

Notes from Sunday August 3, 2008 Publications SIG Luncheon

Sharon Sandle and Linda Kruschke (pronounced kr-oosh-key) introduced themselves as the current SIG chairs and announced that Sharon will be cycling off and Edwin Jackson coming on to serve for the next 2 years. Linda groaned in pain audibly - like REALLY loudly. The people in the next room could hear it.

Most of the conversation for this group focused on the second set of questions revolving around “what does edited mean.”

The pubs attendees broke up into 3 main groups to answer the questions and then presented their findings at the end of the session.

Some items of note:

- (1) Many of the answers from all 3 groups were the same despite varying backgrounds.
- (2) There was an initial discussion about what type of books were being referred to with the main distinction between seminar materials and practice manuals. The former often has little or no editing. The latter often has the full editorial treatment mentioned in the questions below. Some publishing personnel only had seminar materials that were edited, some had both seminar materials and practice manuals and some only had practice manuals.
- (3) Pubs people are very disturbed.
- (4) Pubs people despite all evidence to the contrary are not introverts when around others like them.

Summary of questions and answers:

Is the required level of editing affected by the quality of the material received?

Other than differentiating between seminars and non-seminar material the consensus was that the same standards of editing apply no matter who submitted the material. Although well-written material generally requires less editing, the same “checking behind” case references and statements of fact still apply. A good writer can make an editor’s job a lot easier, but editing steps cannot be skipped.

Can different levels of editing be assigned to different manuscripts or different projects?

Again, generally most people who have seminar materials and “practice manuals” treat them differently. Seminar materials are either not edited at all or edited to a lesser degree than practice manuals. Some people who were at the session do not have both categories but when they have only 1 they use standard editing criteria for what they do have. In general however for most people the same editing standards apply for all books in the same category.

Is cite checking a necessary component of the editing process?

The overwhelming consensus was “yes.” There was little discussion.

Should staff editors review statutes and case law cited or quoted by authors to verify that manuscripts are substantively accurate?

There was some mixed opinion on this one but the majority answer was that it is required certainly for new editions and for new updates for material that comes in. Too often many people had the experience that the author would quote something that either was not in the case at all or was completely opposite what the case stood for. Some folks said that this is the job of the outside editor as well, but that an internal resources was the only one that could be counted on for the most accurate assessment.

Is simply copyediting for grammar, punctuation, clarity, and flow ever enough?

The group tried to think of an instance when this might be true. One bar organization that had only 1 staff person assigned to their pubs division said that she relied entirely on the outside authors and editors to check the legal accuracy of their work even for practice manuals. She performed all the non-legal editing but made it clear to the outside editors and authors that their names would be on the books in question and it was up to them to make sure what they were sending in was accurate.

Several people pointed out that this was a mind-set that would be very nice to implement given that legal editing is expensive and time-consuming. Others however had many horror stories of editors who had sworn their material was accurate when in fact it was horribly, horrible wrong in many places.

The session ended promptly on time and Edwin’s reign of terror officially began...