

## More grammar, more content

Dear Subscriber,

If you've been to the **Copyediting website** recently, you know that it's been redesigned. Our goal with the redesign was to give you more content, on a more frequent basis, particularly through the blog, which now publishes three times a day. I still write the **Tip of the Week** and now the daily **News Roundup**, while our stellar new site editor, Dawn McIlvain Stahl, writes the balance of the posts. (Twitter users might know Stahl as **PurplePenning**.)

Our coverage on the blog includes new words and news stories of interest to copyeditors. As a result, we've retired **In the News** and **Dictionary Update** from the newsletter. In their place, you'll find **Grammar on the Edge** by Andrew Johnson and **Word Resource Roundup** by Mark Peters. Grammar on the Edge will discuss unusual grammar points, while Word Resource Roundup will aim to teach you to be your own lexicographer using available tools and resources. Let us know what you think of them.

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find

**In Depth:** Katharine O'Moore-Klopf tells you how to find—and keep—ESL clients.

**Resources:** Phillip Blanchard returns to our pages with a discussion of plain English.

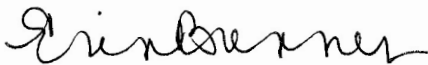
**Currents:** Mark Farrell talks about textese and the state of our language.

**Technically Speaking:** I review the proofreading software PerfectIt.

**In Style:** Paul Martin gives us the lowdown on some Yiddish terms.

If you have topics you'd like to see covered in our new columns, e-mail them to me (**editor@copyediting.com**). You can also e-mail me with Ask the Editor questions or e-mail tech-related questions to our Tech Speak contributor (**technicallyspeaking@copyediting.com**) at any time. We'd love to hear from you!

Cheers,



Erin Brenner

Editor

*Copyediting*

**editor@copyediting.com**

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Don't miss our December and January audio conferences! Read more about these sessions by clicking on the links to the right.

**Medical copyediting, part 2:  
Using the *AMA Manual***

Thursday, December 15, 2011  
Speaker: Stacy Christiansen

**Charged language: Dealing with  
the unspeakable in copy**

Thursday, January 12, 2012  
Speaker: John McIntyre

## ► RESOURCES

Say it plainly  
by Phillip Blanchard

The government enacted a law last year that mandates “plain writing” in official communication, and the president further ordered that regulations be written “in plain language” and that they be “easy to understand.”

The subject comes up now and again in America. Nixon ordered it. Clinton tried. **The Plain Writing Act of 2010**, though, is the first act of Congress to require that government agencies communicate in language that the rabble can understand.

Like most laws intended to suppress bad behavior, it is widely and defiantly ignored.

Warren Buffett, the billionaire who works very hard to project the image of Everyman, wrote: “When writing Berkshire Hathaway’s annual report, I pretend that I’m talking to my sisters. . . . No siblings to write to? Borrow mine: Just begin with ‘Dear Doris and Bertie.’”

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## THE QUIZ

How many errors does the following sentence contain?

The tenth annual Brattleboro Literary Festival will dedicate three days to celebrating books, those who read and write them.

See page 10 for the answer.

## ► IN DEPTH

### How to find and keep nonnative English speakers as clients

by Katharine O’Moore-Klopf, ELS Academic publishing in the United States has long been fueled by the publish-or-perish

imperative. Now researchers around the world, especially those in Asia, are affected by that imperative and are producing a great many reports for submission to peer-reviewed English-language journals. And guess who gets to edit them: you do, if you’ve made your own luck.

If you have the patience, persistence, and proper manuscript-side manner, you can cultivate a large clientele of researchers from all over the world who are nonnative English speakers. They need your editing because they must **get their articles published** in English-language US and UK journals to secure tenure, promotions, and even, in some cases, housing. A large portion of my clientele consists of about 60 physician-researchers from 20 nations. I do substantive editing of their articles, which collectively have gone on to be accepted for publication by 35 English-language biomedical journals. I find it rewarding to work with these clients, first because their research is fascinating and second because they are often effusively grateful for my editorial assistance. These authors, not the journals that they submit their articles to, pay me for my editing.

I fell into English as a second language (ESL) editing—sometimes called English as a foreign language editing—by accident. Before I began freelancing full time, my last in-house job was as a production editor for a medical publisher. The longer I held that job, the more often I was given the most difficult manuscripts to edit: those written by nonnative English speakers. I had become known as the editor with a talent for finding the intended meaning behind the stilted syntax. Once I began freelancing, that medical publisher began referring many of its ESL authors to me because the in-house staff members just didn’t have the time to do the substantive editing that those authors’ manuscripts needed. As those authors realized the value of my editing, they began referring their colleagues to me. And those colleagues went on to refer *their* colleagues to me. And because, for transparency’s sake, I require my ESL authors to note in their articles’ acknowledgment section that I conducted professional English-language editing for them, the journals that publish those edited articles became aware of my skills and referred even more ESL authors to me.

#### How to find ESL authors

But what if there’s no one to send ESL authors your way?

First, note on your business website, in your resumé, in online

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In the February–  
March 2012 issue:  
*American Heritage*  
*Dictionary’s* fifth edition

profession-related directories where you have an entry, in your LinkedIn profile, on your business blog, and everywhere else online where you have a professional presence that you specialize in ESL editing, and explain what that is. Add it to your signature for posts to profession-related e-mail lists so that colleagues will think of you when one of their clients needs a referral.

Second, hang out where these authors are likely to be. For example, if you like working with university students who need ESL editing, contact university department heads and let them know that your services are available and that you'll abide by university regulations on editing students' work. Contact universities' international student organizations and ask if they will post your contact information and a description of your services on their website or their page of the university website. If you want to work with researchers who need ESL editing to get their journal articles published, contact professional organizations that deal with subject matters you like to edit and ask them to make your contact information and services description available to their members.

When I contact the editors-in-chief of journals whose subject matter I feel comfortable working with, I let them know that I know that ESL authors are doing great research but that because of budget and schedule limitations, the journals' staff members likely can't spend the necessary time to heavily edit these authors' manuscripts. I add that I work directly with authors and would be pleased if the editor-in-chief would consider referring promising ESL authors to me. The editors-in-chief are often happy to do this for me because I make their jobs—and the jobs of their editorial staff members—easier by taking the substantive editing off their hands.

Third, as you gain ESL clients, those who are pleased with your work will be happy to tell others about your services. Make it clear in your communications, especially written ones, that you'll gladly accept referrals. You can even put a note to that effect at the bottom of your invoices or your payment receipts. When you finish a project for an ESL client, be sure to mention that you'll be available for editing additional materials from that person in the future. E-mail these clients periodically

to say hello, and remind them that you enjoyed working with them and would like to work with them again.

### How to keep ESL authors as clients

What freelancer doesn't want repeat clients? If you find that you enjoy working with ESL authors, you can take steps to make them want to keep returning to you for editing. Creating a good working relationship is important with all clients, but with clients whose second or third language is English, it's *all* about your working relationship with them. Not only must these authors do research and then write about it, but they also must either write in a language in which they're not fluent or write in their native language and then have their writing translated. Then they must deal with a copyeditor who may not speak their language and whose culture they may not understand. So take these steps to ease the editing process for them and help them feel that you're on their side.

*Communicate with authors by e-mail rather than by phone.* They can review your written communication with them as many times as necessary to fully comprehend it. That isn't possible when you communicate by phone.

*Be easy to reach.* Some nations' governments restrict their citizens' access to some websites, domains, and Internet service providers. Authors in those nations may suddenly be unable to receive messages from your domain-related business e-mail account. Because of that, make sure that the first time you correspond with new authors, you give them two e-mail addresses: your main business address and a free webmail address.

*Use easy-to-understand language every time you communicate with your authors.* Break up complex and compound sentences into easier-to-digest portions. Avoid using idioms and contractions; many idioms don't translate well, and not all languages use contractions. Although ESL authors are proficient enough in English to understand much of what you write, they may not understand a native English speaker's elisions and allusions.

*Explain everything.* Spell out your working process and how and when authors will pay you. Lay out what times you are available for consultation, how many rounds of editing you will do, how long you expect editing to take, how you want them to respond to your queries, and what

your responsibilities are versus theirs in the editing process. If you have to use publishing terms, such as *callout*, explain what those terms mean.

*Avoid promising that your editing will work miracles.* You can't guarantee that your authors' work will be published just because you edited it. The first time that we work together, I tell my ESL authors that my editing doesn't guarantee that their article will be accepted by a journal. Journal editors base their decisions on content and other concerns. I explain that my editing can make their writing flow smoothly and follow the conventions of their target journals, which can help with acceptance.

*Be respectful at all times.* Some ESL authors may feel at a disadvantage because they must deal with a system that doesn't speak their first language, so put them at ease by being extra careful to convey your high regard for their work. This is easy to do in the tone you take in your e-mails and queries. There is no such thing as saying *please* or *thank you* too often. Never come across as condescending or lecturing when discussing problem areas in manuscripts.

*Suggest fixes rather than just asking authors to clarify muddy sentences.* This gives authors a better understanding of the problems that you are seeing.

*Be transparent.* Top-quality editing is built on frank, open communication. In some cultures, being direct is sometimes seen as being impolite, so your authors may not bring up some of their concerns. But if you are straightforward, you tacitly give your authors permission to be straightforward with you.

*Thank your authors for the privilege of working with them.* I take every chance I can find to let my authors know that I value being able to read about their research, which helps them feel that I am on their side.

*Be an ambassador for your nation's publishing industry.* Offer to explain any publishing processes or conventions that you're familiar with but that may differ from those in your authors' nations or cultures. Being helpful in this manner is one more way to show that you are on your authors' side. Your authors will demonstrate their gratitude by coming back to you with their next research article or chapter for a multi-author book.

*Endear yourself to your authors by speaking their languages.* You don't have to be fluent in their languages, but you can

## ► IN DEPTH

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convey information that you must often provide to authors—about the editing process, how to review your edits, or how to pay your invoices—in their languages. For example, I wrote a one-page explanation of how I want my authors to review my edits. I paid professionals to translate that explanation into eight languages. The cost, spread out over time, wasn't large; it was a tax-deductible business expense. Most important, though, is that my authors realize that I care enough about them to make it easy for them to understand my instructions. I plan to commission translations in additional languages as the need arises.

*Learn about your authors' cultures and show appreciation for them.* Authors are likely to ask for your services again if you're a good editor, but they will *rush* to work with you again if you show that you value them as people and not only as sources of income. I have researched the

major holidays in my clients' cultures. On each holiday, I e-mail them good wishes and thank them once again for the privilege of working with them.

*Engage in a little small talk from time to time.* If your authors mention an award or promotion that they have received, congratulate them. If you come across an article in their field that you think they might find interesting, share it with them. Ask your authors to let you know when the articles or book chapters that you edit for them have been published. Let them know that you ask because you want to be able to congratulate them on their successes—and then follow through.

*Keep your authors posted about your work schedule.* When I'm going to be away at a business conference or on vacation, I e-mail my authors ahead of time to let them know. This allows them to plan ahead for their editing needs. And it often prompts authors whom I haven't worked with in a few months to e-mail me with offers of new projects.

*Wrap up the year with thanks.* At the

end of each year, I snail-mail a "Happy New Year" card to each of my authors, enclosing some of my business cards, wishing them a healthy and prosperous new year, and thanking them for working with me in the preceding year. They love this, and many have referred their colleagues to me immediately after receiving those greeting cards. I send KOK Edit coffee/tea cups to the authors I work with most frequently.

### Resources on working with ESL authors

Here are some good resources with additional tips on working with ESL authors:

- **"Bridging the Gap: Working Productively with ESL Authors"**
- **"Understanding the Challenges of Non-English-Speaking Authors"**
- **"The Editor as Translator (or: How Do You Say That in Calculus?)"**
- **"Editing English Content for Non-English Readers"**

**Katharine O'Moore-Klopf** of KOK Edit has worked in publishing since 1984. In January, she will celebrate 17 years as a freelance copyeditor. As a **board-certified editor** in the life sciences and a medical copyeditor with an ESL specialty, she has helped researchers in more than 20 nations get their articles published in 35 US and UK biomedical journals by removing language barriers. She is also the creator and curator of the **Copyeditors' Knowledge Base**. ■

## LETTERS

### Farmers' market

I don't know *Copyediting's* style on this, but I recommend *farmers market*, no apostrophe. I did some checking for the AP some years back, and we decided on that based on information from the Washington State Farmers Market Association and the USDA. (Generally, the farmers do not own the market.)

Norm Goldstein

Editor Emeritus

*The Associated Press Stylebook*

In the **October–November issue** of *Copyediting*, I suggested that *farmers' market ingredients* would be correct if an editor were following *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *The Gregg Reference Manual*. If you're following Associated Press style, use *farmers market*, as Goldstein suggests. —Erin

### Compound adjectives

In your **June–July 2011 issue**, your answer to an Ask the Editor question wasn't entirely correct. You stated

that "most style guides, including *Chicago*,... will advise you to hyphenate them [compound adjectives]." While this is true in most cases, there are exceptions, and the example given (*early stage valuation*) is an exception.

From *Chicago's* 16th edition: "A two-word phrasal adjective that begins with an adverb ending in *-ly* is not hyphenated." It offers the example of "a sharply worded reprimand."

Thanks for an informative newsletter! I've been reading it for years.

Anne B. McDonnell

Senior Technical Editor

Design + Planning

Thanks for sharing that point with us, Anne. You're right: *-ly* adverbs are not hyphenated in *Chicago's* style. *Early*, however, can be either an adjective or an adverb. In *early-stage valuation*, it's an adjective. —Erin

### ► CONTACT US

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# GRAMMAR ON THE EDGE

by Andrew Johnson

## On the meaning of *grammar*

Most editors, writers, teachers, and students have, at best, a love-hate relationship with grammar. I like grammar ... most of the time. Having edited copy for *Copyediting* over the past several years, I've gained a greater appreciation for language and for those who know about grammar and writing. But what is the meaning of grammar to copyeditors? One of the goals of Grammar on the Edge involves finding some answers to that question.

Mignon Fogarty, in her 2008 book *Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing*, declares, "I think of grammar as the rules to the game of writing." That works well for me; however, developing a useful definition of *grammar* remains a moving target. For the purposes of copyeditors, the word can mean "a normative or prescriptive set of rules setting forth the current standard of usage for pedagogical or reference purposes" (*American Heritage Dictionary*, fourth edition). I prefer Grammar Girl's take.

Of course, the meaning of *grammar* has more facets than those mentioned. Grammar encompasses the form and function of language, the morphology of words, the managing of words within sentences (syntax), the structural relationships within language, and the meaning and expression of concepts (semantics). The broadest interpretations and conceptions of grammar extend beyond the basic rules and have more to do with effective composition than mere correctness. Copyediting demands knowledge about the style of a particular publication, about different types of editing (e.g., line vs. content), and about the whims and intentions of writers. In all instances, copyediting should enhance—or at least salvage—the writing, and more elaborate edits require better familiarity with what makes sentences grammatical.

Readers of *Copyediting* form the rear guard of the editorial industry, making those final cleaning passes that spruce up text for publication. But copyeditors today perform more than a janitorial function. They contend with a multiplicity of writing

styles—formal and scientific writing, news writing, writing for online publications and websites, magazine writing, and so forth. They evaluate and improve grammaticality, and they help ensure that writers have created meaning.

So rather than emphasizing and justifying prescriptive grammar rules or splitting hairs about what constitutes good grammar, this new column will focus on identifying grammar elements that can strengthen different kinds of content, envisioning ways in which grammar can support context and meaning, and exploring issues of grammar that have direct relevance to copyeditors.

And what about that love-hate thing?

As Patricia A. Dunn and Kenneth Lindblom of Illinois State University, writing in *The English Journal* in 2003, state, with tongues jammed into cheeks, "Most conversations about grammar would probably benefit from that word being barred from discussion altogether." But they continue:

We're not saying that attention to careful language use is not important. In fact, ... attention to careful language is so important that students must be taught the complex, higher order tasks of analyzing each rhetorical situ-

ation in which they write. They need to practice writing for different purposes and for readers with different expectations, so that they can make sophisticated decisions about audience, purpose, and voice.

To me, that explanation captures the meaning of *grammar* for copyeditors: paying attention to the constructs of language so that we can make editorial decisions to improve writing.

Renowned linguist Henry Widdowson once suggested that grammar should serve as a "liberating force." When applying it, we should have a sense of freeing the text from the constraints of awkward or imperfect writing.

## But why "on the edge"?

*The American Heritage Dictionary* defines *on the edge* as being "in a precarious position" and "in a state of keen excitement, as from danger or risk." The *edge* in the column title represents a figurative precipice—a perilous position. In that sense, Grammar on the Edge will highlight advanced and unusual grammar topics, using examples from contemporary writing and, I hope, offering suggestions for making complex edits without veering off the grammar precipice. ■

## INSIDE JOKE by Sage Stossel



# CURRENTS

## The impact of textese on language

by Mark Farrell

“I’ll b home b4 dark—tc and c u soon!” It’s a typical text message, written in a shorthand now familiar to those who use the technology. Some fear that using such shorthand ultimately degrades the language. But using history and current trends as our guide, we should not necessarily see texting shorthand, or textese, as a harbinger of doom for our cherished language.

Technically known as short message service (SMS) language, texting aims to reduce the number of characters needed to transmit a comprehensible message. But texting language has roots that date back to long before the advent of the cell phone and instant messaging (IM). Beginning in the 19th century, telegram messages included many of the same abbreviations and codes we see in today’s IM and texting language, as have the more recent phenomena of vanity license plate abbreviations.

In the 1861 classic *Great Expectations*, by Charles Dickens, Pip tries his hand at sending Uncle Joe a would-be IM via a note scrawled on a frost-covered slate:

MI DEER JO I OPE U R KRWRITE WELL  
I OPE I SHAL SON B HABELL 4 2  
TEEDGE U JO AN THEN WE SHORL B  
SO GLODD AN WEN I M PRENTGTD  
2 U JO WOT LARX AN BLEVE ME INF  
XN PIP.

This doesn’t exactly make the case for shorthand having a beneficial effect on grammatical precision, but it is one example that demonstrates that the concept of textual shorthand is nothing new. In many ways, it goes beyond language and into the world of encryption and coding and decoding, giving literacy a whole new meaning. **Plester, Wood, and Joshi** (2009) define literacy today as “the ability to decode information in various orthographic formats, including digital media, to make meaning from it, and to encode information into those formats to communicate ideas to others.” The researchers also note

that those who use textisms have high “phonological awareness.” They believe, as I do, that “any engagement with the written word... is beneficial” for youngsters. And according to **research by Nenagh Kemp** of the University of Tasmania, students who were adept at using textese were found to have better literacy skills than those who were less able to produce such language.

In a **2009 University of Alberta study**, lead author Connie Varnhagen found that young people are able to “compartmentalize” their languages, using one for the playground (or cell phone, as it were) and another for the classroom.

Students aren’t the only ones who compartmentalize their languages. Jim Libbey, an editor and writer from Frederick, Maryland, told me that he never uses textese for e-mails, “even e-mails that I send from my BlackBerry. As long as its use stays segregated, ... I’m cool with it.”

J. P. Partland, a writer from New York City, compares texting compartmentalization to the way people adapt their speech patterns to their audience. “People speak one way to infants, another way when kids are around, another way at work, another way with their friends, and another way with their parents,” wrote Partland in an e-mail reply to my questions regarding the subject.

In my experience teaching essay writing, I haven’t detected textese creeping into the essays of my older students (those old enough to be in the habit of texting)—they seem to intuitively know that textese is not proper usage for a formal written composition. I do find typical teenage slang, like “It was so cool” or “I thought, like, it was really fun,” in the essays of students with weaker writing skills, but that’s not a recent phenomenon.

Neale Baxter, an editor from Virginia, believes that texting does weaken word skills but sees it as another development in the long history of the written word. “The development of printing weakened people’s ability to memorize long texts because they no longer had to do it,” Baxter replied in an e-mail when asked what he thought about the matter. “I don’t see [textese] as good or bad, just a change.”

As Patricia Van Horn, an editor from

New Jersey, observed, perhaps those “who use textese for everything have trouble with writing English in any form.” Libbey agrees. “The use of textese could affect the writing abilities of those with lower levels of education or of those who simply can’t write no matter their education level,” he wrote in an e-mail. “I’ve seen it in the e-mails of certain members of my own family and among a few of my friends.”

Some fear that bad habits will eventually make their way into formal writing, because future generations will learn the shortcuts through texting and IMing first and perhaps be less motivated to learn the longer, more formal forms.

Could we be seeing a revolution in language form akin to what Noah Webster caused for American English when he banished *-ou-* and *-mme* beginning in the late 18th century? Will the objective in the digital age be to continually minimize the number of keystrokes needed (à la Twitter) to effectively communicate?

In my somewhat limited texting experience, I find myself forgoing the apostrophe in text messages. Do I really want to go through the trouble of opening the symbols menu and scrolling down to get to the point where I can insert it, all for the sake of grammatical correctness, when there’s no chance that the recipient will misunderstand the message? Most of the time, the answer has been no. Now, if someday it becomes as easy to insert the apostrophe as any letter, I would certainly do so. Technology could be adapted to better support correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Editor Chrysa Cullather told me that she found that once her kids got full-keyboard phones, they didn’t use as much textese.

Judging from the results of the latest research and my own observations as a writing teacher, I believe texting will have a generally positive impact on the language, at least in the short term. The extra step taken to convert formal language into a codified, phonetically approximated version of what is being communicated helps improve language skills. And, ultimately, the language is resilient. It survived more than a century of shorthand used in telegrams and elsewhere, and I think it will survive the use of shorthand where it is used today. ■



# ASK THE EDITOR

by Erin Brenner

**Is it correct to omit or include the apostrophe in the following phrases? If it should be included, should it be placed at the end of each plural word, such as *Writers*’?**

Writers Council  
Visitors Center  
Pastors Vision Trip  
Sponsors Handbook

**Our style guide currently states that the apostrophe should be omitted, but I’ve never been terribly comfortable with explaining why. Any guidance you can provide (preferably from an established style manual so I can cite chapter and verse) would be greatly appreciated!**

Sandra Boedecker  
Senior Editor  
CreativeSolutions

The question in each of these phrases is whether you have a genitive of purpose or an attributive modifier. In its opening section on “Case,” *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* says that a pronoun’s case tells you its function in a noun phrase as it relates to the context it’s in. For example, when a pronoun is the subject of a clause, it is in the nominative case: *I slept soundly*. When the pronoun is the object of a clause, it is in the accusative case: *Please help me*. And when the pronoun is the subject-determiner of a noun phrase, it is in the genitive case: *Where is my bag?* English no longer shows the distinction between nouns in the nominative and accusative cases (*The doctor slept soundly. Please help the doctor*). But it does show the distinction in the genitive: *the doctor’s bag*. Note that the genitive noun uses an apostrophe-s construction to show the relationship.

There are several genitive constructions; the one you’re interested in is the genitive of purpose, such as *children’s books*. In simple terms, a noun that is in the genitive of purpose case (*children*) is used for the person or group modifying it (*books for children*). There’s a relationship present; it might be one of ownership, but

it might be less formal than that, as in *for pity’s sake*.

An attributive noun is a noun functioning as something else. In this case, we’re looking at nouns functioning as adjectives—attributive modifiers, *Cambridge Grammar* calls them—such as *government inquiry*. The noun *government* is modifying *inquiry*. Note that the apostrophe-s construction is not used here to show the relationship.

As Wendi Nichols pointed out in the **April–May 2008 issue** of *Copyediting*, nouns as attributive modifiers are usually used in the singular, but increasingly they are used in the plural, as when there is no singular form (*blues music*) or when the singular form would be confused with an adjective (*a good delivery* vs. *a goods delivery*). There’s one other case when a plural might be used: when the plural noun is a proper noun: *a Cincinnati Reds infielder*. The relationship between the attributive modifier and the noun is stretched a bit when the modifier is a proper noun.

Now let’s turn to your examples. Are *writers*, *visitors*, *pastors*, and *sponsors* genitives of purpose or attributive modifiers? As Wendi mentioned in her article, *The Gregg Reference Manual (GRM)* gives us a few fairly easy tests to determine what’s going on. To test if *Writers Council* is an attributive modifier, use a singular noun in the adjective position: *writer council*. Most native English speakers would think that sounds odd; we tend not to make people into adjectives.

Are we dealing with a genitive of purpose, then? One test for that is to turn the phrase in question into a prepositional phrase using *for*, a relationship supported by the genitive case: *council for writers*.

Yes, that sounds plausible. If the council were created for one writer (perhaps a group to counsel the writer through revisions), you might have a *Writer’s Council*. But since the council is most likely for several writers, you’d write *Writers’ Council*.

For tougher cases, there are two further tests. *GRM* asks if it is *the girls basketball team* or *the girls’ basketball team*. Try replacing the regular plural noun with an irregular plural noun. You wouldn’t write *the women basketball team*; you’d write *the women’s basketball team*.

Given all that, style guides treat genitives of purpose differently. *The Chicago Manual of Style* uses the apostrophe, except with proper nouns (7.25), while the *Associated Press Stylebook* drops the apostrophe. Check your style guide for what it advises.

**I very much enjoyed the issue about how to edit marketing materials. In a future issue, can you address how to use the word *testament* properly versus the word *testimony*? I’ve encountered quite a few cases of “a testament to, of, or about” something in copy and news stories. What is the current accepted usage of *testament* and *testimony*?**

Larry Anderson  
DePauw University

I checked several dictionaries for the definitions of *testament* and *testimony*. All agree that a *testament* is “something that serves as tangible proof or evidence,” as *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it. There are other definitions of *testament*, including one that essentially means “a will,” but the “tangible proof or evidence” meaning is the one that seems to best fit your example.

*Testimony* is a specific type of evidence. *Garner’s Modern American Usage* states that “it refers only to evidence received through the medium of witnesses.” *The New Dictionary of Legal Terms* by Irving Shapiro reinforces Garner’s statement by defining *testimony* as “evidence by a witness, given under oath.” (Two other popular legal dictionaries were both written by Garner, so we can safely assume he holds the same opinion in both.)

Those definitions stand up to scrutiny in the **Corpus of Contemporary American English**. Discounting references to the Bible’s New and Old Testaments, *testament* is most often used in a nonlegal sense to mean “proof of something,” whereas *testimony* is restricted to evidence given by witnesses, usually during a court proceeding.

**I just learned about your blog and it couldn’t be at a better time! I write marketing copy and our editor has a newspaper background. Oftentimes the “marketing”**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## ▶ASK THE EDITOR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

of what I write isn't always clear to him and I have to fight for it. When writing headlines and subheads, I sometimes use our friend the ampersand for effect and to save space. Our editor insists that there is a comma before the ampersand, whereas I strongly disagree. In a promotional headline or title on a piece, the text looks over-punctuated.

From what I just read in your **August 30 post**, he really needs to “let go” and let the marketing copy speak for itself. What are your thoughts? Here's the tagline: *Shape Up, Slim Down & Win!* The editor wants *Shape Up, Slim Down, & Win!*

Trish Jasinski

Copywriter

FreeLife International

Whether you use the serial comma with an ampersand or not is a style issue, so there's no need to worry about a meaning change if the comma is present or not. *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *The Yahoo! Style Guide* say not to use the serial comma with the ampersand (as do other guides), and I agree. Using both creates “visual clutter,” as Yahoo puts it. Particularly with marketing copy, you want to avoid clutter. This is something your editor can let go of.

### Which sentence is correct and why?

The research also must be validated.

The research must also be validated.

Jill Costello

*Also* is like *only* in that both are what *Cambridge Grammar* calls focusing modifiers: their position in the sentence determines which element in the sentence they focus on. Focusing modifiers can occupy several positions in the sentence, causing ambiguity or clarity. Like real estate, *also*'s value is all about location; it modifies whatever is closest to it.

Let's take your second sentence first:

The research must also be validated.

In this sentence, *also* is smack in the middle of the verb phrase *must be validated*, a legitimate place for it to be. Because it's sitting right next to *be validated*, we know that *also* is modifying *be validated*.

That is, whatever else must be done with the research, it has to be validated as well.

Now let's look at your first sentence:

The research also must be validated.

With *also* outside of the verb phrase, it may be focusing on the action, as with the second sentence, or it may be focusing on *research*, the other word it's snuggling up to. So we could take the sentence to mean that something (e.g., the researcher's credentials) must be validated and so must the research.

There are two other positions *also* can occupy. It can occur at the front of the sentence: *Also, the research must be validated*. That would make *also* a sentence adverb; whatever else must happen, the research must be validated as well.

It can also occur at the end of the sentence: *The research must be validated also*. Again, we end up with an ambiguous meaning; *also* could be modifying the whole sentence, as it does when it's at the beginning of the sentence, or it could be modifying the verb phrase and focusing on the verb, as with your second example.

Which of your examples is correct depends on your intended meaning. Take a look at the context and see which meaning is wanted.

**Hello there! I have a capitalization query for you. Should we capitalize the names of certain dishes (e.g., the Korean dish, Samggetang)? Or do we only capitalize the titles of specific recipes (e.g., Grandma's Stupendous Apple Pie) or those that contain proper nouns (e.g., Rice Krispies squares)?**

I have a feeling that most people tend to capitalize the names of dishes because they appear capitalized as titles in cookbooks, but I would appreciate your thoughts on this.

Linnet Humble

How you style recipe names will depend on which style manual you follow.

The Associated Press recently added a food section to its *Stylebook* that says to capitalize brand names and trademarks within food names, such as *Tabasco sauce*. Proper names are also capitalized when the food name depends on the proper noun for meaning. So it's *Boston brown bread*, but *french fries*. If you're giving a recipe, the recipe title is capitalized. *The AP Stylebook's* food section offers lots of entries for individual foods.

*Chicago* follows the same style rules as AP (how often does that happen?). In *Chicago's* forum, there's a **thread on this topic** that recommends the following for checking food names:

- ▶ **The New Food Lover's Companion**
- ▶ **Epicurious's Food Dictionary**
- ▶ **Gastronomica**

As for *Grandma's Stupendous Apple Pie*, if you're referring to the title of a specific recipe (in this case, Grandma's recipe), I'd be tempted to capitalize it because you would when the title appears over the actual recipe and the capitalization makes it clear that you're referring to a title. However, *Grandma's stupendous apple pie* could work just as well, as long as you apply the style consistently. ■

## THE COPYEDITING JOB BOARD

Job seekers recently read about these positions on the *Copyediting* Job Board:

- ▶ Editor, the *EMBO Journal*
- ▶ Technical Editor/Writer, Datacard
- ▶ Assistant Editor, Million Dollar Round Table

Go to the **Copyediting Job Board** to apply for these or other great editing jobs. The Job Board is free to job seekers, and you can get new job notifications delivered to your inbox. Why wait? Find your dream job today!



## ► RESOURCES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

That was for the preface of **A Plain English Handbook**, issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1998. And Buffett didn't do honor to his sisters by implying that they are yokels from the sticks, which they are not.

The SEC handbook yielded mixed results. Just recently, the commission told us that

Proposed Rule 127B under the Securities Act would prohibit certain persons who create and distribute an asset-backed security, including a synthetic asset-backed security, from engaging in transactions, within one year after the date of the first closing of the sale of the asset-backed security, that would involve or result in a material conflict of interest with respect to any investor in the asset-backed security.

That's not the worst, but no yokel from the sticks will understand it.

Writing of this sort is catching. Nothing can match the business community for latching on to the regulatory model. And within that community, nothing brings out the worst more than "complicated financial instruments" like exchange-traded funds.

On its product page, Russell Investments has this:

The Russell Growth at a Reasonable Price ETF [exchange-traded fund] seeks investment results that closely correspond to the total return of the Russell U.S. Large Cap Growth at a Reasonable Price Index, which is designed to select securities intended to produce a performance that is similar to professional investment managers using a growth at a reasonable price investment discipline.

Most people would have no idea what that means, and not because it's so complicated. It's because of how the description is written.

Writers and editors can't necessarily translate gobbledegook like that on their own. They have to talk to someone who understands the language and can explain it. Jessica Toonkel, writing for *Investment News*, did just that by clarifying that the Russell ETF "is for advisers who are looking for stocks with consistent historical earnings growth, rather than stocks with

high price-earnings ratios, said Andy Arenberg, managing director of global distribution for ETFs at Russell." We'll allow *price-earnings ratios* because most people interested in such things probably have a grasp on that term, which is basic in the mysterious investment world.

Other finance-oriented publications sometimes fall down. Index Universe reported

The First Trust Mega Cap AlphaDex Fund (NYSEArca: FMK) is based on the Defined Mega Cap Index, a modified equal-dollar-weighted index designed by S&P to identify and select stocks from the S&P BMI US Index that may generate positive alpha relative to traditional passive-style indexes.

For an article on *BusinessJournalism.org*, I asked author and investment adviser Russell Wild to translate. "We pick a bunch of huge companies that we think are going to perform better than other huge companies, and we plunk our dollars into these companies based on how well we think each company is going to perform," said Wild, "and when it all comes out of the wash, we trust that the performance of this fund will clean the market's clock."

How refreshing. How unlikely it is for anything like that to show up in the press.

Editors have to ask writers whether they understand what they're regurgitating and, if they do not, tell them to get someone on the phone who does. Failing that, editors have to do it themselves.

Why do people write that way in the first place? "Reasons no doubt vary," said

MIT professor emeritus Noam Chomsky, the world's most prominent linguist. "For some, self-importance and pretentiousness, talents not rare in the intellectual/academic world."

Or government, or business.

Clare Lynch is managing director, trainer, and writer at the British firm Doris and Bertie Ltd. (Warren Buffett's sisters, if not his commercial intent, were the inspiration for the name). The company specializes in helping businesses communicate clearly.

"Various reasons, I think," she said. "A lack of confidence on the part of people working in the insecure corporate world, a fear of appearing different by cutting through the crap? Perhaps it's an attempt to ape the seemingly impressive language of academia. I do wonder if the rise of business schools, in particular, has anything to do with it. Less charitably, one might suggest a deliberate desire to obfuscate with really abstract language.

"I read a piece on the BBC about the new Kindle that banged on about leveraging the Amazon brand or some such nonsense. Clearly lifted verbatim from the press release. Why? A time-pressed journalist? Or perhaps one trained on a media studies degree rather than through the old newsroom apprenticeship scheme, and so less sensitive to the pseudo-academic crap of corporatese."

*Phillip Blanchard was in the newspaper business for more than 35 years, most recently with the Washington Post and the Chicago Sun-Times. He now is a freelance editor and writes about editing for [BusinessJournalism.org](http://BusinessJournalism.org).* ■

## THE COPYEDITING BLOG

You don't have to wait for the next issue of *Copyediting* to get more rock-solid advice on language and editing. Check out our **expanded blog**, which features commentary on news items, interviews with copyeditors, games, and more.

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# TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

## Perfect your documents with consistency tests

by Erin Brenner

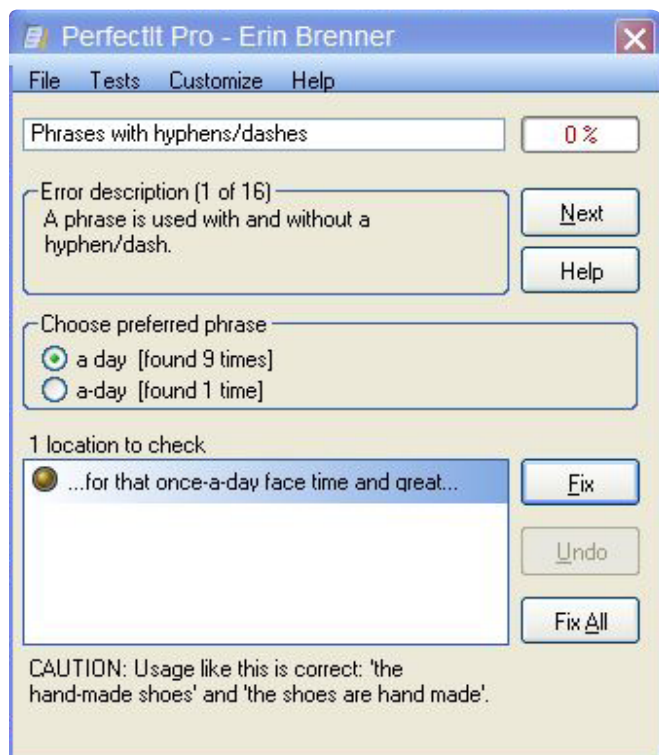
I recently attended **Communication Central** in Baltimore. The conference brought together many communication professionals, mostly editors, to talk about our work and how we can do it better.

Several sessions were devoted to using Microsoft Word more efficiently to help us edit faster and more consistently. In addition to using wild cards with Find and Replace and running macros, you can purchase add-in software for Word. Like spell checkers, these add-ins are only as good as their users. When used correctly, they can help copy be more consistent and editors be more efficient and thorough. When you spend less time on the mechanical editing, you can spend more time on language and content editing, resulting in cleaner, more concise copy in less time.

Recently, I've been trying out one of these software add-ins: **Intelligent Editing's PerfectIt**. This consistency checker runs up to 27 different tests on a given document, including hyphenation, abbreviation, heading, and table tests. (Full disclosure: Intelligent Editing offers a discount to *Copyediting* members, but we have no financial relationship with the company.)

### How PerfectIt works

PerfectIt operates similarly to a spell checker, and the company has wisely fashioned the interface like a spell checker's.



PerfectIt's user interface is similar to a spell checker's.

After you load PerfectIt into Word, you'll find the software under **Add-Ins** in the toolbar in ribbon versions of Word or in the **Tools** menu in older versions. Select the software. Within the window that opens up, select **Start** to begin testing.

Once the tests are running, just below the menu bar you'll see the name of the test, the percentage of all tests completed, and a brief description of the current test. In the image at the bottom of the preceding column, PerfectIt is running a hyphenation test and has found instances of *a day* and *a-day*. When I select *a day*, I see all the instances inconsistent with it. I can click on each location to check them or go by the snippet offered. I can then choose **Fix** or **Fix All**. If I don't need to fix any of the instances, I just click the **Next** button to the right of the error description box.

When all tests are completed, PerfectIt can create a list of abbreviations, update the table of contents, accept all the tracked changes, and finalize other details in the document.

### Test results

Although Intelligent Editing recommends running PerfectIt on documents of at least a thousand words, I ran tests on both long and short documents.

Document (word count)	Errors caught
Press release (469)	1 hyphenation error
Blog post (954)	All tests passed
Award entry (2,773)	1 head error, 1 abbreviation error
Research report (6,859)	2 hyphenation errors, 4 abbreviation errors, 1 table error
Nonfiction book (25,951)	6 hyphenation errors, 1 spelling variation, 1 capitalization error

PerfectIt caught errors in nearly all the documents I tested, even the shortest one. It caught the most errors in the longest document, which was to be expected. The tests were quick, too. It took just eight minutes to run PerfectIt on the book, well worth the time to fix all those errors.

### Advanced features

I ran all my tests without customizing the software, and I was pleased with the results. Yet if you customize the software, you can fine-tune your results and help the software run faster. You don't have to run all 27 tests, for example. The nonfiction book I edited was written in a colloquial style, so contractions were acceptable. Going into the **Tests** menu, I can deselect that test under **Spelling consistency** and save myself the bother of skipping past 26 different contractions and all their instances.

You can also create custom style sheets. A style sheet is a predetermined list of terms to watch for or skip. The system

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## ► TECHNICALY SPEAKING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

can warn you of a common misspelling of an industry term, for example, and suggest the correct term. You can create your own style sheets, specific to client, topic, industry, or whatever makes sense to your workload.

Even better, though, you can use someone else's style sheet. Intelligent Editing offers a **forum** where staffers and users can post their style sheets for others to use with the software. A few of them include

- Computer Terms (almost 200 terms)
- World Health Organization (WHO) Style Sheet, constructed from chapter 5 of WHO's style guide
- Convert UK Spellings to US (over 1,700 terms)
- American Anthropological Association Style Guide

You can also use the forum to offer feedback and ask questions about PerfectIt, get news about software updates, and participate in general editing discussions.

### But should I use it?

I wish PerfectIt had been available when

I worked for a marketing research firm a few years ago. For two years, I faithfully added hundreds of industry terms and company names to an Excel spreadsheet. It was faster to search my spreadsheet than to redo the research each time (and it was often months before a specific term came up again), but I could have created a PerfectIt style sheet and let the software do the work for me in a fraction of the time.

I really like using PerfectIt. It lets me do one final pass for consistency on a document before I hand it over to a client. It's as easy as running a spell checker, and I'm delivering cleaner copy by using it.

You can try a limited version of PerfectIt—**Online Consistency Checker**—for free. It will run five tests on an uploaded document of up to 10 MB, giving you a quick sense of what PerfectIt can do. Documents are automatically deleted from the company's server once the tests have been performed. You can also download a free 30-day trial to see how the software might help you.

The one caveat in all this is that currently PerfectIt is available only for PCs. If you're a Mac user and interested in using PerfectIt, there is a **workaround**, and the company would like to hear from those who want a Mac version.

What other tools or efficiency tips do you want to know about? Send us an e-mail at [technicallyspeaking@copyediting.com](mailto:technicallyspeaking@copyediting.com). ■

## THE QUIZ ANSWER

*The Quiz is on page 1.*

The Quiz sentence contains one error.

The question is whether the elements should be formed into a list (books, readers, and writers) or whether there is another intended meaning. Fact-checking reveals that the author intended a list of three elements, but that leaves us with a parallelism problem.

For items to be parallel, each item must be the same part of speech. Here's what we've got:

- *books*, a noun
- *those who read*, a noun phrase
- *write them*, a verb phrase

It's a safe guess that the writer's intention was to have the two verbs, *read* and *write*, share *those* [people] *who* and *them* [books]: those who read them and those who write them. However, the first item, *books*, isn't meant to be part of that phrase. The items aren't parallel.

We could make the ideas a two-item series:

books and those who read and write them

That's OK as far as it goes. But the sentence is part of some marketing materials, and it's always best to be as clear as possible, especially for a mass audience. We can clarify the meaning and keep much of the writer's original wording:

books, those who read them, and those who write them

Our best bet, though, is to be concise and direct:

books, readers, and writers

Would you have done something different? E-mail [editor@copyediting.com](mailto:editor@copyediting.com), and we'll print your solutions in a future issue. ■

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Thursday, January 12, 2012  
Speaker: John McIntyre

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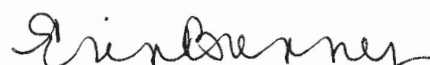
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# WORD RESOURCE ROUNDUP

## Word Spy

by Mark Peters

Are you *underdecided* about a mediocre political candidate? Have you recently *pity-friended* some desperate schlub you barely remember from the sixth grade? Do you enjoy books so much that you've been diagnosed with *paperphilia*?

If you need more information to answer these questions, you can find definitions and citations for *underdecided*, *pity-friend*, *paperphilia*, and thousands of other neologisms at Paul McFedries's **Word Spy**, the best online source for new words that are making a dent in the language.

There are plenty of blogs,

online dictionaries, and language columns that give snapshots of new words, but Word Spy shows a level of research and curation that is rare. Unlike a wiki-thingamajig like **Urban Dictionary**—which, granted, does reflect a certain chaotic genius of the hive mind—Word Spy is the result of one person's careful research into new words. As in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, example citations are included, so you know these words aren't fanciful coinages of McFedries himself. He also provides commentary on many words, letting you know a word's context and whether it is truly new or actually an older term that's been resurrected or reinvented.

This site is remarkably practical, allowing you to reap the benefits of McFedries's keen lexicographical abilities. Plus, it's more fun than a dog playing with a sprinkler. Take the term *butler lie*, which McFedries defines as "a lie used to politely avoid or end an email, instant messaging, or telephone conversation." It's called a butler lie because this untruth—such as "I have to walk the dog!"—helps one find the door, so to speak, in an interaction that's become lengthy and painful.

For more new-word ology from the prolific McFedries, check out his **Spectrum article** or, even better, the **book version** of Word Spy, published in 2004. ■

## IN STYLE

### Ploys of Yiddish

by Paul R. Martin

An article about elderly folks in South Florida who volunteer as police deputies observed that these *alte kockers* (Yiddish for "old-timers") "have become 'alte coppers.'" Readers of the *Wall Street Journal* article wrote to object. *Alte kocker* (or alternatively *alter kocker*), they complained, literally means "old defecator," so the expression isn't used in polite company, polite newspapers, or even impolite blogs. Although the term in fact is often used to mean a complaining old fogey, the authoritative **Joys of Yiddish** does call it a vulgarism.

The Yiddish *schmuck*, similarly, is widely used as a derisive or kidding word for "jerk," and it's listed in dictionaries as slang, not vulgar. Yet it's better avoided, even in quotes, because its literal meaning equates with the vulgarism *prick*.

*Putz* is another Yiddish slang word to be avoided, because it can mean either "penis" or "stupid person," although the German root means "decoration."

A term that isn't vulgar but is open to misinterpretation is the verb *stiff*, "to deprive a waiter of a tip." This also draws irate mail from readers who perceive that *stiff* has a literal meaning akin to *schmuck*. But the verb isn't regarded as vulgar in American usage, and even the staid *Saturday Evening Post* uses the term. The verb probably derives from the noun meaning "a disagreeable person."

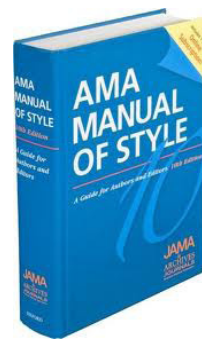
The best idea for copyeditors is to avoid vulgar and slang words or check with a stylebook about their use. Terms of foreign origin like *alte kocker* are best avoided simply because of their obscurity, vulgar or not. But obscurity is transient. The Yiddish word *maven* was quite obscure until self-described language maven William Safire helped make it stylish and then overused. In editing copy, you should still consider changing it to *expert*, unless maven's connotation of "self-appointed expert" carries the day. ■

► Thursday, December 15, 2011

# Medical Copyediting, Part 2: Using the *AMA Manual*

90-Minute Audio Conference | with Stacy Christiansen

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In part two of our medical editing series, we look at the bible of style and presentation for scientific content: the *AMA Manual of Style*. The most recent (10th) edition checks in at 1,010 pages and covers a wide range of information, from how to cite reference material to how genes and alleles should be presented. There are several ways to find information in both the print and online manual, from the print index to advanced online searches. Topics of particular concern to copyeditors will be highlighted, as well as several other noteworthy style topics, such as whether eponyms should take the possessive form (*Alzheimer's*) or not (*Alzheimer*). In addition, we will discuss the manual's official website, blog, and Twitter account, which provide clarification of style rules as well as sources of updates and new style decisions.

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- What content is included in the manual
- The various and most efficient ways to find information in the manual
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- Online tools and special features

## Date:

Thursday, December 15, 2011

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## YOUR PRESENTER

**Stacy Christiansen, MA**, has been a medical editor for the American Medical Association since 1996. She first worked with a group of five specialty medical journals, including the *Archives of Internal Medicine* and the *Archives of Neurology*. She is currently the director of manuscript editing for JAMA, managing a group of eight manuscript editors who perform research, editing, proofreading, and author-editor liaison for the weekly publication. She is a coauthor of the 10th edition of the *AMA Manual of Style*. Christiansen has taught medical editing for the University of Chicago since 1999 and has participated in the Council of Science Editors Short Course for Manuscript Editors since 2005. Christiansen has a master's degree in English language and literature from Northern Illinois University.

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Thursday, January 12, 2012

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## YOUR PRESENTER

**John E. McIntyre** is the night content production manager (read: night editor) at *The Baltimore Sun* and the author of the blog *You Don't Say*, which treats of language and related subjects. A working copyeditor for more than three decades, he is a lifetime member of the American Copy Editors Society, for which he served as president for two terms. He teaches a course in editing at Loyola University Maryland and has conducted workshops on editing at publications in the United States and Canada.

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