



Editors on Editing: What Writers Need to Know about What Editors Do

Gerald C. Gross (Editor), Marc Aronson (Contributor)

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Since 1962 Editors on Editing has been an indispensable guide for editors, would-be editors, and especially writers who want to understand the publishing process. Written by America's most distinguished editors, these 38 essays will teach, inform, and inspire anyone interested in the world of editing. Editors on Editing includes essays on the evolution of the American editor; the ethical and moral dimensions of editing; what an editor looks for in a query letter, proposal, and manuscript; line editing; copyediting; the freelance editor; the question of political correctness; making the most of writers' conferences; and numerous other topics

Editors on Editing: What Writers Need to Know about What Editors Do Details

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Melanie says

So I had to buy this book for an editing class. We were supposed to read it a little bit at a time, but it was so fascinating that I couldn't put it down. The world of editing is not what I had imagined, but it's a very vivid place. Anyone who wants to edit or who wants to write should read this book.

Orphic {Ally} says

I would suggest this book to anyone truly interested in factions of the book industry. Amongst some of the text, is the attempt to dispel some of the well-known stereotypes of editors made by authors (i.e., someone who barely works and takes all the credit and lets the author do all the work), which is all quite contrary to the truth as known by the editors.

This book, in my opinion, had done a better job of depicting and not only outlining, but painting the inner dimensions and workings of an editor's job than any article I have read on the Internet concerning a day in the life of an editor, as well with letting us explore the finer intricacies of an editor's mind. An idea of what it takes to be an editor (essentially, editors require no formal training but in actuality, one will have been doing it all one's life; you are one or you're not)

Among some of the contents of the book is correspondence between one of the greatest editors known, Maxwell E. Perkins and author of The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald.

I have become in awe at the dedication a great editor carries to his job, in that it becomes his life, after "having read everything and written much".

Marissa van Uden says

“Authors really depend on editors for one thing: the truth.”

Editors on Editing: What Writers Need to Know About What Editors Do, by Gerald Gross, is a collection of essays by editors, illuminating all the different things that go on in that strange editorial realm between writers' and readers' imaginations.

The book is broken into two parts (Theory and Practice) and includes essays like

“What Is an Editor?”

“What Editors Look for in a Query Letter, Proposal, and Manuscript,”

“Doing Good—And Doing It Right: The Ethical and Moral Dimensions of Editing,”

“Line Editing: The Art of the Reasonable Suggestion,”

and (one of my faves) “Editing the Science-Fiction and Fantasy Novel: The Importance of Calling Everyone Fred.”

This book covers everything from roles of different types of editors (e.g. acquisitions editors, freelance book doctors, line editors and copyeditors) to the different painstaking tasks they perform, and how writers should approach revisions. Not every essay will be useful (it's a pretty eclectic and freewheeling selection), but there's bound to be a few that inspire you one way or another.

For editors, there are tips on how to communicate effectively with authors, what to look out for in specific genres, and even advice on how to become an editor. There are also loads of great passages on how to use the art of suggestion to help authors strengthen their writing voice and engage their readers. As one essayist charmingly puts it, the editor is "the author's umbilical cord to the outside world."

This is an inspiring book for anyone entering into editorial collaboration, with plenty of advice and philosophies to help create great editorial relationships, set the right expectations, and sync minds in service of the story.

Original post and fav quotes at <http://www.marissavu.com/2013/12/reviews-of-editing-books/>...

Adrienna says

There were some passages that were liberating, knowledgeable, and helpful as both an author and editor. It touched on various subject areas, types of editors, and gamut of wealthy information concerning publishing houses, book doctors, freelancers, and more on the grounds of editing.

What I liked most was the 1930 cultural mythology: editor as a savior, finding the soul of the manuscript; editor as a friend; editor as alchemist, turning lead into gold (or turning a piece of work into a masterpiece); editor as a seer, recognizing what others missed. Overall, this is a risky profession and encouraged to start trends, not follow them.

I took 3-5 pages of notes.

Adrienna Turner
Author of "The Day Begins with Christ"
www.adriennaturner.webs.com

Kendra Lee says

Ok, full disclosure: I didn't read the *whole* book. There were a few sections I skipped as I felt they didn't have any relation to me or the knowledge I wanted to have.

The ones I did read (a majority) were excellent and really opened my eyes to the editing process. As I one day hope to be an editor, this was invaluable. As a writer, this is especially helpful information to have. Probably most important is it will give you knowledge that may help you stay calm during the publishing process.

Something I found interesting was this edition was published in 1993 and still held plenty of relevant information to today's publishing world. Hardly any of it seemed out-of-date, actually. They even talk about

electronic publishing.

So, if you're a writer with a manuscript ready to send in, or have sent one out already, I definitely suggest you read this. It's not a boring read, I promise.

Keith says

The essays in this book are split into two categories: theory and practice. The theory section is mostly composed of aging editors pining for the "golden age" of publishing, and masturbating to the legend of Maxwell Perkins. I hate hearing about the golden age of anything--literature wasn't better in the 20s, music wasn't better in the 60s, and anyone who thinks publishing has ever been anything other than a for-profit enterprise is deluding themselves. But don't take my annoyance the wrong way: these essays are interesting and almost universally fun to read (especially since I've spent the last couple of years working as an editor myself).

The usefulness of the "practice" section will probably depend on your interests--for instance, I skipped the essays on editing Christian and Jewish literature--but there's something in there for just about any aspiring editor or writer.

Victor Oh says

It is jammed with all the information you need to know about editing. So packed with expert info, I'll be coming back to read it again. I've highlighted a lot of stuff. So I guess I won't have to plough through the whole book for what I need next time.

Kris says

Contains some great advice, but badly needs updating. Took me way too long to slog through (even considering the break for classes I took in the middle of it).

This book is almost as old as I am. It's still very valuable because it contains so much timeless advice, but it doesn't offer a fresh or practically useful perspective. Things move so much faster now, which makes relationships much different. I did love how these editors showed the passion they hold for their work; that's still the foundation of this industry, the root of it all. I also got some good recommendations from the list at the back.

When/if this book is revised and updated, it'd be a gold mine for any editor out there.

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Mohamad Yoosofi says

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Danielle Williamson says

Every writer should read this- a completely different angle that opened my eyes.

Tortla says

A charming, life-affirming (that is, if your life goal is to join the publishing industry) collection of essays. Plus some literary correspondences. (I was all in a tizzy over the fact that the book ends with a correspondence with Steinbeck, ostensibly focused on *East of Eden*...but more memorable for the sweet way that it captures the relationship between editor and author.)

The revised edition is not particularly relevant anymore, but it's an interesting read nonetheless. Some elements of editing are timeless, and the dated bits give a nice perspective on the history (and the often-mistaken predictions) of the business.

Keith says

Truth in advertising! This book is exactly what it says it is: editors laying out their views on what it is they actually do. It is presented into two broad segments: The Theory and Practice of Editing, and Editor/Author Correspondence.

The first part is light on theory, and heavy on practice. After just four essays on the theoretical aspects of editing—including one from the Schuster of Simon & Schuster—practice is examined in some detail and from numerous angles including manuscripts, copyediting, line editing, contract negotiation, acquisitions, the role of editor-in-chief, and the special considerations of editing in such genres as nonfiction, scholarship, literary, mystery, SF&F, children's, and illustrated.

Finally, a few closing essays are accompanied by excerpts of actual correspondence between editors and their authors, including material from *Steinbeck and Covici* and some really telling letters demonstrating means of dealing with difficult and delicate situations, and showing just how close the relationship between authors and editors can become over the course of connected careers.

Two caveats, however: firstly, in terms of any kind of career guidance, this edition is very largely outdated, though there is a 3rd edition which is itself now over 20 years old. Thus, while this is a wonderful look inside publishing during the eras of Fitzgerald and Hemingway, I suspect that it has little of relevance to say to the era of email, word processing, and self-publishing. Secondly, the focus is almost exclusively on the book trade, and heavy of the literary end even of that, which again barely exists anymore. A somewhat wider field from a considerably narrower source is available in the badly-titled and slightly less outdated *Make Money Reading Books* by a far lesser name.

So, read this if you're interested in the field as it was, and don't bother considering it all to be sound employment advice for today except insofar as soft skills remain transferable.

Tortla says

Simultaneously disheartening and encouraging for a wannabe-editor such as myself.

First, the disheartening:

It's already outdated. It doesn't discuss email or similarly-recent word processing software, nor does it go into the related realms of e-publishing and self-publishing. Many of the details about how editors spend their days (making phone calls, marking up physical manuscripts, etc.) seem irrelevant in the digital age.

Many of the essays make the publishing industry sound a bit too cutthroat/stressful/political for my taste. The reminder that the publishing industry is for-profit (and hence manuscripts must be picked based on their marketability) kind of crushed my idealistic desire to spearhead a literary renaissance.

Apparently experience is really important. Like, a decade of experience minimum. (BUT I WANT IT NOW.)

Do editors ever have time to read for pleasure?? It seems like all reading becomes a form of research, like this manuscript-hunting, commercial mindset (necessarily) takes over the editor's life. Like, I guess editing is itself pleasurable. But...money is gross. (And it's made very clear that editors aren't particularly well-paid.

Which is fine with me. Because money is gross.) Must an editor always have "moneymoneymoney" in the back of her head?

On the bright side:

The thankless, anonymous artistry of the craft.

The full-time immersion in the world of literature.

The constant placating of authors, being a go-between for publishing professionals and aspiring artists (authors).

The attention to detail. The fact that it's necessary to be harsh, blunt, honest, thorough...

The necessity of staying true to yourself, trusting your instincts, and taking work that you're passionate about.

Basically, every detail about what it means to be an editor, the type of person who's well-suited to the career, the humility and the passion and the pragmatism alongside the romantic sort of idealism that keeps editors going...

Everything that these editors write about their careers--both that which is written with love and that which is written with frustration, that which is written to discourage and to disillusion as well as that which is written to inspire--makes me want to join their ranks.

So, yeah, this book kind of makes me want to cry. Happy tears. Relieved for the reaffirmation that this is the career for me. (But also tears of frustration. Disappointed that it will take so long, require so much

political/economic/social savvy, and probably lead to a whole different world from the one that filled me with such hope when I read about it in these outdated pages.)

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