

There's no eHarmony For Finding Editors

Focus On Editing

This month's focus is on editors---what they do, how much they cost, how to find them and if you need them.

What Does A Freelance Contract Editor Do?

A freelance contract editor is an individual who has no connection with a publishing company, and is willing, for a price, to help you shape up your writing in one way or another. He or she usually has experience and credentials in editing and writing. (You wouldn't want to hire one who doesn't!) Freelance editors usually work with only novelists, as there's no money in short works.

The following are the most common levels of editing services offered:

Basic Proofreading

Correction of punctuation, grammar, subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, typographical errors, spelling errors, basic word choice.

Complete Editing

Basic proofreading plus advanced word choice, consistency and clarity of style, flow and transitions, conciseness, appropriateness of style and tone to the audience, format and citations, sentence and paragraph structure, overall structure

Manuscript Critique

An overall analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript, including plot, characters, themes, voice

Manuscript Development

The editor will work one-on-one with you, develop-

ing your document section by section.

Freelance editors usually charge by the size of your document—the number of words. Depending on what type of service you want, the cost can vary from 1.5 cents to 4.5 cents per word.

What Does A Publisher's Editor Do?

Publisher's editors work for the publishing company and their services usually come as part of the package, covered by the percent they earn on your novel. These are the most common terms for their job descriptions:

Line Editor

A line editor's job is to review every line of a manuscript for typos, misused words (i.e., affect/effect, advice/advise), grammatical mistakes and punctuation errors. Line editors need to be excellent proofreaders and be familiar with proofreading symbols.

Copy Editor

A copy editor's role is to make sure the book's content is concise, clear, correct, easy to comprehend and maintains continuity in its details (i.e., eye colors, names, sequences of events) from start to finish. For technical manuals, the editor also ensures that graphs, maps and diagrams are matched to the right references.

Developmental Editor

When more substantive editing is required to get a book ready for publication, a developmental editor works one-on-one with the author to addresses weaknesses such as story structure, inconsistent pacing, poor character development and contrivances.

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Fact Checker

An editor is sometimes required to verify sources in historical, political and technical manuscripts. Because such research is time-consuming, however, the task of fact-checking is more likely to be put back on the author.

Acquisitions Editor

An acquisitions editor's quest is to find new projects the publishing house could successfully market. This is done in two ways. The first is to read new manuscripts submitted by authors or their agents. The second is to aggressively seek out new voices (i.e., following up on a newspaper/TV human interest story that has book potential).

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Editing By Community

Another school of thought regarding editing emphasizes community and process.

There are many who hold that if a writer reads widely, immerses himself in a writing community, meets often with his or her peers, listens to feedback with an open mind, writes, re-writes, re-writes and polishes, the editing will have occurred during the process.

Implicit in the process is the obligation for a writer to give back to the writing community. Reading carefully and offering insightful comments on the work of others not only pays a writer's dues, but is yet another way to hone one's own skills by identifying writing that could be better and determining how to improve it.

The one drawback to process editing by the community is that helpful readers lose a sense of the novel as a whole. Even after rigorous process, it needs a discerning person to read the novel in its entirety and judge whether it flows properly and hangs together as a continuous tale with a proper arc.

Finding a discerning person from the writing community who understands a writer's genre is often difficult. Finding a person with enough time and generosity to read an entire book and make notes for suggestions is close to impossible.

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Editors Say The Darndest Things: Act I

Editing: Scene 1

Ed: In your novel, you have two men traveling through a dangerous section of jungle and one of them, a hired truck driver, says, "What if we run into an anthropophagus?"

Auth: Yeah? What's wrong with that?

Ed: Wouldn't a truck driver say "cannibal" instead?

Auth: "Anthropophagus" is a perfectly good word.

Ed: Well, think about it.

Auth: Okay.

Ed: And then two paragraphs later, you have the other man, an anthropologist, say, "I don't think we have to worry about cannibals." Wouldn't the anthropologist be more likely to use "anthropophagus?"

Auth: Well, make up your mind! Which word do you want?

Editing: Scene 2

Ed: This sentence is an example of a problem I see throughout your novel: "She ran down the hall with the oak and maple parquet floor, grabbed her key ring with the plastic day-glow tag on it from the top of the antique demi-lune cherry wood hall table she had bought at an antique shop two years ago, rushed out the front door with the stained glass window, went down the steps, and ran to her three-year-old blue four-door sedan."

Auth: Isn't it clear?

Ed: Well yes, it's clear enough, but you're overwriting and weighing down the flow of the action. Wouldn't it be more fluid to say, "She grabbed her keys from the hall table, rushed out the door and ran to her car?"

Auth: I can't do that.

Ed: Why not?

Auth: I've gotta have 80,000 words.

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<p>-----Contact Us-----</p> <p>Minnesota Writers' Alliance Joan Sween, Editor 5031 Tongen Ave NW, Rochester, MN 55901 mwriters@charter.net or sweens724@charter.net 507-281-1472</p> <p>Unless otherwise attributed, all content is written by Joan.</p>
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Would I Do It Again? Yes.

By Jennifer Galuska

Jennifer Galuska is a Rochester writer working on a paranormal young adult novel with a working title of A KISS FOR EMILY. She can be reached at galuska4@msn.com.

One of my biggest questions as a new writer continues to be: "How will I know when what I've written is good enough?"

While I give much credit to my friends, family, and writer's group for aiding my story, this past fall I was at the point in my writing where I still had doubts in my head. Specifically, I viewed myself and fellow writers as eager novices in the game of "novelist" and I wasn't convinced we were as smart as we thought we were. That's when I decided to hire a professional.

In my quest, I began to inquire the ads I found on *the Loft* website. The responses from these "professional editors" were scary—"I'm pretty frickin cheep compared to others," (which she was not.) I also discovered that most editors placing the ads were from out of state. I was hoping to meet the editor.

It was then I began to ask other local writers who they used for editing. Getting a name was harder than I thought, though I'm not sure why. One writer told me who she used but wouldn't recommend him. Then while attending the 2010 Rochester Writers Festival, I spoke to one of the presenters and she gave me two names. I Googled both.

After reading the credentials...

After reading the credentials and what kind of feedback would be provided—general comments versus nit-pick, and if face-to-face feedback was offered, I sent off emails to see what kind of a response I'd receive. I chose the one that concentrated on overall story development.

I mailed off my manuscript and waited. I often say that waiting for feedback is like the anticipation of opening a present. Some gifts you like, some you don't. However, waiting for this feedback was a little different for me because I mailed my manuscript with the mindset that no matter what was said, at least "I'd know."

The cost of having a professional edit my 74,000 word YA novel: \$900.00.

The satisfaction I felt hearing the feedback: immeasurable!

Would I do it again? Yes.

Would I get rid of my small writers group? Never! (Hiring the editor not only increased my own self-confidence, but also boosted my faith in my small writer's group.)

If anyone is serious about writing, I think the best advice I can share is to develop a small writers group that has time to meet often! Their help is free and they will let you know when it's time to seek a professional editor. Of course, it's never too soon to start networking. Professional seminars are a great place to start!

I have been fortunate to find three editors, all of whom I would recommend. Mary Logue, Paulette Bates Alden, and Michael Kalmbach. Mike happens to be here in Rochester while the other two are up around The Cities.

Editors Say The Darndest Things: Act II

Editing: Scene 3

Ed: Your novel is 159,000 words, which is rather long. Have you considered making two books of it?

Auth: I like long novels.

Ed: Ah. You include a lot of physical detail, what your characters are wearing, what they weigh, where they have moles, what gel they use in their hair, and so forth. You might want to pare those irrelevant details down a bit.

Auth: I think that stuff is interesting.

Ed: Ah. You don't use dialogue tags. I think it would be helpful to let the reader know who's talking.

Auth: I think it's pretty clear who's talking.

Ed: Well, those are all the comments I have.

Auth: Okay. Thanks a lot for the editing job.

Overheard at a Fourth Tuesday meeting:
"You can't trust your friends. What you really need is someone with a *mean* pen to edit your stuff."

Editing Fiction: Hook, Plot, and Conclusion

By Michael Kalmbach

*Michael Kalmbach is the facilitator of the Rochester Library Writers Group and the Fourth Tuesday meetings, founding member of the Rochester Writers Collaborative, and slated to be the keynote speaker at the Rochester Writer's Festival in April. He is a freelance editor whose services can be found at <http://writanon.com/services/editing/>. He is currently finishing an epic fantasy novel titled, *THE CALDARIAN CONFLICT*. He can be reached at mikekalmbach@gmail.com.*

Most of my clients submit manuscripts that they've invested months or years trying to perfect.

A typical client has often been working in a vacuum, with no other writers to offer useful critiques. The writer wonders if something might be missing from the manuscript, and desires one-on-one feedback from someone who can help take the manuscript to the next level.

While there are countless details that one can fix, there are three areas that I focus my initial reviews on: the hook, the plot, and the conclusion.

- If you've missed the hook, your reader will miss your message.
- If the overall plot doesn't make sense, your reader will find something else to read.
- If your conclusion doesn't fit, then your reader will feel dissatisfied.

The Hook:

Your hook is the most important part of your novel. If you haven't engaged your reader by the end of page 1, you're in dangerous territory.

A hook should focus on one event: the inciting incident. This is the thing that kicks off your entire novel. It should be exciting, scary, or otherwise *different* from everyday life.

You should avoid "ho-hum" events--get right to something exciting. Today's readers are trained to get to the "good stuff" right away. Give them something enjoyable, and they'll give you time to fill in the details later.

Some warning signs your hook probably isn't good enough:

- The character arrives home, sits down, and

watches TV or reads a book (or some other "boring, everyday" event).

- The first pages are a prologue that explain the background of the story.
- Everything about how the character appears (down to eye color and shoe size) is described within the first three pages.

The Plot:

The majority of your novel consists of the journey from the hook to the conclusion. Characters grow (or at least they should) throughout the novel, and each plot point should follow another in logical succession.

Avoid jarring your reader with unexpected jumps forward or backward in time or position. To aid your reader, every jump in time, space, or point of view should be clearly marked as a section break or chapter end. *Warning:* doing this too often can confuse your reader.

For maximum readability, try to stay in one person's head at a time--this gives the reader an idea of who should "win".

Some warning signs that there are problems with the plot:

- You have a nagging feeling that your characters aren't reacting to events like real people.
- Flashbacks (especially flashbacks within flashbacks) are present. *Note:* A couple of flashbacks might be okay. Seventeen are probably not.
- Multiple characters share italicized thoughts within the same section.

The Conclusion:

One of the hardest parts of a novel is knowing where to stop. To achieve a satisfying ending, writers need to wrap up the major loose ends in a manner that logically follows from the plot.

It's a tall order.

For most writers, I recommend writing the conclusion before you begin your story. This helps you stay focused so that every word feels like it's moving the reader closer to the final destination.

If you've already written most of your novel, and are still struggling with the end, then I suggest looking at your beginning. A good conclusion often mirrors the beginning--a journey away ends with a return home, two lonely souls find comfort in each other, or
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Editing Fiction: (Continued from page 4)
a beginning war culminates in a final battle.

Some warning signs that your conclusion probably isn't good enough:

- The real murderer isn't introduced until the end of the book.
- A wise old seer tells the main character the "right answer".
- Your character wakes up--it was all a dream.

Closing Remarks:

By the time you've finished addressing problems in your hook, plot, and closing remarks, you're ready to tackle the smaller issues: sentence structure, grammar, and typos. These errors are often introduced in the revision process, so you should fix them after major revisions. Take your time, evaluate your work objectively, and you'll often be able to discover many errors on your own.

Only when your work is as perfect as you can make it should you consider submitting to agents and publishers. Of course, if you're receiving rejections and desire more specific feedback, you can always feel free to contact myself or one of the other freelance editors mentioned in this newsletter.

Go forth and revise!

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Editors Say The Darndest Things: Act III

Editing: Scene 4

Ed: This is a good story, but I would strongly advise you to cut out all the swear words.

Auth: Hey, swearing is really in now. Didn't you watch "The Sopranos?"

Ed: Yes, but this is a children's book.

Auth: Hey, kids can handle tough language nowadays.

Ed: Perhaps. But their parents can't.

Minnesota Writers' Alliance is a registered Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation networking writers of all types in the 11 counties of Southeastern Minnesota---Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona.

HOW TO SHOP FOR AN EDITOR

[This is a condensed reprint of an article posted on Ciao.co.uk. The name of the author of the guest post was not given.]

There are a lot of editors out there and before beginning to look closely at them, you really need to make a shortlist. I did all my research on the internet, so any editor not easily found online was ruled out. Here are the other reasons for rejection.

Making a Short List

1) The website. If I go to a website and can't read the text because of an over fussy background or find the page littered with errors, I won't even bother seeing what that editor has to offer.

2) Lack of information. Any site that says "I edit stuff, send me your manuscript" isn't going to get my attention. The same goes for any editor who has no list of credentials or experience. If an editor can't offer you this much, how will you know you can even begin to trust them?

3) No examples. If I cannot see how the editor works, how do I know if the editing they do is worth my time? At the very least the editor needs to show samples of their work. Better still are sample edits on the writers own work. Free is good, but I WOULD be willing to pay a reasonable fee for such a sample.

4) No e-mail contact. If I cannot make first contact through e-mail I'm not interested.

5) Restricted payment methods. When an editor has done enough to gain my interest, it's rather disappointing to find there is no accommodation for credit card payment. Check the payment methods offered before you do anything else.

6) Payment set on a "per hour" basis. Personally I find this very off-putting. I have no idea how long it takes to edit work. If you are going to charge per hour, at the very least assess the manuscript first and give me a MAXIMUM fee you will charge.

7) Broken links. It goes without saying that a broken link gives a bad impression. How can you trust an editor to work on your manuscript when they don't take enough time to make sure their own website works.

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How to Shop For An Editor (Continued from p5)

Shortlisting the Shortlist

It's time to narrow that shortlist down even further. Here's where the writer has to decide exactly what they want out of the service.

1) Interaction. How much direct input do you want on the editing process. If you want to be able to get updates on progress, comment on changes or make suggestions based on comments received, you'll be wanting a direct contact service, where the writer will be able to talk to the editor through e-mail or on the phone. (DO NOT use this communication to constantly bug the editor.) If, on the other hand, you're happy to hand the manuscript over and leave the editor to get on with it, then a large impersonal company will be just as useful to you as a small company or individual.

2) Services offered. Check what type of manuscripts the editor deals with. There is no point sending a fantasy work to a thesis editor. Also check to see if the editor can forward to someone more appropriate.

3) References. Okay, this was in the first list too, but I'll say it again. Check the editor's references and experience, but this time use it to rank your shortlist in order of preference. Experienced editors are going to be better - they've had more practice after all.

...they've had more practice, after all.

4) Compatibility. This is extremely important. There is NO point in contracting an editor you do not like or whose work you do not like. If an editor offers a sample, get one. Pay attention, not just to the sample itself, but also the conversation between yourselves. Make sure you're happy with both things. If you can't get a sample, read the on-line examples and see if you would accept such editing on your work. If you're iffy still, e-mail them, see what sort of response you get. If at any stage this makes you uncomfortable, cross the name of your list.

5) Trust. Trust is a very subjective thing. If there is ANY doubt in your mind regarding the editor, cross them off your list NOW. This person is going to be changing your work. If there is no trust, they are not worth a penny to you.

6) Fee. Whilst you should be aware of the editor's fee from the beginning, this should be the last thing

considered when ordering your shortlist. There is no point picking out all the editors who charge less than X amount only to find you hate them all. If a fee is very obviously beyond your budget, then eliminate it. But if your chosen editor really stands out from the rest, you might be better off having a little patience and saving up the fee. Remember how much time and effort went into your work. Is it really worth settling for second best at this stage?

Talking to the Editor

This may seem obvious to anyone seeking to speak to an editor but, be polite. You may be working with this person so don't start off on the wrong foot.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. If there is anything you don't understand, ask about it before you commit yourself.

...ask questions.

Don't take it the wrong way if the editor tells you no. Not everyone can edit everything. I do think, however, that you should be told why they said no.

If you don't like what the editor did, don't jump on them, just say a polite, thank you, but your editing isn't right for me.

*[Editor's note; I included this post because the author makes many good points, but I feel a few things ought to be pointed out. First of all, I have corrected a great many misspellings in the post. If I were an editor, I would think twice about working for an author who cannot even heed the spell-check. Second, the author mistrusts editors who charge by the hour, expecting a firm maximum fee quote, but yet, appearing to expect the editor to be readily available for questions, explanations and discussions initiated by the author. How does an editor estimate how many hours of his time this author would consume with a desire for perhaps argumentative discussions? And last, this author speaks of the need to be comfortable with an editor who is going to **change** the work. I think that's the wrong idea. An editor **suggests**; it is up to the author to change or not.]*

Editing involves criticism, and all serious writers desire criticism because that's how they grow. Nevertheless, it's nice if an editor will point out the good along with the bad.

Searching for an Editor?

You may want to check out PEN, the Professional Editors Network, a Twin Cities organization for editors. <http://pensite.org/>

For a national list of book editing services, book editors, copyeditors, proofreaders, indexers, translators and ghostwriters, go to this web site <http://www.bookmarket.com/101edit.htm>

Why Not Advertise?

Minnesota Writers' Alliance will be pleased to print small ads of interest to writers in its monthly newsletter at no cost.

Are you looking to share a ride to classes in Minneapolis or Zumbrota? Looking for a few like-minded writers to share feedback? Looking for actors to read your play? Looking for advice on how to tame your word-processing program? Wanting to tell the writing world of a special writing event in your area? Looking for a ghost writer? Need volunteers to assist at a writing event? Looking for a local book editor? Want to sell your scanner? Plug your new book?

MWA will help get the word out.

----Opportunities----

Poet/Artist Collaboration X April Exhibit at Crossings at Carnegie in Zumbrota. Original poems are being accepted to be teamed with artists creating visual works inspired by the poems. Deadline for poetry entries and for registration forms from interested artists is February 11. For further info: www.crossingsatcarnegie.com.

Poetic Strokes 2011 Contest. Southeastern Libraries Cooperating (SELCO) and your local library encourage you to submit your original unpublished poetry to be considered for publication in a regional anthology. Deadline for submissions is February 15. For info: Mollie Pherson, (mpherson@selco.info), 507-288-5513, or www.selco.info.

The 2011 Great American Think-Off is an amateur philosophy contest organized by the New York Mills, MN. Regional Cultural Center . Anyone may enter free by submitting an essay of 750 words or fewer on the topic "Does Poetry Matter?" Deadline April 1. Four finalists will each receive \$500.00 and also debate the question in New York Mills on June 11 before a live audience. For further info: www.think-off.org.

The Green Blade, a literary arts publication by the Rural America Writers' Center in Plainview, is published spring, summer, fall and winter. Prose not exceeding 1,600 words and poems are encouraged from writers living in Southeastern Minnesota and who are affiliated in some way with the RAWC, either through membership, attendance at Open Mic events, or participation in events sponsored by the Center. For information, contact Kevin Rafferty. raffam@hbc.com.

---Events & Classes---

The Loft Winter/Spring Classes Over 130 classes offered variously in 6 different locations around the Twin Cities. Access their class schedule online. In the first part of the text, there is a place to click for a PDF of the schedule. <http://www.loft.org/classes-at-the-loft>.

February 26, Saturday, 9 am-noon\$36.00
"Writing Great Beginnings for Novels and Screenplays." At Crossings in Zumbrota. Instructor Britt Aamodt. www.crossingsatcarnegie.com

April 16, Saturday, 10 am-1 pm\$36.00
"Working Your Way to Success: Working Effectively With Publishers & Editors." At Crossings in Zumbrota. A most important step to becoming a successfully published author. Instructor Lisa Finander. www.crossingsatcarnegie.com

April 30, Saturday, 9 am-noon\$38.00
"Next Steps in Creative Process." At Crossings in Zumbrota. Instructor Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew. www.crossingsatcarnegie.com

March 6, Saturday, 10am-1 pm\$35.00
"Get In, Get Out." Ray Carver's advice on writing the short story. At Crossings in Zumbrota. Instructor Suzanne Nielsen. www.crossingsatcarnegie.com

March 19, Saturday, 9 am-noon\$35.00
"Memoir Without Excuse: Writing Family Stories." At Crossings in Zumbrota. Instructor Jorie Miller. www.crossingsatcarnegie.com

Writers' Institute

Fri.-Sun., April 8-10, 2011

University of Wisconsin, Madison Campus

More than 25 session options. New this year: practice pitch sessions, speed coaching, writers' artistic jam sessions, personal consultations, and critiques. Register/Info: uwwritersinstitute.org

Rochester Writers Festival

Sat., April 9, 2011

New this year: Register for all day or half day!

--Area Group Meetings--

Austin Writers' Group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm in the Austin Public Library. All are welcome. Contact facilitator Betty Benner for more info. bennerbj511@charter.net.

Brick House Coffee House Writers meets monthly, every second Friday, 7:00-9:00 pm at the Brick House Coffee House, 412 Third Ave NE, Austin, MN. Writers read their works aloud to an audience of their peers. Storytellers, poets and listeners join the mix. All are welcome. Contact facilitators Michael and Bev Cotter, 507-373-4748, cotter6@q.com.

Fourth Tuesday. Writers meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday, 6:30-8:00, at a coffeehouse in Rochester for an informal gathering to discuss whatever writing topic comes up. All are welcome. Location changes as the group grows. Contact Michael

Kalmbach, mikekalmbach@gmail.com for each month's location.

Inkslingers Outcry! meets 2nd Thurs. of the month, 7-9 pm at Crossings in Zumbrota. Activities alternate month to month--discussions, exercises, professional presentations, open mic sessions. Basic cost of \$14.00 includes wine and cheese but may vary with speaker fees. www.crossingsatcarnegie.com

Open Mic meets monthly, every third Wednesday at 7:00 pm, at the John Hassler Theater in Plainview. Writers read their works aloud to an audience of their peers. Suggested length is 3-5 minutes. All are welcome. Contact facilitators Dean & Sally Harrington. dean.harrington@fnbplainview.com.

Rochester Library Writers' Group meets monthly on the second Tuesday from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm in Conference Room A of the library. All are welcome. Contact facilitator Michael Kalmbach for more info. mikekalmbach@gmail.com

Southeastern Minnesota Poets, a chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets, meets monthly on the first Wednesday, 6:30 - 8:30 PM at Buena Vista Condo's party room in NE Rochester. Meetings include discussions of poetic forms, optional monthly assignment, poetry sharing and friendly critique. Dues are \$12 per year. Contact president Sue McMillan for more info. suemac.sue@gmail.com

Washington Avenue Writers' Group meets weekly on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm at Christ Episcopal Church, 204 W. Fountain St, Albert Lea. All are welcome. Contact facilitators Rachele Flieman or Maren Ring for more info. rfliehman@charter.net, ringmaren@yahoo.com.

First-timers should double-check with facilitators, as weather and conflicts may change meeting times.

Asahi Loft of Harmony

Asahi Loft of Harmony is offering a special price on a four-day mid-week rental targeted toward writers and artists who desire a working retreat. For more info: <http://www.asahiloft.com/writers-retreat>.