to invest time, money, and resources into the work in order to share the author's writing with the world. He or she has offered the author the opportunity of a lifetime and has ultimately entwined his or her career with the author's work. For this reason, there must be a firm degree of trust between creator and editor:

Respect creates trust and should permeate every aspect of an editor's dealing with an

author. An author trusts an editor who "sees" his work as he does, who shares his vision

of what it should be, and shows respect for his language and ideas. To keep that trust, [the

editor] must demonstrate complete understanding of—and empathy for—the author's

purpose. (Sharpe 85-6)

Without a relational foundation of trust, a book may be published, but it certainly will not be

offered to the world in its best form. In the end, a true understanding between the author and the

editor makes the work easier and the final product better.

Along with authors, the editor must also form relationships with agents and other

publishing industry professionals. From acquiring books to understanding the market, these

connections are critical for an editor to complete his or her work. A good editor "is gregarious

enough to get along with authors, illustrators, designers, and other editors, and to build good

relationships with agents (an agent with whom she has a good working relationship is more

likely to funnel worthwhile projects her way)" (Sharpe 13). In this respect, social skills are not

just necessary, but they also correlate with greater and greater publishing opportunities. And one

editor of today even says that "an editor who can use personal connections to secure publicity for

her book will have an easier time getting ahead than an editor who isn't friendly with a spectrum

of people in the industry" (Rudolph). From this glimpse into the editor's world, it becomes

apparent that relating to others matters to the publicity and marketing of a book as it does to the

actual production of a manuscript. Networking is a major factor in many publishing decisions,

and much like other industries, it often comes down to who you do and do not know. Editors

with emotional intelligence and social grace are well equipped for the relational demands of their

job.

When it comes down to it, people can be difficult. There will be turbulent conversations, challenging relationships, and infuriating hours spent teetering on the edge of an emotional pin for any editor, no matter the level of his or her social aptitude. On these particularly trying days, editors can embrace the recommendation of publishing industry veteran William Targ: "My advice is the same to all editors whose authors and books are giving them a pain in the neck: be sure the martinis are extra dry" (19).

Tangible Tools

If we consider tools, what typically comes to mind are concrete objects that are useful for work. This final category of the editor's toolbox is dedicated to those necessary items that every editor should have on hand. The first—a supply of pencils and pens—is obvious. Of the red, blue, and black varieties, these writing utensils aid editors through note-taking and the querying process of editing a manuscript. While much of today's editing is digital, the pencil and the pen will never fully go out of style.

Editors also benefit from having style guide books, house style sheets, a dictionary, a thesaurus, a copy of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, and maybe even atlases or encyclopedias nearby, for the editor never knows when he or she will have to confirm the spelling of a country or the capitalization of National Parks. These books are not only great educators, but also solid reference materials. If good editors do not know how to fix an error they encounter, they should at least know where to look for the answer.

Finally, modern editors need a computer, and most likely a laptop so they can work on the go. Not only does the internet aid in fact-checking, but all email communication and digital

editing takes place on the device. Track Changes in Microsoft Word is one example of a digital editing program or system that an editor may use in his or her career. A computer or a laptop provides access to information, people, manuscripts, and news. While a computer is crucial for getting work done, all of these tangible tools enable editors to do their job.

While all of the items in the editor's toolbox are crucial for success, any editor's achievement ultimately hinges upon how such tools are deployed. Now that we have gone through what the editor needs to get the job done, let's discuss the job itself—the process of bringing a manuscript to the public.

You Get A Book—Now What?

Once the acquisitions process is complete and the editor has found a project worth investing in—suited to the market, original, financially prudent, compelling—he or she purchases the project on behalf of the publisher and thus takes responsibility for preparing the book for publication. In a sense, the book has become the editor's book, and he or she will help the author nurture it to completion. Sometimes the project is a finished manuscript; other times, it is an outline, a lone chapter, or a book proposal (Schuster 33). Whatever the form, the editor now has plenty of work, deadlines, and maybe even some tears ahead of him or her.

The first step in the process is to educate the author about what will take place. Editors set forth the stages of book production so the author can anticipate what to expect: "assigning a contract number, manuscript editing, rights and permissions, design and production, and marketing" (Greco 170). This sets the tone for the production process and provides a trackable course of action for all parties involved.

Next comes the actual editing. The first truth to keep in mind is that "there is no pat formula, no one way of approaching each different text. Each book has its own problems; each feels like starting from scratch" (Sharpe 79). Sure, there is correct and incorrect grammar, but beyond that, there is no right or wrong editing. Poor editing? Indeed. But wrong? No. As editors develop, they grow in an understanding of their individual style and how editing works best for *them*. No two editors' brains are alike, and therefore no two editors will approach a manuscript in the same way or with the same perspective. It is these differences, preferences, and varying strengths that suggest editing is not just a skill, but an art. While there are countless books in the universe about editing that can suggest and imply all they want, the editor is the only one who can determine what is useful to his or her editorial endeavors and what is not.

Editing involves cleaning a manuscript of grammatical and spelling errors, but it also entails clarifying the author's words and encouraging the development of his or her ideas. An editor may read through a manuscript multiple times before passing it back to the author for revision. Time in the manuscript, nowadays spent on a computer, can involve tending to mechanical errors, clarification issues, structure or arrangement problems, plot holes, house style guide deviations, potentially libelous or controversial statements, word choice, and weak writing. Three levels of editing exist—heavy, moderate, and light—although the stipulations of each depend on the editor in question (Sharpe 94). Often, the acquisitions editor or a superior will determine the level of editing a manuscript needs, but if the acquisitions editor is *also* responsible for the book's publication, he or she will decide what needs to be done.

One's personal editorial convictions come into play in this part of the publishing process. What approach an editor takes to a manuscript depends upon many factors, especially its genre. Max Perkins's belief that the manuscript belonged to the writer is a conviction that an editor may

use to guide his or her editing practices. In situations where the editor and author are working

from an outline, the editorial approach may include more hands-on writing and conjecturing

alongside the author. Letting the author control his or her story is more relevant when editing

fiction than when editing a non-fiction work, which should be grounded in fact. While all editors

have their own style, it's important they remember their place in the process; they are the editor

and not the writer, and their job is to make the work the best version of itself—not to make it

their own.

      As he or she goes through a manuscript, an editor will make a manuscript-specific style

sheet for reference, either for his or her own edits or for any editors down the line who may have

a question. This style sheet caters to specific words, names, characters, preferred spellings, and

locations in the text. As editors move through a manuscript, they will make a note that the

daughter's name is "Kelli," not "Kelly"; they will mark that the author strongly prefers "gray" to

"grey"; they will note the antagonist lives in "Jonson's Hollow" and not "Johnson's Hollows."

The style must be consistent throughout a manuscript, right down to the spelling of places and

names, so creating a style sheet is important for keeping track of all relevant information.

      Editors attend to the entire manuscript, not simply the words. For that reason, they must

also edit and fix tables, illustrations, charts, photographs, maps, lists, and any other visual

elements that a text could have. Sometimes, the editor may even suggest the use of these visuals

and create them him or herself. This area of editing may include tending to problems like

incorrect figures or math, alignment errors, problematic captions, sizing issues, or page

placement mistakes. Working with illustrations is less common in fiction and more common in

nonfiction and children's' books and is an important element to which editors must pay attention.

Along with using copyediting and proofreading symbols to edit (or whatever the digital

program that the editor uses offers), editors also employ queries in the editing process. A query is

a note from the editor and for the author as he or she goes through the edited draft. They are used

for clarification, encouragement, questions, suggestions, and confirmation. It is of the utmost

importance that the editor phrases his or her queries kindly, wisely, and tactfully, for "all

authors—not just those new to the editing process—are apt to be put off by queries that more

closely resemble dissertations. An editor should not show off her knowledge or expertise; she

should use it to make *pertinent* suggestions on a manuscript" (Sharpe 85). Authors are often

reluctant to change the manuscript they believed they had already perfected, so editors must be

mindful of this when phrasing and adding queries. Indeed, even too *many* kindly worded queries

could set an author on edge, so an editor must be careful and judicious. It takes time to discern

what merits a query and what does not, but typically queries are meant for edits that are vital to

the understanding of the manuscript or edits that could not stand alone. A comma splice does not

need a query; calling a character Emily in some places and Emilie in others definitely deserves

one. With regard to questions, suggestions, and changes, it is ultimately the author's say as to

what changes and what does not. Editors can stand for their opinions and attempt to convince the

author of the benefit of a change, but in the end the authors choose whether or not they want to

expand a section, move a paragraph, delete a chapter, and so forth.

Once finished, the editor sends the edited copy of the manuscript, or the galleys, to the

author, and the two determine a deadline for the next draft. In this time, the author is expected to

respond to each of the editor's queries. Aside from hard draft and production deadlines, there is

no set limit as to how many times this cycle occurs; the editor may go through two, five, or

twenty-seven sets of galleys before the author's work is ready for print. The final galleys are

referred to as the page proofs or the bluelines; these come from the printer and display the

version of the manuscript as it will appear once published, including all visuals, page numbers,

front and back matter, and so on. At this stage, any changes the author or editor makes are

expensive, so only those that are extremely necessary should be made. Edits are marked as either

author's alterations (changes the author wants to make), printer's errors (faults made by the

printer), or editor's alterations (errors unnoticed by the editor until the final draft). While the type

of error typically determines who pays for it, editor's alterations are regarded as the most serious,

professionally speaking. When the blues are approved, "the promotion and marketing

departments finalize their plans, and design and production make sure the book is processed"

(Greco 171). At this point in the process, the author is essentially out of the woods. He or she has

played the part and finished the manuscript. Now it is in the editor's and publisher's hands to see

the work through publication and promotion.

It is noteworthy that, throughout the editing process, there are countless other projects

occurring for the editor at various stages of development. One simple book on the editor's radar

would be wonderful, but in fact there are many to be taken care of, as well as other potential

projects vying for attention. One editor currently in the industry shares

> I have to know the various stages of book production and keep track of how my projects
>
> are coming along, which means keeping on top of upcoming benchmark dates
>
> (manuscript delivery, developmental edits, copyedit due date, art or photography in date,
>
> first proof date, second proof date, ARCs in date, etc. etc. clear on until publication) and
>
> maintaining contact with my authors, artists, designers, publicists, and sales team to make
>
> sure we're on track. (Thornburgh)

The life of the editor is a balancing act, and no matter the time he or she wishes to dedicate to a manuscript, most of that time must be spent elsewhere. Editing does not exist in a vacuum, but rather takes places within a vortex of tasks, meetings, correspondences, and more.

The editing process is truly laborious, in both respects of the word—it is not just hard work, but also the bringing forth of a new, albeit literary, creation. There are high moments and low moments, long nights and quick days, and yet, for the talented editor, the end product will justify the means:

> Each book, before the contract, is beautiful to contemplate. By the middle of the writing, the book has become, for the author, a hate object. For the editor, in the middle of editing, it has become a two-ton concrete necklace. However, both author and editor will recover the gleam in their eyes when the work is completed, and see the book as the masterwork it really is. (Vaughan 43)

While there will probably be some mistakes and development opportunities overlooked in any project, the feat of revising and bettering a book is admirable—especially when performed with *dozens* of books each year. Though the editorial process may vary from house to house and genre to genre, it is the bread and butter of the editor's work, both yesterday and today.

The Modern Editor

The role of the modern editor is to be a complex word mechanic, a relational superstar, a meticulous worker, a humble voice, and a protector of the American literary tradition. Though it has changed considerably since the days of Perkins and Commins, the editor and his or her obligation to the book persists. Editing today takes place in a fast-paced and often money-

focused setting. It asks more of the editor's patience, time, and dedication than ever before. To some, it may seem editing demands wizardry of the rarest kind—and editors would tell such people that wizardry is an acceptable (though, magically speaking, quite misleading) description of the way in which they manage to juggle their many talents and tasks. As one editor put it:

A good editor needs to produce good books that sell. It sounds so simple! And yet, you have to stay "read up" on what the industry is doing and know the history of the genre you're working in. You have to be able to spot trends before it's too late to capitalize on them. You have to know bad writing when you see it and know how to fix it. You have to recruit and retain talented and well-connected writers. You have to foresee problems with projects and figure out answers—*Where will we get the art assets? Can we afford to print this in four colors? What's the appropriate price point?* You have to think like a hard-nosed businessperson when you're bargaining over an advance and like an understanding friend when your author is having a meltdown. (Thornburgh)

Editing today is not for the faint of heart. It is active and challenging, mental and emotional, diverse and unexpected, infuriating and deeply rewarding. It is unlike any other career.

As we move on to projections as to how the role will continue to change in the coming years and decades, we must keep in mind the resiliency of literature and the love of reading. While the editor's role may shift again, while the tangible products may change, and while the public's preferences may waver, the written word is a critical aspect of our society and culture and the editor will remain to herald books and written works into the world.

Chapter 4

The Future

The future is a funny thing. Whatever one's predictions for the next century, it is safe to say that many old-fashioned imaginings for the future have already come to pass. Thanks to incredible technological advancements made by innovative minds across the globe, inventions like smart phones, hybrid cars, and solar panels have changed our world, along with our perceptions of what can actually be done. For younger generations, this high-tech world is commonplace, and the limits to what can be accomplished in their lifetimes are probably more flexible than the limits of those still amazed by the touch screen. If technology only sharpens as time progresses, our future is both uncertain and bursting with potential.

Our increasingly industrialized and computerized world has its setbacks, of course. For one, throngs of workers have been replaced by robotic equipment or intelligent programs, even down to the simple self-checkout stations at the supermarket. A trend of trading human laborers for digital ones is worrisome, and undoubtedly the editor's position comes into question in these conversations. While there are many aspects of the future that will affect the editor's role— changing markets, job prospects, shifting skillsets, and so on—perhaps the most pressing and prominent factor impacting the next generation of editors will be the influence and power of technology.

The Role of Technology in Publishing

In the mid-1400s, Johannes Gutenberg introduced his printing press to the world. Though this event occurred nearly six hundred years ago, it is still recognized as one of the most significant inventions in human history. Prior to the printing press, the only texts available were handwritten by individuals who were unable to mass-produce their works, and often did not want to for fear of educating the multitudes. Gutenberg's contributions to society revolutionized the way in which books were fabricated, duplicated, and distributed, and his creation provided a firm foundation upon which wide-spread communication, education, and reading continue to thrive.

Nearly 500 years later, in the 1960s, arguably the greatest communication revolution since the printing press occurred: the creation of ARPANET, which would become the modern-day Internet. Along with the supplementary formation of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, which gave Internet access to the common person, the Internet played a vital role in inspiring the increasingly digital society we know today.

Technological advances have reached nearly every facet of the modern world, and the book publishing industry has not been exempt from the trend. Unlike before, readers connect with beloved authors through social networking or personal websites, companies sell books online to individuals all over the world, paperless news and information is incredibly accessible, and libraries use digital means for storing data and offering services. To the mixed emotions of many—horror, delight, fascination—even books themselves became digitized in 1971 with the beginning of Project Gutenberg (Lebert 3), the first online library of free e-books. Nearly 45 years after its initial creation, the e-book is an everyday household word, and booksellers like Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and textbook companies have jumped on the digital book

bandwagon. The concept of digital reading appeals to the masses and the book industry has had

no choice but to respond to the growing popularity of this relatively new book form.

But what is it that draws people to the e-book? Is it simply the natural next step in the

technological progression of most every aspect of our society, from writing to shopping? Perhaps

the most prominent reason e-books became popular was that they are less expensive than print

books (Gale 161). While the lower cost of an e-book may have once been offset by the upfront

cost of an e-reader device, nowadays people can download e-books onto their phones, tablets,

and computers without ever purchasing a designated reading gadget. As for the convenience of

e-books, they also interest readers in that many books can be stored in one gadget, whereas a

single book is limited in its capacity and may not be as easily stored or packed away. There exist

a variety of reasons why people purchase e-books over traditional books, and vice versa, but in

the end it typically comes down to personal preference and circumstances. Of course, the e-book

has benefits for book producers, as well. According to one editor, e-books typically take less

time to create and bring to the public:

> I personally put the same amount of effort into editing my e-books as I do my print
>
> books. However, the production schedule is shorter, so we typically have less time from
>
> acquisitions to when the final file needs to be ready. So the rounds of edits themselves
>
> and the deadlines tend to be shorter. The authors need to be able to work quickly and
>
> confidently on their revisions, and I need to turn them around in a short amount of time.
>
> (Brauning)

It seems the e-book has simplified reading and storage for the consumer, just as it has

streamlined the production process for the editor. While it still takes time and concerted effort to

produce an e-book, in the end it takes less energy to publish—which means a swifter payoff. The

digital book is certainly revolutionary and carries implications for reading and publishing communities alike.

In spite of the e-book's growing popularity and sophistication, its true impact on the publishing world remains a challenge to discern. News outlets consistently waver between declaring the death of the tangible book and venerating the resiliency of the same. Even professional research finds shifting attitudes from year to year. For example, a study in 2013 found that "the number of those who read an e-book in the past year increased from 16 percent of all Americans ages 16 and older in December 2011 to 23 percent in November 2012. At the same time, the percentage of Americans who read a printed book in the previous 12 months fell from 72 percent of the population in 2011 to 67 percent in 2012" ("Americans' Reading Habits Over Time"). This research suggests the e-book's growing popularity. In contrast, however, a study from 2015 shows "digital sales, which comprise about 20 percent of the market, have slowed sharply, while print sales have stayed relatively strong, according to the Association of American Publishers" (Rainie). A study published as recently as September 2016 states that "e-book readership increased by 11-percentage points between 2011 and 2014 (from 17 percent to 28 percent) but has seen no change in the last two years" (Perrin). Looking at more recent data, which shows "the share of Americans who have read a book [in any format] in the last 12 months (73%) has remained largely unchanged since 2012" (Perrin), we find that e-books have not overtaken print books, as many predicted they would. And the public's waning interest in e-books could be here to stay, for Statista observed that "in 2015, there were 92.6 million people reading e-books in the country. By 2021, this figure is projected to drop to 88.4 million" ("U.S. Book Industry"). Indeed, data on the American public's choice reading habits continues to oscillate, and the jury is still out as to how e-books will affect traditional book sales over time. It

will be interesting to see how purchasing habits differ in the next few decades, considering the

increase and subsequent plateau of e-book popularity in recent years. Clearly e-books are not

going to disappear—they are much too technologically advanced to simply vanish from our

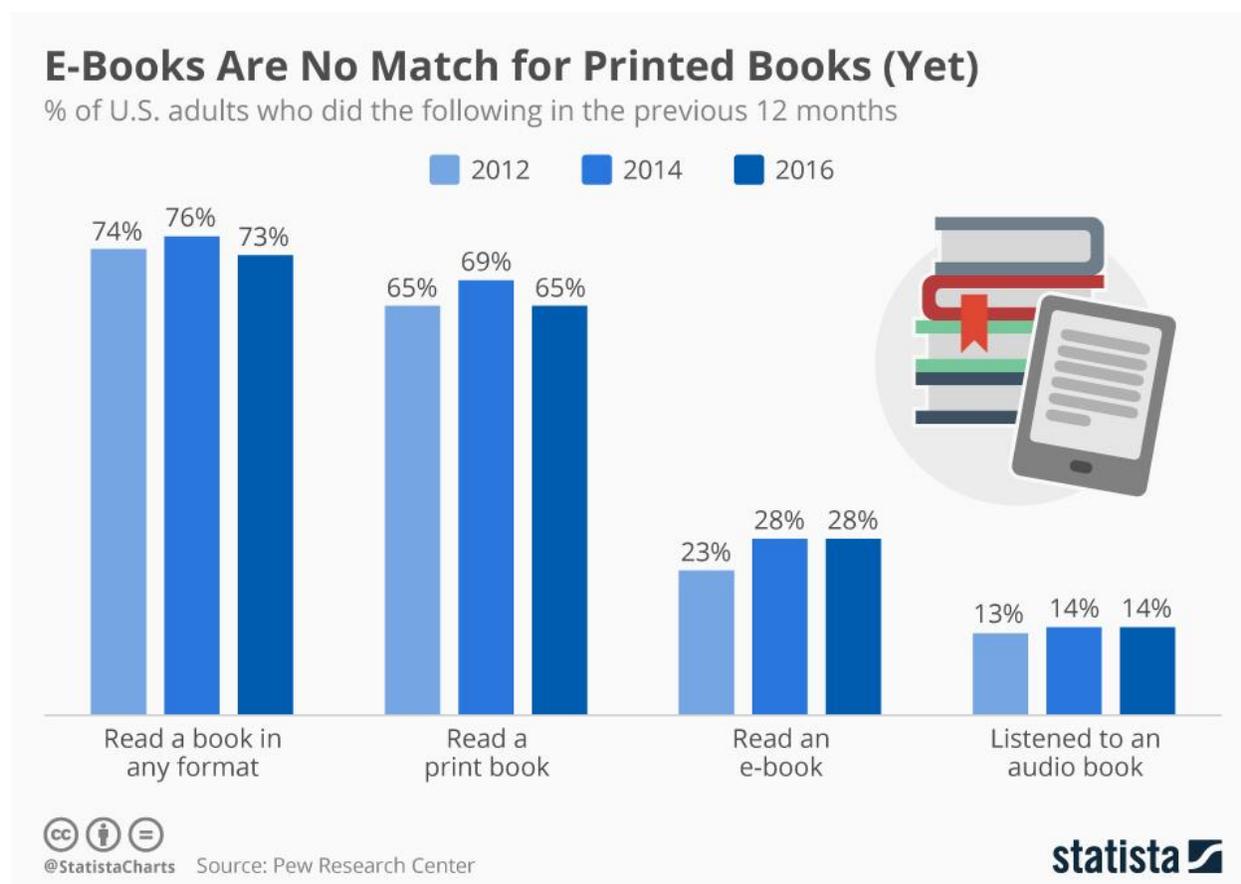digital world—and yet print books seem to be holding their own (see figure 1).

E-Books Are No Match for Printed Books (Yet)
% of U.S. adults who did the following in the previous 12 months

Legend: 2012 | 2014 | 2016

Read a book in any format: 74% (2012), 76% (2014), 73% (2016)

Read a print book: 65% (2012), 69% (2014), 65% (2016)

Read an e-book: 23% (2012), 28% (2014), 28% (2016)

Listened to an audio book: 13% (2012), 14% (2014), 14% (2016)

@StatistaCharts   Source: Pew Research Center   statista

Figure 1. Print Books Prevail

Whatever patterns emerge, many believe "we are still a long way from a situation in which trade

publishers can rely on e-book sales for a substantial or even a significant proportion of their

revenue (if indeed they ever will)" (Thompson 398). For now, traditional books have managed to

keep their digital counterparts at bay, though e-books certainly have the capacity to surge again

in popularity as our society turns more and more regularly to a lifestyle dominated by screens,

convenience, and technology.

As books have undergone a digital transformation, so too have the methods by which editors and publishers complete their work. We have moved from an age of marking up printed or typewritten copies with a blue pencil to an age where all corrections, suggestions, queries, and the like are documented in a digital manuscript and passed between author, editor, and others through the web. Computers and other technologies have overtaken the publishing industry as a whole, and they now play a critical part in the editor's work. As one editor shares,

> Technology plays a huge role in my work. Not only do I read my submissions on a computer or e-reader, do my edits in Word, and keep in contact with agents and my clients over email, but I also do video meetings with my colleagues and intern team over Google Hangouts and use social media to develop my brand and promote the books on my list. I also have to do quite a bit of work with online retailers, such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble, to work with their rankings, meta tags, and genre listings. (Brauning)

Technology is not only used for actual editorial tasks, but for most everything else the editor does. From connecting with colleagues and attending meetings, to book promotions and negotiations, editors rely on high-tech devices and the Internet to complete nearly every aspect of their work.

This heavy dependence on technology is a fairly new development in the grand history of the industry. Indeed, as recently as 1990, one editor cautioned in her copyediting handbook that "[scrolling up and down] may sound like a lot of work when you're used to reading papers instead of screens, but you get used to it" (Judd 10-11). Advice like this would be laughable today, seeing as our lives are filled with screens. The level of technical proficiency required for editors has skyrocketed in the last two decades alone, and, considering the speed with which technology has made itself an everyday necessity in the publishing world, the trend can only be

expected to continue as society advances. Indeed, "this media revolution marks a step change in digital document formats, and like the emergence of PDF for printing and HTML for the web, will give rise to new media formats" (Battle et al. 1). If editors who worked in the 1990s have seen clunky contraptions turned into handheld devices with touch screens, just imagine the complex and brilliant innovations that will be commonplace in the next 10 to 30 years.

A critical aspect of digital publishing is, of course, its effect on publishers and editors. The future of publishing is a hot button issue, especially considering the breakdown of the traditional gatekeeper model. Whereas it was once the publishers who decided whose writing and voices were heard, now anyone can create a blog, a tweet, or a video and share it with the world. Smart technologies, even those as simple as autocorrect and spell check, also play into these matters. Much of the editor's letter-by-letter grammar work is now delegated to digital programs that fix errors automatically, and certain complex software can even edit contextually. With some of their line editing and copyediting work currently delegated to programs, there is a question of whether the future will even *need* editors. Will the advancing digital age of publishing have a place for them?

Indeed, it seems the reality of increasingly intelligent technologies threaten the editorial role, and unknowns like these can be framed in a manner that makes technology seem at odds with the editor, almost as if one or the other will prevail in the end. The overall argument is reminiscent of the classic "man versus technology" theme. But, in fact, improved technologies are what the editor hopes for! As one editor shares: "When good editing software is available, I'll be the first to buy it. The more mechanical tasks I can delegate to software, the more time I'll have for the challenging and fun parts of the job: developmental editing, usability testing, and serving as a mentor for writers" (Tarutz 365). Rather than advanced programs stealing the

editor's work, the probable technologies of the future will instead free up editors to spend more

time on the content, shape, and development of their projects—and their writers. If all or most of

the grammar issues in a manuscript were corrected at the click of a button, the editor would, in

theory, have more energy and resources to craft and nurture an author's work, as well as foster

better writing skills in the author. Editing technologies are a *tool* for the editor, not a competitor

or a replacement, and when it comes down to it, no digital intelligence compares with the eye of

a seasoned reader. What's more, advanced technologies do not benefit just the editorial side of

the work. One editor believes that advancing technology allows editors

> to do better work faster, I think. Our research is more accurate, and more available, than
>
> ever before. Being able to edit files in Word instead of editing on paper can also mean
>
> more thorough and careful edits. But the more advanced programs we have available
>
> means we can use data to better sell the books we do have, and have a stronger idea of
>
> what to acquire in the future. Knowing who is buying which books and why is a huge
>
> asset in understanding why the market works the way it does. It can also inform how we
>
> write back cover copy, how we design our covers, what price point we set for our e-
>
> books, hardcovers, and paperbacks, etc. So technology enables me to do a better job with
>
> my authors' books, handle risky concept books with more confidence, and position my
>
> clients for success. (Brauning)

With more information at their fingertips, editors are—and will continue to be—more aware of

the market and how books compete and succeed. Understanding as much as possible about the

bookselling landscape aids in both acquisitions and publicity, and when an editor understands the

public and different readerships, he or she is better prepared to make wise decisions. Just as

digital programs and devices function as editorial tools, so too do they function as marketing,

acquisitions, and public relations tools.

Technology, then, is not an enemy but an ally. Just as computers have saved editors from

spending hours retyping drafts on a typewriter, so intelligent editing software will cut the time it

takes to edit the fine lines in order that more important matters in manuscripts can be

addressed—and much sooner in the editing process. Of course, utilizing such programs will

require learning on the editor's part, for "any system is only as good as the person who uses it. A

keyboard operator with an editing program is not an editor, any more than a clerical worker with

a desktop publishing program is a graphic artist. In editing there are often no right or wrong

answers; choices depend on contexts and intangibles such as flow, euphony, and audience"

(Stoughton 240). A growing proficiency with relevant programs will be part of the editor's future

career, although such technologies cannot stand in for their higher-level recommendations.

Since programs will only improve with time, the editor's close relationship with

technology will be a mark of the next publishing generation. Indeed, it will be imperative for

editors to keep track of new software and to know how to use it to their advantage. In speaking

of the future, one professional in the industry predicts that

> in addition to those [skills] that have always been necessary (e.g., attention to detail, solid
>
> knowledge of language and grammar, excellent memory), editors will be expected to
>
> know more about online editing tools (e.g., PerfectIt) and perhaps even XML coding.
>
> They also may be required to work in online platforms that simplify collaboration among
>
> authors, editors, and publishers (O'Reilly's Atlas and S4carlisle's Dazzle are two
>
> examples). I also expect that our editors will need to be comfortable with working with
>
> nonlinear formats (e.g., website materials as opposed to books). (Furney)

As this editor points out, not only will software knowledge be expected, but even a familiarity with coding could be necessary. Indeed, especially when editing and formatting e-books, an understanding of computer programming would prove useful. Another present-day editor agrees that tech-savviness will be a crucial aspect of the future editor's skillset:

> Career path options are so broad for editors in book publishing, the only thing I can say is that likely as publishing houses become smaller and roles become more and more merged/the responsibilities [*sic*] broaden for each role, I''d say tech-savviness (familiarity with several programs; XHTML, InCopy, the deeper functions of Word and styling) and familiarity with several social media platforms would probably serve an editor well as the industry develops. I feel like opportunities that blend traditional copyediting skill set with these additional skills are going to become more and more common roles in the industry, especially at smaller houses, and people who have both skills will become a valuable asset to fill that gap. (Jones)

Overall, the editor of the future will be technologically inclined and literate, while also informed of traditional editorial knowledge. In fact, having one type of knowledge without the other could result in fewer job opportunities, as this editor suggested. Still, when editorial and technical knowledge come together, it is for the same result. Another professional asserts that "the same editorial considerations take place whether you're editing text for a novel or for editing text on an online platform: Is this content delivering the intended message to its audience? Is it clear? Is it factually accurate? Is the style of the text consistent, mechanically and grammatically correct?" (Valadez) Although the medium over which text is edited has and will continue to change, the same underlying tactics for editing will remain essential.

Technology has made an unparalleled impact on the publishing industry, and it will only

continue to do so in time. Yet, when it comes down to it, there will always be human editors—at least, as long as the world keeps writing and producing content. Even if the next century yields a friendly robot with perfect grammar and interesting suggestions, the extent of what it could offer would be limited by its programming, its algorithms, and the existing database of human content downloaded onto its hard drive. The idea that technology or robots could replace the editor dismisses the majority of the editor's function: to dwell upon and challenge an author's writing, to aid in development (from plot to characters), to stimulate an author's growth, and to support their books in the marketplace. To the editor, making judgments through personal interactions is vital:

> The decision to accept or reject a manuscript, the strategies of revision and publicity, the choice of artwork and typography when a satisfactory manuscript is finally produced, the emotional and financial support of authors: these can be done only by human beings endowed with the peculiar qualities that make up a successful publisher or editor no matter how the technological environment transforms the rest of the publishing process. Except in rare cases, authors will always need editorial valets to polish their syntax and replenish their purses, share their anguish and their joy, and submerge their own egos for the sake of their authors' fame. (Epstein 37)

As we have seen, the role is demanding and complex, and it is only with time and practice that editors truly garner a handle on the position. From negotiating contracts and taking risky chances, to crafting creative marketing approaches and tending to the green author's sensitive emotions, original creativity and social stamina are stern requirements for the job. Since the role of the editor cannot help but be highly artistic and relational, humans will remain the most qualified candidates.

Editor: Becoming a Misnomer

If the editor is not in danger of going out of style, how will he or she need to adjust for the future of publishing? Along with becoming tech savvy, the editor of the future will need to continue embracing duties well beyond the assumed job description of revising and improving copy. In the interest of being well-rounded and fully prepared for whatever the industry presents, he or she should possess "a willingness to learn about various sides of publishing, including editorial, marketing, sales, business, and production work" (Valadez). Indeed, editors are not just editors, but rather Renaissance men and women with a keen eye and sound judgment. A present-day editor acknowledges that

> the best editors and the ones who move ahead are those who become skilled at editing
> (whatever their specialty: acquisitions, content editing, copyediting, proofreading, etc.)
> AND who become skilled at other related spheres. If your only skill is editorial-related,
> you'll fence yourself in. For me, my strong project management skills—in addition to my
> editorial skills—are what has given me my edge. For others, it's understanding rights,
> permissions, contracts, and copyright law, etc. The point is, you need more than editorial
> skills to get ahead; you also need to become knowledgeable in other areas, too. (Valadez)

The editors who find success in the future will be those who do not confine themselves to strict editorial work. Instead of defining the editor's job as one involving manuscript work—with business negotiations and marketing ventures on the side—they will need to regard the career as a comprehensive position not dominated by any one ability.

Recall that editors of the present are more business and marketing savvy than ever before. As corporate mindsets continue to influence the industry, the editor's career will require an ever-growing understanding of marketing, publicity, and business protocols. The editor of the future

will need to be a businessperson, even more so than the editors of today. For this reason, those interested in pursuing the field would do well to study some form of economics, business, or marketing techniques, either at university or on their own time. Having business experience will be an advantage for the next generation of editors, and it could ostensibly be a fixed requirement for generations thereafter.

Navigating the marketplace will remain an unpredictable challenge, which will force editors into a practice of relearning and flexibility. Trying to understand the demand for their books—sometimes on a week-to-week basis—will be a prominent task for the editors of the future, especially as reading communities continue to shift and transform. As one editor shares,

Audience awareness will play a huge role in editorial success, especially as audiences become more and more siloed thanks to the Internet. A front-page review in the New York Times Book Review no longer guarantees a sales bump; editors need a very nuanced understanding of the coverage that will "move the needle" for a particular book and a particular audience. (Rudolph)

Since editors work on behalf of their authors, their publisher, and the market, they indwell the stressful, demanding space between the three. Knowing the audience means knowing what types of books to look for and buy; knowing the publisher means knowing contract possibilities, budgets, purchasing freedoms, and company goals; knowing the author means knowing when to take a chance on a project of value. While it may have once been simple to spot trends and respond to them, another editor agrees that the future will involve untraditional marketing obstacles brought about by the progressively intricate publishing landscape:

The market for books is ever-fragmenting—it has become far less linear to bring a book to its audience. That's a challenge for those of us who are in between authors and readers,

and it requires a continual openness to new ideas, new markets, and new technologies. I

think that's one of the larger challenges editors face and will continue to face. We have to

continually adapt or stuff will just pass us by. (Stocke)

As if the role of the editor were not already multifaceted, it seems it will only grow more edges

and introduce a few more hats to wear into the mix. The future of editing will warrant even more

well-roundedness, business skills, publicity creativity, and market understanding.

Finally, many current industry professionals agree that the editor of the future will need

to be adaptable and crafty—ready to change with the times, to work with what they have, to spin

original ideas from nothing, and to constantly seek to learn more about the discipline. As one

editor most concisely puts it, "I think editors in the future will need to be adaptable. An editor

will need to retain her good taste and judgment while not letting her conceptions of 'how things

are done' get in the way of nurturing new voices and growth within the industry, both for writers

and authors" (Thornburgh). Mental and emotional elasticity will buoy the future editor in times

of trial, confusion, and surprise; being prepared and open to change is an understated talent that

will separate the so-so editors from the fruitful ones. Shrewdness will also play a key role in the

future editor's life. Being able to prioritize the vital tasks from the important to-dos, to manage

time with finesse, and to devise ever more effective systems and work methods—these will all

benefit the editor as much as an extra arm would. In fact, one publishing professional

acknowledges that

successful editors know how to do less. Obviously this is a uniquely demanding role, and

the temptation to take on an impossible amount of work is hard to resist. Editors have to

wear many hats, and their responsibilities are increasing every day. Good editors will

figure out where they can cut corners in order to focus more attention on the

responsibilities that will make a difference to their books' sales. (Rudolph)

In the end, much of an editor's work comes down to sales, and if he or she is able to create new

ways of traveling the extra mile or seven to achieve a respectable end goal, then he or she will

compete well in the market of the future. The publishing industry is often unpredictable, as is the

society it appeals to. Just as editors of today must be prepared to deal with last-minute crises and

problems in the day-to-day, so the editors of tomorrow should be ready and willing to be flexible

in all areas of their job.

The future will demand that editors *already* rooted in the business embrace a growing and

robust collection of competencies if they wish to keep in step with the volatile industry. An

increasing emphasis on digital work and product will especially necessitate persistent learning

and discovery, even for the most well-established book business veterans. But what of those

novice editors who hope to join the ranks of the publishing world one day? Not only will they

need to prepare for the requirements of the job, but also for the trying and selective process of

entry into the publishing world.

The Future of the Beginning

As the publishing industry rides the transformative wave of the future, what can aspiring

editors do to prepare for and acquire an editorial job? Considering a bachelor's degree is required

for most entry-level positions today, earning an English degree, a journalism degree, or even a

marketing or public relations degree will be the first step. There are also graduate programs—

like the Denver Publishing Institute or the Summer Publishing Institute at New York

University—or graduate degree programs—such as the master's program in publishing at Pace University or George Washington University—that are specifically tailored to students interested in a publishing career. One publishing professional advises "even if you're in school, or job hunting, keep up some kind of book-related side hustle—a book review blog, a podcast, a column in the campus paper—to show that you're keeping current with the industry and know what's up" (Thornburgh). Whatever undergraduate or graduate experience a budding editor completes, he or she should show an interest in the book industry through extracurricular or personal activities.

Still, an education is not the only prerequisite for a job. Another editorial professional shares that "publishing is still very much an old-school apprentice sort of industry, meaning you always enter from the bottom. If you get a master's degree, you're still going to have to start as an assistant at the same level pay as someone who didn't get a master's degree. It will not give you a leg up over other applicants" (Jones). While one would assume the most traditional route to the editor's desk would be earning a relevant degree or attending a graduate program, as it is in many other professions, entering the publishing industry truly hinges upon one factor: experience.

Internship experiences are the key to acquiring an editorial job and will continue to hold as much power in the future as the number of jobs is expected to diminish. Publishing is fast-paced, difficult work, and a candidate with prior experience in the field will always receive preference. Internships allow students to learn about the trade first-hand, to garner editorial skills, to adopt the vernacular, and to get a sense of working with book audiences and markets— skills that publishers appreciate not having to teach new hires. One editor suggests "get some internship experience under your belt before you apply to jobs. Work at a literary agency (or

publisher, if you can) to get things like reader's reports and industry lingo down cold"

(Thornburgh). Yet another editor says, "get an internship while you're still in school, or multiple

internships. Most entry-level positions require one or more years of experience; that's where a

semester or two of internship experience comes in" (Jones). Still another editor believes "that

new editors entering the field today face a more competitive environment and are less likely to

be given opportunities to prove themselves on the job. Internships seem to be the best way for a

new editor to enter the field" (Furney). In fact, the same editor, who brings on new hires as part

of her editorial work, asserts that resumes boasting sharp editorial skills cannot compete with

those that list internship experiences:

> I usually reject those applicants [who have skills with no formal training] because they
>
> will require too much training and their ability to do the work is difficult to assess. The
>
> resumes that I do consider, for both freelance and assistant positions, show direct
>
> experience, including freelance work, internships, paid positions in publishing, or a
>
> combination of those things. (Freelance experience alone may not be enough; it depends
>
> on the applicant's client list; I look for reputable publishers.) (Furney)

Many editors agree: internships are vital when beginning a publishing career. Even if an

internship is not specifically editorial in nature, it is beneficial to have some level of experience

with or connection to the overall industry before applying to jobs. The majority, if not all, of

editorial entry-level positions require a form of prior professional experience, and internships are

the most direct and preferred way to satisfy that requisite.

As far as applying for jobs, aspiring editors begin at the bottom; it has been this way for

quite some time, and there is no indication that this expectation will change. Few, if any,

inexperienced students will acquire a full-throttle editing job fresh out of college or an

internship. Rather, he or she will begin with the entry-level position of the "editorial assistant,"
which we discussed at length in our overview of the titles and types of editors. While the job
description varies from house to house, the editorial assistant role is mostly administrative in
nature, though it can involve assisting with copyediting, writing, or acquisitions tasks. Budding
editors will begin at the bottom and observe the process, rather than be involved first-hand.

As we have learned, being an editor is multifaceted and demanding, and it takes years to
hone the skills required of an average editor, let alone an expert one. If an entry-level position is
not open in the editorial department of any given house, industry professionals recommend
applicants

> get in the door however you can and learn everything you can from those around you, with a
> good attitude. Entry-level positions aren't necessarily glamorous, and you're asked to do a lot
> of tasks that might seem irrelevant to your goals. But do them anyway because they need to
> get done: do them well, and take them seriously. Don't consider yourself "too good" for any
> task; you're not. (Valadez)

Multiple full-time editors have shared that working in different departments will not exclude an
employee from job considerations in the editorial department if a position becomes available.
Just like in many other settings, employees who show themselves to be responsible and
reliable—even with administrative tasks—tend to gain a good reputation. Developing into an
editor today takes patience, time, and learning, and these specifications will only appear more
crucial and necessary as the role's dynamics intensify in time.

Concerning the editor's career outlook, the traditional route of joining and rising through
the ranks of a publishing house may become muddled. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
predicts that employment of editors, people defined as those who "plan, coordinate, and revise

material for publication in books, newspapers, magazines, or websites," will decrease from 2014 to 2024 ("Job Outlook"). While there will certainly still be in-house jobs available in the future, many individuals are expected to turn to editorial careers in the form of freelancing—either to support in-house work or to serve self-publishing authors. Considering "the number of ISBNs associated with self-published books climbed 437% between 2008 and 2013" (Palmer), there is book work to be done—even if it's not through an official publishing house. Many companies exist specifically to help self-publishing authors connect to the editorial assistance they want or need, such as Reedsy and Bibliocrunch, while other self-publishing platforms, like Amazon's CreateSpace, BookBaby, or Lulu Press, offer editorial services at an additional cost. While not every self-publisher may seek editorial input, more and more self-publishing companies are incorporating these services into their repertoires. As the self-published pool of books becomes larger, external editorial support will help separate the mediocre books from the good ones. Many freelance networks, like those mentioned, are available to join and help connect freelancers to a range of work opportunities (not just self-publishing work). Some have stricter requirements for membership than others, but there are a variety of options for freelancers to utilize. With the explosive growth of self-publishing and the increasing time crunch of corporate publishing, the future will most likely find untraditional methods of editorial work arise as viable career options.

The internet has opened wide the door for freelancing opportunities, from part-time to full-time work. Freelancing may be a great option for future editors, though it usually requires years of experience and reputation-building beforehand. As for independent publishing houses and even corporate editorial departments, one industry veteran believes that "on the World Wide Web, publishers' tasks can be reduced to an essential handful: editorial support, publicity,

design, digitizing, and financing. For these functions, size confers no advantage and at a certain

magnitude becomes a nuisance. My guess is that future publishing units will be small, though

they may be related to a central financial source" (Epstein 175). A movement towards smaller

publishing teams aligns with the predicted decrease in employment, so the future most likely will

bring smaller editorial departments, fewer available jobs, and more necessary decisions to

freelance.

The future of entering the publishing industry is not much different than entering the

industry today. Perhaps the only notable change will be an increased emphasis on prior

experience, as job opportunities are expected to be fewer. Indeed, one of today's editors believes

that "unless something dramatic changes in the industry, young people are going to need to be

able and willing to devote a lot of their own resources to their jobs in order to work on books in

the first place" (Rudolph). The path to becoming an editor is long and arduous—one editor

shares that some of her colleagues worked their entry-level positions for 10 years before being

promoted. It will take a certain type of person to be an editor in the future, and an even *more*

specific type of person with the gumption to endure the struggles and succeed.

The Editor of the Future

Who are the editors of the future? These gifted individuals will be forward-thinking,

attuned to the market, business savvy, and adept at employing various technologies and

programs to continue bringing books to the public. They will not be robots—though artificial

intelligences will participate in the editor's labor probably sooner than any of us could believe.

Even then, the editor's mind will trump any technological program, which will be used only as another instrument in the process of bringing a manuscript from its first to its final draft. Quite simply, these editors will be active, they will be intelligent, and—above all else—they will be committed. As the role entails further knowledge, training, technical understanding, and experience, those who are not dedicated to the job will fall behind or opt to pursue a different career path entirely. Just as Saxe Commins consigned his days in hospice to studying Christian philosophy for the sake of a manuscript in his care, so the editors of the next generation will need to make sacrifices of both time and energy to acquire the talents and information that will enable them to accomplish their work. We have established that an editor's personality is key, and that truth comes well into play with these predictions. Anyone without staunch enthusiasm and patience for the toil will not be suited for the editor's office, especially as the role becomes more demanding and multifaceted in our rapidly changing world.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Being an editor is a doozy of a career. Now that you know about its intricacies and tics, it would be quite impossible to view the role as it has so often been romanticized. Indeed, when the editor goes to work each day, it means they go to work—work that is meaningful, yes, but vigorous work all the same. The editor boasts a profession with demands that are never-ceasing.

In our examination of the role, we have learned that editors take part in a long list of responsibilities and that editing copy is just one small part of their toil. Read a book and you will find a well-written, clear story; what you will not notice between the lines are the hours of work spent on non-literary matters, which were necessary to bring the book to shelves. From the early 1900s onward, the editor has done much more for his or her books than any consumer can see. Yet those once-supplemental duties have and will become increasingly major components of the editor's day-to-day tasks—just as technology, which once held a minimal role in the editorial process, is becoming more and more essential to the editor's work.

Our look at editors in the past revealed their job was a really a lifestyle, one filled with enthusiasm, discovery, and comradery. The editorial work was meticulously and thoughtfully handled, and relationships between editors and authors were often strong. This lifestyle career was perhaps named as such because it touched every aspect of the editor's existence: authors would stay with editors long-term in their homes, wives and friends would know the details of their work, sick days would be spent combing through manuscripts, and personal conversations and experiences were shared in the name of friendship more than collegiality. It was a lifestyle

the editor could enjoy embracing, one occupied with manuscripts that were intimately connected to the humans who wrote them. While the past age of editing certainly had its share of challenges and struggles, it also offered an overall lifestyle rhythm the editor embraced.

In our examination of the modern age of editing, we discovered that a career in editing is again a type of lifestyle—although a lifestyle very different from the ones people like Saxe Commins experienced. Instead of a literature-centric cadence with time to foster relationships and nurture manuscripts, the lifestyle of the modern editor can be deemed such because it *must* be. While we established that there are still warm authorial relationships and looser deadlines in some areas of the industry, the general arch of the publishing business demands editors give their all and then some in order to complete their work properly. Endurance is required in the midst of even the most riveting tasks, and dedication is of paramount importance. There can be no slackers in editing today because the industry would simply chew them up and spit them out. Modern editors work tirelessly and passionately in a job that requires they be willing to put in the effort well beyond the typical 9-to-5 schedule. It is a lifestyle by necessity, though adopted by choice.

The future of editing, as it seems, is saturated in potential, and we have seen how technology and diversified skillsets aim to play prominent roles in the future editor's labor. In fact, these elements are already impacting the editors of today. Many predict that untraditional forms of editing work will mark the next generation of publishing as editorial jobs are expected to decline. In this regard, even future editing careers can be thought of as lifestyles since honest resiliency, patience, and experience will be required to enter the industry. Without putting the time and sweat into earning the credentials—schooling, side projects, extracurriculars, and especially internships—aspiring editors will not gain their coveted titles. The future will only

find the publishing industry more challenging, but greater challenges bring greater rewards. Who knows what has yet to be written—it will be a question for the next generation of editors to resolve.

In a culminating effort to grasp the editor's role and worth, let us lastly consider men and women such as these: Charles Harris; Frank S. MacGregor; Bennett Cerf; Cass Canfield; Lois Cole; J. Norris Myers; Alfred McIntyre; Robert Loomis; William H. Appleton; Horace Elisha Scudder; Pascal Covici; Max Brod; Sarah Josepha Hale—all incredible individuals who were dedicated to their roles as editors. Yet how many of these names are recognizable to the common person, or even to the publishing professional? Few, if any at all.

The editor's labor is imperative for literary success. The hours and emotion given to each manuscript binds the editor to his or her acquired books, and it is the editor who is the second most invested person in each word and comma and sentence (second to the author, of course). But what is it all for? As you can see, the overwhelming majority of the editor's work goes unnoticed. While their authors may bask in their fame, or at least get their names printed on the front cover, the editor receives little formal recognition for the work put into making each manuscript the best it could be—or the best it could be with the time given.

If fame is not the reason for the work, then maybe it is the money that editors crave? And yet, as we have learned, most editors do not make enviable salaries, especially considering the sheer amount of work and overtime work that goes into functioning at a reasonable level. Editors do not become editors for the sake of the paycheck. Though some may strike it lucky with a bestselling author or eventually work their way to the top, the average editor subsists on an ordinary salary and standard of living.

Simply put, editors pursue a career in publishing because it holds personal reward for them—they find the work gratifying and worth the frequent unpredictable, rough days. Surely not every editor finds his or her work to be enjoyable, and some do it mistakenly believing either a large paycheck or a chance at becoming an author themselves is in store; yet the majority of editors, those who are willing to stick it out through the difficulties, the failures, and sometimes the years of lower-level work, do it because they enjoy it. As the famous Lincoln Schuster shares,

> Editing can, and should be, not only a life-enhancing profession but also a liberal education in itself, for it gives you the privilege of working with the most creative people of your time: authors and educators, world-movers and word-shakers. For taking a lifetime course for which you would be willing to pay tuition, you are paid, not merely with dollars, but with intellectual and spiritual satisfactions immeasurable. (Schuster 37)

Though editors may find it too cliché to admit—and who better to spot a cliché than an editor?—editors edit because they love to edit; it is satisfying, valuable, and challenging toil that constantly inspires growth, learning, and intelligence.

The past century has seen an incredible transformation of the editor's role. From a decrease in time to work and invest in close authorial relationships, to more convenient editing methods due to technology and new audiences to engage. And still, despite the changes, the essence of the editor remains the same: to nurture the written word and push authors to make their works as remarkable as resources allow. The editor's task is neither bland nor easy, but rather one of the most strenuous arts to perfect.

Although the next century may present even more alterations to the role than the last, I am wholly confident that the editor will preserve the integrity of the publishing community.

They will persist in challenging authors, though more and more voices vie for attention; they will

continue to pursue literary eloquence and creativity, though the Internet and texting culture

affront grammar; they will endure with their sound judgment and innovative ideas, though the

world tells them software will soon take their place; and they will remain the quiet champions of

the publishing industry, though the world does not know their names.

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Academic Vita of Emma Shellhamer
Emma.shellhamer@gmail.com

Education

Major(s) and Minor(s): Public Relations and English
Honors: English

Thesis Title: "It's More Than There, Their, And They're:
The Role of the Book Editor in Decades Past, Present Days,
and the Age to Come"
Thesis Supervisor: Gregg Rogers

Work Experience

Copywriting Intern
June 2016-August 2016
In this position, I wrote compelling, persuasive, and conversational copy for hundreds of online product descriptions each week, including food, beauty, fashion, home décor, and health items; created standardized bullet point information lists for each product while adhering to strict style guide standards; and contributed to a presentation project inviting a well-known beauty brand to partner with QVC.
QVC, West Chester, PA
Supervisor: David Engle

Technical Editor Intern
November 2016-May 2016
In this role, I edited video transcriptions of online course content for grammar and clarity.
College of Information Sciences and Technology at Penn State, State College, PA
Supervisor: Kira Marshall-Mckelvey

Online Editorial Intern (Remote Position)
May 2015-August 2015
In this intern position, I produced three 500-word articles weekly, including thought pieces, news stories, recipes, and quizzes; collaborated with full-time staff to revise and improve articles despite minimum face-to-face contact; and received over 111,000 page views on published content.
Spoon University
Supervisor: Brooke Hamroff

Social Media Marketing Position
March 2015-June 2015
As the Facebook social media marketer, I launched the Facebook social media plan through posting photos and accompanying text in daily status updates according to observed media patterns and reached hundreds of potential customers with our online presence.
Undressed Foods, State College, PA
Supervisor: Jennifer Swistock

Editor-in-Chief
January 2014-May 2015
As the editor-in-chief, I founded the club, trained over 10 members, and launched campus site during first year of my university studies. I facilitated the production of thought-provoking content with a college-aged audience in mind; edited and published at least eight articles with photos to the website weekly; and built a publication from the ground up that became one of the top five chapters of 45 chapters in nine months.

Awards: Presidential Freshman Award for Academic Excellence, 2014
           Evan Pugh Scholar Award for Academic Excellence, 2016
           Evan Pugh Scholar Award for Academic Excellence, 2017
           Overall Student Marshal for the College of Communications Spring
             2017 Commencement Ceremony

Professional Memberships: Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society

Publications: "That Dogged Quality: A Review of *Dog Medicine* by Julie
             Barton," Open Minds Quarterly, Spring 2016 Issue

Community Service Involvement: The Global Brigades, The Navigators