NONFICTION EDITING 201

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Lesson #4

Proofreading

Welcome back!

At the beginning of my editing career, I started out by proofreading for several publishers. I quickly moved to copyediting, but I never lost my love for proofreading. In fact, I still proofread for a couple of those same publishers and enjoy it immensely.

Proofreading is the last editing stage before books are printed. Most publishers put their manuscripts through two rounds of proofreading. A proofreader corrects a typesetter's work, while a copyeditor corrects an author's work and prepares the document for the next stage. Proofreading is rather straightforward and does not require judgment calls, which copyeditors are required to do. Essentially, the proofreader follows a checklist.

When I first began proofreading, before editing and proofing were done electronically, I did comparison proofreading. I compared the hard-copy galley against the hard-copy edited manuscript. I would lay the edited manuscript to the left of the galley sheets. Any errors I found, I had to designate them AA (author's alteration). These kinds of errors were carryovers from the "dead copy," the edited manuscript, as well as any changes from the dead copy once the "live copy," galley, was printed. I marked errors introduced by the typesetter PE, printer's errors. The reason for distinguishing the errors was because the publisher was responsible to pay for correcting AAs (or they would let the error through if it cost too much to correct), but the typesetter corrected PEs at no charge.

I haven't done a comparison proofread in . . . well, it's been so many years I can't remember! Now the proofreading I do is cold reading, sometimes called blind reading—no comparing it with the edited manuscript. The only document is the galley.

A word of advice: Please encourage your self-publishing clients to thoroughly proofread their galleys. I worked with a client a few years back who decided this step was unnecessary. Her

book is a horrible mess of typos, spacing gaps, double and missing punctuation . . . Her story is great, but the final product is something she's not proud of; therefore, she never marketed it and lost a lot of money simply because she failed to proofread.

Because this is not a comprehensive course about proofreading, we won't cover all the possibilities one can encounter while proofreading. What follows is a concise run-through of the basics. (See hardcopy proofreading marks in Figures 2.6–7 [pp. 112–13] in *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition.)

Proofreading involves several steps—many more than in copyediting. Not only are you checking for typos and egregious errors but also all of the elements of typography. It means making several passes to check for everything a proofreader is responsible for.

Most of my proofreading for publishers requires me to proof in Adobe Acrobat Pro. The pdf provides an exact copy of the book pages. Of course, proofing in Acrobat is a bit clunky, but it's doable.

Proofreading Process

Let's break down the proofreading process.

1. *Verify typographic specs have been followed.*
Along with the galley, you should have received a style sheet (some clients don't supply this, so you're on your own), which includes not only the names and places mentioned within the text but also the book title, author, ISBNs, project/job number, Bible version(s) used (and designating the primary version), release date, etc. Typographic specs will also be stated on the style sheet, including trim size (the finished size of the book), ink color, special design elements, front and back matter components, etc.

Check the trim size. At the four corners of the galley, you should see something like these:

(top and bottom left)   (top and bottom right)

If you're proofing a pdf and using Adobe Acrobat, check the trim size by using the Measuring Tool under View>Tools>Analyze.

Make sure the number of pages you have in your document agree with the number of pages stated on the style sheet, and check that the ISBNs on the copyright page agree with the ISBN and other data on the style sheet.

Check these typographic elements also and mark for correction:
- Margin alignment to correct right- and left-hand line over- and underruns
- Vertical alignment consistency
- Spacing between lines and heading and top of the page
- Spacing between paragraphs and headings
- Typeface, style, and format of chapters

- Stacks (three or more identical words at the beginnings or endings of lines)
- Widows (last line of a paragraph at the top of a page)
- Orphans (any line with four or fewer characters or only the second half of a divided word)
- Bad word breaks (words divided at the wrong place or hyphenated words not divided at the hyphen—*two-par-ents home*)
- Loose and tight lines of text
- Crashes (a character touches, or nearly touches, the character next to it)
- Short pages (pages with three or fewer lines of text)

2. *Check display type for consistency throughout galley.*
Display type includes the following items:
- Titles and headings at all levels, including running heads or running feet
- Captions
- Legends
- Tables
- Footnotes
- Endnotes
- Lists
- Illustrations: charts, graphs, photos, etc.
- Extracts
- Quotations at the beginning of sections/chapters
- Design consistency throughout the book

3. *Numbers, Numbering, and Math*
Following is a list of numbers, numbering, and math to check:
- Placement, alignment, type, size, and sequencing of page numbers
- Sequential numbering of footnotes or endnotes
- Sequential numbering of parts and chapters
- Sequential numbering for questions in study/discussion guide
- Simple arithmetic
- Totals in tables
- Incorrect or impossible percentages
- Numbers in cross-references
- Numbers in jump lines (lines reading "continued on page xx")

In addition, you may be required to insert into the TOC the chapter-beginning page numbers. And if one part of the text refers to another page, you'll need to insert the appropriate page number: "See page (XX) under the subheading 'Choosing Age-Appropriate Books.'" [Replace (XX) with the page number.]

4. *General Tasks*
Some clients/publishers require proofreaders to read the text twice. I always recommend this

because it seems inevitable that you will find additional errors on the second pass that you missed on the first pass. The second pass is a much faster process.

Use this list as you tackle the general tasks of proofreading:
- Mark misspellings and missing words
- Correct conspicuous errors of grammar
- Mark misused words, pronouns without clear antecedents, echoes, etc.
- Check chapter numbers and titles against the table of contents
- Check book titles and authors listed in text for spelling
- Check proper noun spelling
- Check URLs and mark dead links
- Chapter questions or calls-to-action must be relevant to corresponding chapters
- Descriptions in the text, captions, legends, etc., match the tables or illustrations being described
- Check graphs against the descriptions or data
- Callouts should be on the same page as what is called out
- Check running heads*

*This is especially important and easy to miss. I have found numerous mistakes in the running heads. *Never skip this step.* I check these in the same pass when checking sequential page numbering.

5. *Front and Back Matter*
Check for spelling, format, type size, missing material, etc., in these elements that make up the front and back matter:
- Half title page: title is located halfway down; check the title for spelling
- Title page: check the spellings of the title, subtitle, author(s), publisher, publisher's logo
- Copyright: check content and layout according to house style; Bible credits according to publishers' specifications; disclaimers (see Lesson 1); ISBNs and CIP; permissions; special circumstances (if any—e.g., italics in Scripture, author's paraphrase, etc.)
- Notes and bibliography: complete information, formatted to the appropriate style manual; correct note to reference in the text
- Index: check index page numbers against the text

Proofreading Tips
This section is full of proofreading tips I've learned through the years.

Proofreading has five classes of corrections:
- Deletion
- Insertion
- Replacement and transposition
- Typographic changes

- Moving type and space

Every in-text mark requires a corresponding marginal mark when proofreading on hardcopy. Some clients will require a certain amount of fact checking, such as quotes, book titles and authors, trademarks (if allowed), and URLs (check for dead links), just to name a few. This takes extra time, so be sure to allow for that in your bid. It's not always possible for editors to confirm quoted material because we don't always have access to the referenced text. I do a Google search with a significant phrase from the quoted material (put the quote within quotation marks). Many times I get a hit. If you are expected to do this task but you cannot find the quote, simply add a comment that you were unable to locate the quote.

Be sure the title and caption match the illustration/graphic.

If you edited a manuscript then the author requests you to do a proofreading pass, you probably should recommend someone else. Being too familiar with the content sets the stage for missing old errors as well as introducing new ones between your edit and proofreading.

I don't know why, but errors often cluster. If you find an error, be extra diligent when proofing the surrounding copy. Chances are good you'll find others.

Be on the lookout for numerical and alphabetic errors: missing or duplicate page numbers, note numbers, or notations in outlines and lists. Anything sequential needs special attention.

Doubles can be trouble! Any punctuation that comes in doubles must be checked carefully for the opening and closing marks: parentheses, brackets, double and single quotation marks, and sometimes em dashes. PerfectIt and Grammarly are just two programs that find these kinds of things.

When checking numerals of any kind, slow down and check closely. For example, read "2016" as "two thousand sixteen." Even simple math can go wrong. Watch out for misplaced decimal marks. Use a calculator.

When finding recurring errors, it might not be an error. Check the style sheet. Find out what's wrong before you correct recurring errors.

Read one word at a time. Reading out loud is helpful. Maintain a steady pace. To help keep your focus, use a straightedge under each line as you read it.

Don't do all of the required proofreading tasks on one pass. Following is a list of passes I do when proofreading (any order except the first two):

- First pass—proof the text
- Second pass—proof the text again
- Third pass—running heads and page numbering
- Fourth pass—final check for stacks, widows, orphans
- Fifth pass—front matter; back matter
- Sixth pass—notes/footnotes

Take a short break every hour. Get up and move around. Look out the window at something distant to avoid eye strain.

On a hard-copy proofread, use Post-it Notes to flag items you need to revisit because you're not sure but don't want to stop during the reading pass to check it; in electronic copy, highlight the text under question.

If a style sheet does not accompany the manuscript/galley, create one.

Following is a list of common errors in word division:[1]
- Wrong breaks after the first syllable where there's room for another: *in-troduction*, *per-sonnel*
- Wrong breaks in past participles (watch for any words that ends in *-ed*; the division may break a syllable): *pul-led*, *pull-ed*, *wat-ched*, *consider-ed*, *emboss-ed*
- Wrong breaks in present participles: *pul-ling*, *fin-ding*; or in other words ending in *-ing*: *scaffol-ding*, *no-thing*
- Wrong breaks in one-syllable endings (watch that the following syllables aren't broken): *-ceous*, *-cial*, *-cient*, *-cion*, *-cious*, *-geous*, *-gion*, *-gious*, *-scious*, *-sial*, *-sion*, *-tial*, *-ious*
- Wrong breaks after a letter group that would be a prefix in other words: *trans-cribe*, *anti-cipation*, *pro-blem*, *pro-fit*, *re-commend*
- Wrong breaks between consonants: *bet-ween*, *ins-tance*
- Wrong breaks after a vowel: *opi-nion*, *so-meone*
- Wrong breaks in homographs. These are correct breaks based on their part of speech: *pro-gress* (verb), *prog-ress* (noun); *di-vers* (several), *div-ers* (people who dive); *even-ing* (making even), *eve-ning* (end of the day)
- Typos (doubles or outs [omissions]) in words of three or more syllables: *consti-titutionality*, *consti-tionality*

Notes
1. Peggy Smith, *Mark My Words: Introduction and Practice in Proofreading* (Alexandria, VA: Editorial Experts, Inc., 1987), 127.

LESSON #4 ASSIGNMENT

To receive a Certificate of Completion, you will need to complete one assignment from each lesson.

Please access the Word file Nonfiction Editing Lesson 4 Assignment.