

Exercise 6-2: Finding Work: A Light Copyedit

Finding Work

Back in the day, editors aspiring to break into U.S. publishing were often advised to move to New York City. This advice sometimes rankled with professionals elsewhere; so much so that one San Francisco Bay area editor's group produced a t-shirt printed with the slogan "We Don't Care How They Do It in New York." Today, beginning editors are far less likely to be gofer-ing in a smoke-begrimed, book-lined office in Manhattan than sitting at home in front of a computer, working for employers and clients who may be thousands of miles away. Some may work night shifts to liaise with corporate offices in Europe or Asia.

These days too, social media platforms like LinkedIn make it easy for editors to advertise their skills and services, network with professionals in related fields, and pursue opportunities advertised online. Organizations such as ACES and *Copyediting* magazine (and Editors Canada for those north of the border) maintain job boards accessible to their members and subscribers. Remember, when using online platforms to find work, that prospective employers may search the internet for more information about you. Check the privacy settings on your social media accounts, and keep your public presence dignified (and free of misspellings). If you don't want to use your real name as part of your email address or login name, choose an appropriately professional alternative moniker.

Despite advances in technology, some of the traditional advice for seeking publishing work still holds. Go to the public library and look at the most recent edition of *Literary Market Place* (LMP, published by Information Today, Inc.)—or, when you have a block of time available

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to do some research, purchase a week's subscription to the online edition at www.literarymarketplace.com. Turn to the subject index and notice how many different kinds of book publishers there are, not just fiction and nonfiction but el-hi (elementary and high school) and college textbook publishers, legal and medical publishers, science and math publishers, foreign language publishers, and publishers of children's books, art books, scholarly books, wilderness books, computer books, gardening books, cookbooks, and every stripe of how-to-book. Even as brick-and-mortar bookstores are reportedly vanishing from the landscape, book sales are thriving.

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Turn to the full entry for each publisher that catches your eye and take note of how many titles the company publishes. A company that produces fewer than eight or ten titles a year is most likely a two-or-three-person operation, staffed by its owners. But the names of any larger publishers should go on your job-hunting list.

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While you're at the library, you might also look at the current edition of *Writer's Market* (Writers Digest Books). You'll be surprised to see how large the universe of magazine publishers is. There are hundreds of small trade magazines, and hundreds of local and regional magazines.

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Aspiring scholarly editors might check out the annual *Association of University Presses Directory*.

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As you're compiling your list, don't forget the corporate sector. The obvious employers in the corporate sector are retail companies that produce print and online catalogues and other promotional materials, but many firms whose primary business lies elsewhere do an enormous amount of publishing: banks, law firms, phone companies, hospitals, universities, museums, manufacturers of high-tech equipment, and consulting firms in all fields. Any business that provides client manuals, documents, or reports, or that produces a newsletter for employees or

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for clients, needs editors. Many companies do not advertise, but list their openings on their websites.

Finally, there's the government sector. Hordes of editors are employed in almost every department of municipal, county, state, and federal governments. Some of these positions require subject-matter expertise, but others do not. Check with nearby government offices to find out whether you need to take a civil service exam and how openings are posted.

In all four sectors, there is stiff competition for entry-level jobs. To improve your chances of landing a job, whether short-term or permanent:

1. Follow the employer's directions for submitting an application. Candidates who fail to do so are often weeded out immediately: don't be one of them! If the application process requires a résumé and cover letter, make sure these are easy to read, error free, and consistent in editorial style (punctuation, treatment of dates, use of abbreviations, etc.). Tailor these documents to the job at hand, incorporating key terms from the job description and stated requirements. Don't just list your previous job titles—take a sentence or two to describe what you did in those positions. Be sure to include any relevant subject-matter expertise and auxiliary skills (such as graphic design, or e-book production).

2. Don't dwell on your writing skills (unless the job calls for writing—most managing editors believe there is little or no correlation between writing skills and editing skills. And don't dwell on your academic credentials unless you're applying to a scholarly press or journal.

3. If you have work samples, prepare a portfolio, which may include published books or articles and screen shots of online material. (Be sure that none of these samples violate nondisclosure agreements signed with previous employers or clients.) Include a description of the work you did on each project.

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4. Be prepared to take proofreading, copyediting, and other proficiency tests. If you are invited for an interview, present yourself professionally. If it's a Skype interview, remove any distracting items, including kittens, from the background.

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STYLE SHEET

Author/Title: Edna Editrix/"Finding Work"

Date: March 3, 2024

Dictionary: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed.; *Merriam-Webster Unabridged*

Style Manual: *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed.

Alphabetical List of Names and Terms

brick-and-mortar

catalogue

civil service exam

cookbook

copyediting

e-book

el-hi

email

entry0level

error free

high-tech

how-to book

human resources department

internet

job-hunting

public library

résumé

short-term

subject-matter expertise

two-person

US

web

website

Punctuation

Serial comma

Suspended compound: two- or three-person

Abbreviations

LMP

Etc.

Reflection:

1. There were only two things that I missed: “T-shirt” and the first query about consistency with the publishers. Other than that, I got everything right! I finally was able to do a light copyedit without accidentally doing a heavy edit instead. The one thing that I’m a little confused about is the style sheet in the workbook. It has a number section that mentions how numbers under 101 should be spelled out, but I didn’t see that error in the text.
2. The part of the reading that helped me the most was the entirety of chapter six. This assignment had a lot of names with capitalization that needed to be changed, and I think I would have overlooked them if I didn’t pay close attention to the section of the reading that talks about down style and up style. It mentions how most publishing uses down style while up style is more common among newspapers and magazines. It also mentions how if you aren’t sure what the author’s preference is, you should use a style manual to have a baseline. In this case, I ended up using *Chicago* just like the workbook and got my answers from there. I think I just need to continue to refer to the style guide and dictionaries for anything that may raise flags in my head and be on the lookout for consistency issues. The publisher one flew right over my head, so I want to be more aware of that in the next assignments.