

Sarah Weiner

7 April 2022

Philosophy of Editing

I once thought being an editor meant taking an anonymous text to mark up and make better, then sending it back. But I now understand there is more to it than that. It is my belief that editing at any stage—be it manuscript editing, line editing, copyediting, etc.—is about collaboration. It is about building a relationship between editor and writer around a piece of writing. When I edit, I am not only working with words on a page, but I am working with the writer behind those words.

In a literary editing course I took in my university, I learned the mechanics of different stages of editing. As part of the course, I wrote a short piece that would act as a manuscript for my peers to practice editing, and I likewise worked with peers on their manuscripts. I acted as both characters in an editor-writer relationship, and both taught me about the process of editing. I learned how to work with someone else on a text, whether I am actively discussing thematic structure with a writer or leaving tracked changes regarding punctuation in a shared document. I had to look at a text from the writer's, reader's, and editor's perspectives. I had to put all those interchangeable pairs of glasses on to guide a text in the right direction, to make a writer's vision a reality with consideration of audience, convention, and readability.

Additionally, in my experience copyediting for my university's newspaper, the *Independent*, I learned that editing is not just about making a text readable for an audience. It is also about helping a writer improve in the practices of writing. In working with some of the same student writers for over a year, I have seen writers' skills and styles evolve over time. Where one writer's first article had numerous notable issues of grammar and clarity, his latest article had minor mistakes. Or, where one writer's style was initially modest and pliable, her latest work showed a more confident voice, and she was more likely to explain a style choice in response to my alternative suggestion.

Working for this university publication also taught me about working with a diverse range of writers and subjects, from an international student's contributing piece about student life to a journalism

student's review of local political news. In one case, I worked with an exchange student writing from Pakistan. I learned to tailor the language of my comments and emails for this student to address any possible language or culture barriers and to try to be as enthusiastic and welcoming as possible. When her exchange program ended, this writer sent an appreciation email to some of the *Independent* staff, including me, and I was able to recognize what an honor it had been for me to be part of her writing journey at our university. This and the rest of my experience with the newspaper taught me how to read different kinds of articles with a copyeditor's eye and converse with different writers about their work.

Thus, my perspective of what it is to be an editor comes mainly from my education and personal, practical experience. And the work featured in my portfolio is meant to attest to my editing philosophy. Each piece showcases my experience with writing and editing in different forms, and together they all point toward a central value of relationship building in editorial work.

I will highlight a couple of these works now to introduce how they fit in this value-of-collaboration theme. For example, I have included an academic paper I wrote for the above-mentioned literary editing course. For this paper, I interviewed two seasoned editors about their experiences regarding the role of genre in literary publishing and its effect on the editorial process. Working on the project taught me not just about the publishing industry and what editors do but also about how editors collaborate with writers. The interviewed editors even referenced instances where they would focus on their relationship with a writer.

Another piece I have included in this portfolio is a "Common Mistakes" guide I co-produced with my fellow copyeditor at the *Independent*. Together, we compiled a list of top ten common mistakes to look out for in writing based on our collective copyediting experiences and under AP Style convention. We then shared the guide with our writers and editorial staff. This simple project was a practice in copyeditor teamwork as well as a model of the care we show to our writers' continued development.

What I ultimately wish to convey with this portfolio, and what I hope to continue to build on in my career, is who I am as an editor. As an editor, I am a creator and supporter of art. I am a collaborator. I am

someone who works with a writer to draw out their writing to the best it can be. As an editor, I do not just do independent work, but I am constantly working on interpersonal connections as well.