

THE POLITICS OF EDITING

Facilitators: Carla-Krystin Androtte
Michele Paulse

In this workshop we will trace the process involved in producing good copy, from the moment the collective/workgroup decides on the 'vision' of the publication to the editing of articles. Discussion and problem-solving sessions will focus on both the practical and theoretical aspects.

AGENDA

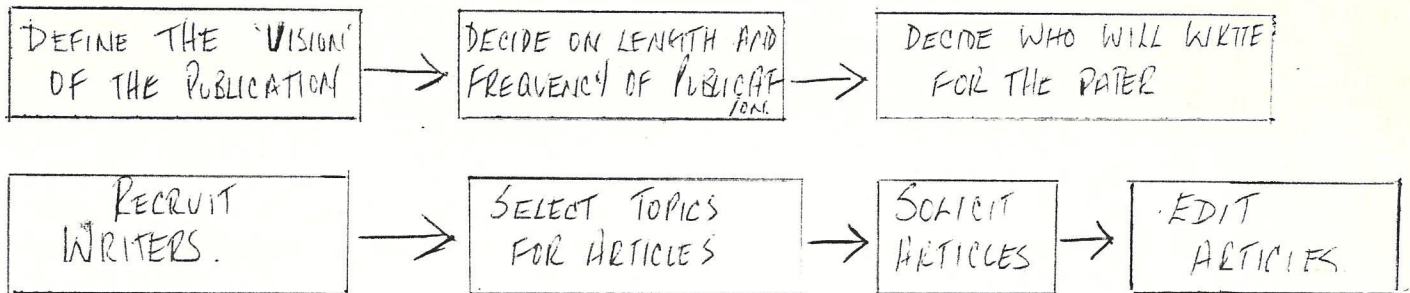
Rounds-Your name
Name of your publication
Size of collective/workgroup
Size of distribution

Overview of handout
Discussion on copy editing
Exercises

BEGINNING --PUTTING THE PROCESS INTO PERSPECTIVE

The process involved in producing good copy begins before you start to copy editpieces which are submitted. Editing the copy is actually the final step of the process. The way in which proceeding steps are performed can affect the manner in which you will edit and the extent to which editing is necessary.

The Process



1. DEFINING THE VISION OF THE PUBLICATION

Vision -- the politics, perspective, and tone which the publication will have. This will depend on the readership you want to attract and the politics and "statement" that the collective wants. This may or may not be rigid or restrictive.

--the vision will influence the style, tone and content of the articles which are published.

Does your publication have a 'vision'? If so, what is it?

How did your group decide what its 'vision' would be?

Can any problems arise from not having a 'vision'? If yes, what can

they be?

2. DECIDING ON THE LENGTH AND FREQUENCY OF THE PUBLICATION

- the number or articles needed
- the variety of articles
- the amount of time available for writers to produce pieces
- the amount of time available for editing

What is the length/frequency of your publication? How does it affect your recruiting and copy edit process? Advantages? Disadvantages?

3. WHO WILL WRITE FOR THE PUBLICATION?

At this point in the process, you may decide where writers will come from/geographically located.

--are they members of your group and or of the local and national community?

Where do the writers from your publication come from?

Do men write for your publication? Why? Why not?

How did your group decide who would write?

How does this affect your soliciting and copy edit process?

4. RECRUITING WRITERS

If people outside your group are to write for your publication, they will have to be recruited. When recruiting, you may have to decide

- how to contact people you want to write
- if you will ask them to produce something specific, or something of their choosing

a. --recruiting can be done in several ways depending on who your writers will be, and where they are.

- phone calls
- ads in other publications
- posters
- flyer distribution at events
- word of mouth

b. --whether you want them to produce something specific, may depend on how specific the 'vision' of your publication is.

- eg. I-recruit certain articles from certain people
- II-have specific topics and allow writers to choose
- III-allow writers to contribute whatever they want to

Each method will require a slightly different approach to editing. It may be more difficult to tailor an article to fit the 'vision' of the

publication if you are working with whatever is contributed.

How does your group recruit writers?

What does your group ask for?

How/why did it decide on this process? Advantages? Disadvantages?

5. SELECTING TOPICS FOR ARTICLES

If you are using methods I & II above, the topics of articles for each issue need to be decided. The topics chosen and the manner in which they are approached can depend on the 'vision' of the paper. You may also look for

- are the articles consistent with your 'vision'?
- how current the topics are
- how each fits into the overall scheme of the issue
- variety of topics

The use of themes, supplements on a specific topic and regular columns can provide a framework for articles.

How does your group decide on the topics for the issues it publishes?

6. SOLICITING ARTICLES

Providing writers with the relevant information when they are being asked to write a piece may make it easier for them to understand what is needed. This can also simplify the editing process.

Regardless of the method of recruiting (I, II, III) you could include

- word limits
- deadlines for rough drafts
- the perspective and readership of the publication
- information on the group's copy edit process

When using methods I and II, you can also include

- information on the topic(s) to be covered
- how the article will fit into the publication
- suggest an approach to the topic or the tone of the article

What much information is generally given to people who write for your publication?

What information have your writers needed to know prior to producing a piece?

7. WORKING WITH WRITERS/COPY EDITING ARTICLES

1. Working With Writers

Understanding the needs of the writer and editor, and the problems each face, can help us understand and improve the working

relationships.

Why do writers need editors?

Why do publishing groups need to work with writers?

What problems do writers generally encounter when writing a piece?

How can we identify these problems and help the writer work them through?

What problems do copy editors encounter when working on a piece with a writer?

How do writers approach the task of having to write a piece?

How can we find out how a writer works, and work with her?

Does your group have guidelines for working with writers? What are they?

8. EDITING THE DRAFT

What is the purpose of copy editing?

When can you begin copy editing a piece?

What is your responsibility to the writer when you are editing a piece? How important is that responsibility?

What do you look for when you are editing?

How much do you edit? How can you edit without destroying the writer's style and intent?

How does WHO YOU ARE (class, race, culture background) affect HOW YOU EDIT?

How do you present problems and weakness in the article to the writer?

How do you negotiate the contents of the first draft?

9. ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR THE CO-ORDINATION OF WRITING AND EDITING.

A process for co-ordinating writing and editing, which takes production into consideration can:

--provide guidelines for group members involved in editing and co-ordination of writing and editing

--increase continuity of the writing--production process

If you define the steps involved in the above process, and decide how your group will handle each step you can have, or at least begin a process.

EXERCISES

1. You have just read the final draft of a piece. The content is

good. The grammar in the article reflects the writer's culture, and language pattern. Her writing style is distinctly different from articles you usually publish, and will publish in your upcoming publication. The writer want to write for you on a regular basis.

What do you need to be aware of as you edit her work?

2. A member of your collective/workgroup says that she feels the publication has become stagnant. How could group members be contributing to this? How could the writers be contributing to this? What may be signs of stagnation? How do you deal with it?