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FINDING WORK AS A MEDICAL EDITOR

Elizabeth Whalen, ELS

There are three keys to finding work as a medical editor: network, network, network.

Networking via Professional Organizations

As I mentioned in previous articles (*Editorial Eye*, February and May 1997), there are two professional organizations that have a large number of medical editors among their members. Investigate and consider joining either the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) or the Council of Biology Editors (CBE), and you've started to network. The Society for Technical Communication (STC) also presents good networking opportunities for science and medical editors, although the organization leans heavily toward writers of computer hardware and software manuals.

Regardless of how many professional groups you join, your networking success depends on your level of participation. Try to attend as many annual meetings of the organizations as your budget will allow. At these gatherings you can meet medical editors and people who hire editors, bond with your peers, and even polish your skills in specialized workshops. If you volunteer to help at the local or national level, you will not only meet some of the most influential people in the field, but you will also gain professional recognition for your skills. If financial constraints keep you at home, you can still keep up with current issues in biomedical publishing (including job-hunting hints) by simply reading the CBE and AMWA journals. AMWA members regularly receive a pink "job sheet" listing staff and freelance employment opportunities from all over the world. And for a fee you can buy a listing in the *AMWA Freelance Directory* to promote your own services and particular expertise.

Networking via the Information Interview

Once you've identified some medical editors in your area, ask if you can meet them for an "information interview." This is a highly successful technique for developing a network, obtaining some valuable information, and actually getting work. The information interview involves the following steps:

1. Identify someone (A) who works as a medical editor, hires medical editors, or knows about local medical editing opportunities.
2. Write to A explaining that you are interested in an information interview; indicate that you will call A on a specific date. Make it clear that you are not trying to interview for a job, but only gathering information. Include a résumé and request feedback on your qualifications and perceived chances in the job market. Most people are flattered to be asked and will be happy to talk about their work.



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3. Call at the specified time. Ask immediately if this is a good time to set up an information interview. If it is not a good time, find out when to call back and get off the phone quickly. If it is a good time, set up an appointment.
4. Get to the appointment on time and do not stay for more than about 30 minutes.
5. Ask A about medical editing in your area. Take notes.
6. Ask A for the names of three more people (B, C, D) in the area who could help you find out more about opportunities in medical editing.
7. Ask if you can mention to B, C, and D that A gave you their names.
8. Repeat steps 2-7 with B, C, and D. Your letter should now state: "A has indicated that you could help me find out more about . . ."

My "personal best" is 40 information interviews in 1 month. I had a great deal of fun and learned a lot, but I had to stop when I got a job—not from the interviews, as it happened, but from a classified ad.

Networking via the Newspaper

As you are networking, also look at the job ads in the classified section of your local newspaper(s). Search under "biomedical," "biotech," "medical," and "scientific" for specific editing positions. Send your résumé in for appropriate jobs; use other classified ads to identify people who may be appropriate for information interviews.

As you network, you may feel occasional pangs of guilt when it seems that you are always asking others for help. Never fear. Instead, you would do well to remember two truths of networking: 1) you have something to offer and by networking you are giving people a chance to find out whether you can help them (who knows, you may be just what they're looking for!), and 2) you will pay back your helpers by helping others as your career blooms. Every time a new editor thanks me profusely for making a connection, I assure her or him that I'm only trying to extend the same kindness to the people who helped me along the way. So networking is not only good for you, but it feels good, too.

I think you will be amazed at how fast your network grows. I've found that mine is not really a networking circle, because it never quite closes: it's more like a widening spiral that grows with professional experience and acquaintances. Good luck—and happy networking!

URLs 4 U

<http://www.medsitenavigator.com/>

As its name implies.

<http://www.stc-va.org>

Homepage for the Society for Technical Communication. Has employment information and a job-leads service that can be accessed by everyone, not just STC members.

<http://www.smpcollege.com/online-4styles~help>

For information on how to order *Online! A Reference Guide to Using Internet Sources*, by Andrew Harnack and Eugene Kleppinger, 162 pages, \$10.99.

<http://journals.ecs.soton.ac.uk/survey/survey.html>

A list and survey of electronic journals.

Websites maintained by the National Library of Medicine, including one for free Medline access:

<http://www.healthfinder.gov>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov>

<http://www.nih.gov/health/>

<http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov>

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/travel.htm>

<http://www.ahcpr.gov>

Grammar and usage hotlines:

<http://w3.one.net/~sparks25/gdoctor.html>

Phillip Sparks's "The Grammar Doctor"

<http://www.slip.net/~sfwave/GQ.html>

Weindy Weiner's "The Grammar Queen"

<http://www.grammarlady.com>

Mary N Bruder's "The Grammar Lady"

<http://www1.infi.net/tcc/tcresourc/faculty/dress/writcntr/hotline.html>

Haven't tried it, but comes well recommended.

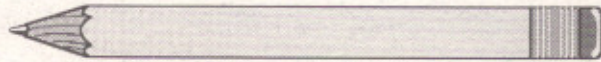
FROM THE EDITOR



"Just massage it a little." So says my boss when asking me to edit one of his manuscripts. Me, the word masseuse. Well, I've been called worse, and that's really not a bad description of what we do. If you don't believe me, try to describe the role of editors in 10 words or less—before your audience's eyes glaze over or close altogether—and send me the result. I promise to publish all submissions in a future issue of the *BELS Letter* and let our peers judge the winner.

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This apparently random musing is actually based on an experience I had this summer. I was hired to attend three medical conferences, two of which were held in Europe and one in Southeast Asia. Upon being introduced as the editor for the symposium, I invariably met puzzled looks and mostly polite requests for an explanation. Why should physicians require the services of an editor, they asked. It is the scientists who are the experts, they stressed; ergo, they are uniquely qualified to report on the proceedings of a medical conference! And so I would launch on a long and undoubtedly boring account of what I perceived as my role, defensively trying to justify both my presence at the meeting and—acting on the belief that “in for a penny, in for a pound”—any future edits I might perpetrate on the speaker’s presentation. These efforts met with, at best, limited success. It seems to be a particularly Western conceit that physicians, by virtue of having endured many years of postgraduate training

in their specialty, must also be good writers. This misconception is so prevalent that it gives me a new appreciation for the odds our European colleagues labor against (and I thought it was hard being an editor in Texas!). But even the Asian doctors, unflinchingly courteous and accustomed as they are to being edited by American journal publishers, were as hard put as I to state, clearly and succinctly, what it is that editors do.

That was the state of affairs until the last 3 days of my stay in Thailand, when, while checking into a hotel, I was asked my profession. Mentally bracing myself, I’d begun another round of lengthy and surely frustrating explanation when the dazzling smile of the registration clerk stopped me cold. With typical Thai perspicacity, she zeroed in: “Like writer, but make better, yes?”

If you think you can top that, I’d like to see it. Write to me at 411 N Washington, Ste 6900, Dallas, Texas 75246 or darlingg@airmail.net.

The Editor

THE EASE MEETING IN HELSINKI: SOME PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

Shirley Peterson, ELS

The 6th General Assembly and Conference of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), was held this past May in Helsinki, Finland. The meeting headquarters was the new Marina Congress Center and an associated hotel (a handsomely converted warehouse) across the street from the convention center, both in the Helsinki harbor area. In fact, we learned that the Marina Congress Center was built a few feet from where seagoing ferries tie up, a happy coincidence during some of the slower sessions, when conference participants could watch a ship being painted right outside the window.

The reception and opening session of the assembly were held at the University of Helsinki, which fronts on the main square of the city. The Rector of the University, Kari Raivio, welcomed EASE and spoke with feeling about science and communication. In his opening address, EASE President Hervé Maisonneuve urged members to improve the quality of science communication.

Food, always a big item at professional gatherings, was available in the hotels, at an open-air market around the corner from the conference site, and at numerous restaurants. Ice cream kiosks were everywhere. The official conference dinner was a posh affair held at a renowned establishment; in addition to fine food and drink, the dinner included entertainment—costumed dancing girls. Diners were delivered to the restaurant by water taxi and found their way back to the hotels by streetcar. Both rides were scenic and pleasant.

Individual sessions of the meeting were frequently cooperative efforts. Several months before the conference, session leaders asked probable attendees if they would care to add a few words on the topic. This invitation was not, it turned out, an effort to ensure lively discussion. "Saying a few words" meant providing a brief, formal presentation buttressed by visual aids and, to at least one new member primed to put in her 2-cents worth, the difference in expectation was embarrassing.

Editing Ephemera was largely a discussion of gray literature and whether appearing at a corporate-sponsored seminar and in the resultant "proceedings" constitutes duplicate publication. Gray literature includes abstracts, proceedings, data on file (safety reports, internal reports), health statistics, press releases, publication in a different language from the original or

in non-peer-reviewed journals, consensus statements, theses, posters, audiovisual material, electronic documents, training material, and advertisements and promotional materials.

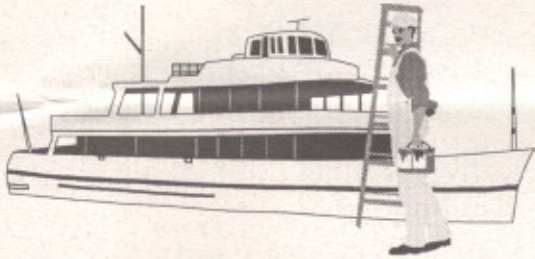
Emphasis and interest focused on pharmaceutical research, products, and meetings sponsored by pharmaceutical companies (pharmcos). A congress participant from the Mayo Clinic explained her employer's policy with regard to pharmcos: The Mayo Clinic discourages its physicians from attending any such meetings and provides staff with a sliding scale of acceptability of pharmco interactions. Ostensibly, the concern of the Mayo Clinic is to avoid the appearance of endorsing any particular product. Other research organizations allow members to attend pharmco-funded symposiums but only to present information already published.

A pharmco spokesperson pointed out that pivotal data sometimes appear too late to be published before the drug is launched, so sales may depend on these unpublished, and therefore gray, data. She described the category of "data on file" as a huge repository of unpublished but meaningful and accessible information. All pharmcos have data-on-file material and it frequently includes the results of ancillary studies that are "too boring" for publication. Some pharmcos have Web sites where gray literature can be accessed, but they try to distinguish between "available on the Web" and "publication."

One participant characterized the use of gray literature as a matter of "buyer beware."

Structure of Scientific Articles: Has IMRAD Had Its Day? was more like "IMRAD structure, yea or nay" and sounded like a well-worn topic, with the same players rising to give their standard arguments. (The vehicle entry hatch of the ferry was being painted red by men standing in a dock-based cherrypicker, using long-handled rollers.) An introductory statement pointed out that IMRAD is still in its infancy. It has been used only since the time of Pasteur (about 100 years, for those of us vague on dates), was widely accepted after World War II, and was standardized in 1972. One panelist suggested that a better form would be "Why, What, and So What"—facetiously, we presume. Another pointed out that IMRAD headings are signals that allow jumps from one section to another without writing well.

An audience member leapt to his feet to demand that IMRAD be retained for scientific reports because the formula is an aid to speed and comprehension. Someone else opined that IMRAD was a convenience for reading but never for writing. The riposte to this was that journalism is a better vehicle for mass consumption. Another person muttered that in clinical-trial reports one can find references in the Introduction to information that couldn't have been published when the trial was begun. (It took about an hour to paint the ferry hatch.)



What is Good Scientific English was the title, more or less, of several sessions. The session run by John Kirkman, a communications consultant, was tightly organized around a selection of six writing styles conveying the same information. The attendees were asked to judge which style was best, and a poll was taken. The version receiving the most votes was a chatty piece that was not particularly well written. The second-place winner was also rather informal but more clearly written. The third-place slot was captured by a version marred by easily excised circumlocutions but otherwise well written and logically arranged. Clearly, none of the six versions had been edited for publication. It would have been interesting to see what different editing styles did for the several versions and the length of time required for each editing effort.

A minor exercise offered two versions to be analyzed for readability and for the level of credibility and esteem that the writing generated for the author. Neither was a really prime example, as participants tried to point out. A poll of 1636 readers declared Dr Easyreader the hands-down winner. One hopes that he had a better grip on science than his slippery one on English, but it was hard to tell.

Designing and Editing Graphs opened with a thoughtful assessment by the moderator, Yateen Joshi. He asked why guidelines for graph design are largely ignored and received the following answers: guidelines are not available, not applicable, not practical, time consuming, unacceptable, or unnecessary. How much editing is necessary or wanted for graphs? The answer

to that lies in the purpose of the graph. Is it to be a showcase or a storage bin? Will it be used to inform, persuade, entertain? If standards are to be set for graphs, what will the scope of the standards be? Will they include the position of the elements, typography, color, embellishments? At what level will the standards be required? In a single paper, a journal, an imprint, a publishing house? Who will be responsible for the graphic displays? The author who is familiar with the data, the subject, the audience, and the objectives, or the editor who is familiar with the print medium and the house style? Computer graphics programs were mentioned as being helpful on a number of counts.

Dr Joshi gave his own checklist for editing graphs: 1) mentioned in text; 2) verbal summary; 3) caption; 4) presence of a sentence identifying the test that produced the data; 5) units; 6) origin and axes; and 7) absolute values associated with a pie graph.

A journal editor said that in a good journal all graphs look alike in terms of typeface and balance. He agreed that computer graphics are a boon as long as the results match the specs of the publication. Another speaker suggested standardizing pie graphs at least with regard to starting at 12 o'clock with the largest sector and working around clockwise with sectors of decreasing size. She was immediately challenged by a geographer who said that standardization was impossible. The geographer was not swayed by the argument that maps and their accouterments are different from other scientific publications. His brief lecture covered sociologic, ecologic, anthropologic, and other types of scientific data that geographers compress into pie graphs. He was abetted by another participant who described a specific use of pie graphs in which sectors have different radii.

Qualifying as a Copyeditor: How and Who? was a spirited and open discussion about how to train people who have shown an interest in becoming editors. Many of the European editors are American or British wives of European nationals. Two of them said the big problem is convincing other English speakers in the country that just speaking the language is not enough to qualify one as an editor. In Holland, Ruth de Wijs-Christenson, ELS, has organized editors to give courses in editing and to publicize the fact that trained and competent editors are available. The international BELS testing program was described. Kathleen Lyle stated that she is hoping to start a BELS-like program of testing in England.

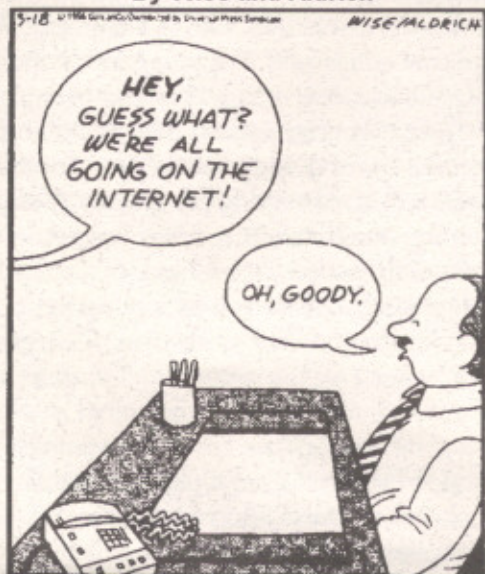
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Helsinki...continued from page 5

Quality in Communication: Does It Mean the Same to Authors and Editors? The quick answer is No. Journal editors maintained that value is added by a publishing house, particularly if it is an independent journal. They cited peer review, design, and reputation (voice of the community). Peer review itself came in for a beating: it is poor and not particularly helpful, ranges from biased to corrupt, and authors have difficulty appealing a reviewer's decision. Cooler heads pointed out that good reviewers identify ways to improve all aspects of a paper or give clear reasons for rejection.

Internet publication was discussed in terms of speed, efficiency, and economy.

REAL LIFE ADVENTURES
By Wise and Aldrich



<http://www.icanbarelyuseacomputerletalontheinternet.com>

The median time to make a decision to publish is 7 days, but longer for longer papers. One startling suggestion was that instructions to authors on the Internet might be in the form of a template. Both print and electronic publishers were reminded to let authors know where the report is in the system.

Real improvement in a written report was a matter of contention. One speaker of the "every-defect-is-a-treasure" school said that real improvement comes from defects found; another said that real improvement comes from careful analysis; and each gave several examples. Agreement was reached on clarity, accuracy, brevity, visible design, and the sobering thought that readers decide what is high quality—Dr Easyreader wins again!

CONGRATULATIONS

We welcome the following new members to BELS:

- Laura Keeler, ELS
- Susan E Robertson, MD, ELS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Catachresis

Congratulations on the quality of the *BELS Letter*. It gets better with each issue. I have to quibble, however, with the distinction that you offer between the words *flagrant* and *blatant* in your exposition of a catachresis. I can just discern a shade of qualitative difference between "offensively conspicuous" and "conspicuously offensive," but I think it's a stretch to say that confusing the two is "improper." I would be happy to be educated further.

Claudette Upton, ELS

On diagnosing

Indeed, people are not diagnosed; nor are they followed or identified or randomized. I don't know how many notes I've written to authors about those usages—or how many more I'll write in the years remaining before I retire—but I do know that I'm not ready to give up. This category of usage extends beyond nitpicking about words to our thoughtfulness of other human beings—the very stuff of which these phrases are made: "half the subjects failed to respond to medication" (they didn't try, or maybe they just couldn't get it right); "six women developed breast cancer" (breast cancer, like any other illness, developed, but the women didn't do it).

Marie S Morgan, ELS

To treat or to manage

Reply: Esko Meriluoto, ELS, rightfully questioned my dogmatic statement in a previous issue to the effect that "patients are treated and diseases are managed." He researched the use of both verbs in medical writing and proved conclusively, at least to me, that either can apply to people or their illnesses. If you are interested in the results of his investigation with examples from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1992), the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine*, *Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*, and others, let me know and I will forward his online file.

THE JURY IS OUT, PART I

Judy Dickson, ELS(D)



The question posted to the BELS e-mail list for this issue was just a tad provocative: *Do you think that ghostwriting is ethical?* (Indicate whether you ghostwrite.) The interesting thing is that we all seem to look at ghostwriting from slightly different angles. Whenever this topic comes up in conversation with other editors, the result is a noticeable volume increase. Here too.

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Your question is an interesting one. I have done ghost writing for physicians, and I've often described it as an activity that was prestigious and high-paying during my freelance career but would have gotten me thrown out of school had I been caught doing it then. I certainly don't think there's anything unethical on the part of a professional writer who assigns all rights to a work for hire to another (paying) individual, no matter how the work eventually gets published. And there's nothing unethical on the part of someone who pays a writer to organize research and present ideas that originated with the payer. The only shady area for me is occupied by someone who wants to pay a writer to create an original work from whole cloth and then put his or her own name on it. Again, I don't think the writer's doing anything unethical even in this case, although my old catechism lessons about the sinfulness of providing "the near occasion of sin" to others would probably prevent me from doing it.

Joe Hoffman, ELS

I have always ghostwritten for both employers and freelance clients. Why not? In technical and scientific materials, the ideas are the important thing; therefore, if I can help someone communicate a good idea well, then I have no objection to that person taking credit. I take cash instead. Regarding the question of intellectual honesty, I would rather find out that an author had a piece ghostwritten than find out that the author had made no contribution to the ideas and research therein. I consider the practice of adding a supervisor's name to the list of authors just because that person is a supervisor considerably more problematic.

Elena Westbrook, ELS

I have ghostwritten a chapter of a book (as a favor for a friend) and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience without once questioning the ethics of my situation or his. I was given a very generous acknowledgment at the chapter's end "...without whom this chapter would never have been written..." and a copy of the book when it was published. I believe the ethics of the ghost-writing situation depends on there being some public acknowledgment of the ghostwriter's contribution or involvement. The titular author and the ghostwriter enter into an agreement that is unethical if there is no provision made for public acknowledgment. This is because the titular author is tacitly representing someone else's work as his/her own.

Heatherbell Fong, ELS

The idea of ghostwriting makes me uneasy. Seems wrong for someone to take credit for another's talent at putting thoughts into words. On the other hand, those with the talent often can't get paid for it through channels that would permit credit for their authorship (a medical book/article/report written by a non-MD, for instance). Ethical? I dunno. Someone who writes a scientific report but does none of the research cannot, according to authorship rules, be one of the authors because the writer is not in a position to take responsibility for the content of the research.

Shirley Peterson, ELS

Of course ghostwriting is ethical. It's a profession. It's legal. It's not immoral. Why wouldn't it be ethical? In some respects, it could even be considered one of the first professions. After all, didn't Moses write down the Ten Commandments as told to him by a nonwriter? Moses never took credit for authoring the list. I don't know what the pay scale was back then, but perhaps a heavenly reward was enough enticement. Ghostwriting is no different from using a pseudonym, and that's never been unethical. We wouldn't have many of the stories we have today without ghostwriting. It's a valuable skill and should be rewarded generously. It's also not much different from corporate writing, where the copyright owner is a company and the individual creative writer's name is irrelevant.

Retta Whinnery, ELS

I have ghostwritten; I suppose in a sense I still do but I don't own up to it (couldn't; institutional reasons). Anyhow, I don't have a problem with ghostwriting. The ethical questions arise with ghost-thinking. That I've

done, in many cases, in my life as a freelance. I've saved people embarrassment, gotten things published that would have been rejected, gotten mediocre papers into high-profile journals by identifying a new "spin" on the conclusions, reanalyzed data that weren't well analyzed, etc. etc. My clients get (got) great value for their money, but I was never sure they could really adequately defend their conclusions; in some cases, their response to a major shift in emphasis was "whatever you think will work." So, they didn't always critically analyze or even fully comprehend points that were presented under their byline. I'm not sure I'd do that again without coauthorship. In fact, I know I wouldn't. Within an institution, it's a different story; helping authors think through their data is part of my job. And taking authorship is against policy (mine and the institution's).

Christy Wright, ELS

Yes, or I wouldn't do it. I see the difference between substantive editing and ghostwriting as a matter of degree. Why should scientists or physicians be penalized (ie, remain unpublished) because they cannot express themselves clearly? For me, ghostwriting is like translating: I am voicing the author's work and ideas in the appropriate language. Everyone benefits from our collaboration and no one is hurt.

Grace Darling, ELS

Yes, I have ghostwritten and probably will again. My response to this question was, where is the potential for an ethical dilemma, if any? Answer, that someone else is claiming your work for their own? This brings up the question of the need for ghostwriters et al. to be sure they understand the distinction between being a writer and being an authority. When I ghostwrite, I am not claiming or wanting to be an authority.

Jonathan Briggs, ELS

Taking credit for someone else's work is lying and is therefore unethical. I know that politicians have their speeches written for them by officially anonymous persons, that sports figures have even their autobiographies written for them, and so on; but leading readers to believe that you created something that someone else created is unethical. However, in some strange way, ghostwriting seems less unethical for the ghostwriter than for the person who takes credit for what the ghostwriter writes. (I don't write anything.)

Norman Grossblatt, ELS(D)

Yes, I think ghostwriting is ethical but only if the "author" supplies his or her own data and approves the outline before the writer begins writing. Ideally, the writer should be mentioned in the acknowledgments section; this could be as simple as thanking person X for help in preparing the manuscript. Of course, all financial relationships between the author and any sponsoring organization must be disclosed. I don't ghostwrite myself but I do edit ghostwritten manuscripts. We typically state that "this work was supported by XYZ Pharmaceutical Company," but our clients rarely approve acknowledgment of the ghostwriter. I don't feel that ghostwritten review articles are ethical unless the author conducts the literature search, or unless the conditions of the lit search are disclosed in the acknowledgments.

Carol Cadmus, ELS



THE JURY IS OUT, PART II

Judy Dickson, ELS(D)

Ann Tamariz posted a plea for advice to the BELS e-mail list that turned out to be a fitting companion piece for this issue's TJIO question. She received a lot of information as well as requests for dissemination of her findings. Here are her question and the replies she received; names have been withheld by design.

To Fellow BELS Members:

Any information or advice you could give me about the credit an author's editor is entitled to receive for work on a textbook would certainly be appreciated, especially with regard to the following situation.

THE FACTS: I am an assistant editor at a university medical center and have just completed 2 years of substantive editing on a 23-chapter, two-volume textbook with contributors located in the United States and Europe. For several years I have worked directly for the physician who is the editor of the book. Although it was part of my job to edit this book, I spent countless hours outside the office on it. (Much of my time in the office was spent dealing with the administrative and organizational aspects of the book.)

THE QUESTION: Would I be entitled to request that my name be listed in the book, perhaps on the back of the title page, as assistant editor? I have seen such credits

before, but I do not know whether these were employees of the publishing company or author's editors without ties to the publisher. The editor (my boss) agrees to whatever credit is customary, and he asked me to contact the publisher. Thanks for your feedback.
Ann Tamariz, ELS

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I have substantively edited five books for academic authors: three books at a graduate business school and two at a school of medicine. At the first university, my boss, of his own volition, acknowledged me by having the words "With the assistance of" appear on the title page under his name. This was in the early '80s. At the second university, my boss agreed to acknowledge me as well. In the two books I edited there, I was listed as assistant editor on the title page. This was in the late '80s and the publisher was Elsevier. If I were you I would make sure that I was listed as assistant editor on the title page. After all, you did the work.

I do not work on textbooks, but I have edited many multiauthor books—maybe 100 full length and many more short ones. I have always believed that the author's editor should be acknowledged, and my various bosses and superiors have always agreed. Sometimes the acknowledgment is by inclusion in the list of participants in the project that leads to the book—committee members, staff (project director, secretary), and editor (listed as such, not just a name). Sometimes it is by explicit acknowledgment of a job well done in the acknowledgments section or preface. In a few cases, it is on the title page, with the names of the scientific editors. The rationale is that identification of the editor is part of the appropriate identification of the origin of the publication. The named publisher published it, the authors were the authors, the scientific editor was the scientific editor, the manuscript editor—and so on.

I am a freelance editor and have received official credit for my work. Some publishers list people who have worked on the book—including freelances—at the front of the book, some list them at the end. Sometimes my name is included in the list of "And thanks to all the good people at the press who work hard to make this book better, including ..." I am listed right along with the in-house people with no indication that I am a freelance.

I recently also assisted one of the physicians in my department to edit a multiauthored textbook. Three of us assisted in this project; the physician did not want to show favoritism in any way, so he gave us equal recognition in the preface. I think that a letter from the editor to the publisher requesting that you be given editorial credit would be appropriate. However, unless they have a contract with you individually, it seems to me that they would be within their rights to deny your request. If they do, the physician should certainly give you credit in the preface or an acknowledgment of some type in the book.

You can be given credit in a couple of ways. You can have your name listed below the editor's as the assistant editor or, if you really push for it, as the scientific editor. The publisher will not care—it is up to your boss as the editor. Alternatively, the editor can thank you in the preface and identify you as the assistant editor. We tend to see this more and more as the editors turn over more and more work to their assistants. You may want to request being listed as scientific editor or associate editor rather than assistant editor.

I don't think there is any entitlement to having one's editorial work acknowledged; it is a decision for the publisher or author. However, I do feel that the editor's input should be acknowledged, not for glorification but to show responsibility—particularly when the editor works in house and can have a profound effect on the final presentation. I would make only one exception to this—when the publication is a corporate document (for example, an annual report) where even the actual author is not acknowledged.

Although you sometimes see it done, I feel that it is wrong for an editor (in our sense) to be included with the subject specialist editor in the byline of a volume—if you cannot answer questions on the subject matter, you should not be named in the author line.

One possible approach to show the involvement of a house editor is to include a single line (for example: Technical Editor: I A M Redactor) somewhere in the front or back matter. I have seen this put on the inside back cover (unsatisfactory as it is really hidden) or on the copyright page or below the author line on the title page (depending on the amount of emphasis that is wanted). For a freelance editor, the form of the acknowl-

edgment is really up to the publisher (or the author). Most publishers seem to have no policy, but most authors seem to want to acknowledge the editor's input. Usually it is something like "I thank IAM Redactor for his most able editing" or "Editorial services for these proceedings were provided by Ms. IAM Redactor."

Publishers often credit both in-house and freelance editors, and said credit often goes on the back of the title page. I have received editing credit in the acknowledgments of articles and prefaces of books and even have been listed as a contributor to a medical text, although I have no medical training. My contribution was to organize, edit, and submit the complete text to the publisher.

Yes, you are entitled to be listed as assistant editor on the back of the title page. My opinion is based on work at a university program that publishes proceedings of scientific investigations, about 12 volumes per year. Each volume has three or more scientists listed as editors on the title page and a volume editor listed on the back of the title page. The volume editor coordinates style, does substantive editing, works on layout, design, and copyediting, and oversees the freelance editing. The freelance editors (like me) are not listed and do not need to be listed.

You are entitled to whatever credit you can negotiate. As a freelance, I worked on several textbooks and was listed on the page following the copyright page in whatever capacities I had worked (copyeditor, indexer, proofreader) along with the developmental editors (all freelance) and the project editor (also freelance). The person who did the work—whether as an in-house employee, freelance, or an author's editor—should get the credit.

In a review syllabus with two physician editors, six physician associate editors, a managing editor, and a manuscript editor (me), we were all listed, along with numerous others (designers, indexers, and so on) on a page following the copyright page. The two main editors' names appeared on the title page as well. In a proceedings that I edited (actually writing some of the pieces) and produced (hiring designer and typesetter and overseeing through production), I listed myself and the designer and typesetter at the foot of the copyright page. The scientists who got the grant to hold the

meeting and then organized it were listed as volume editors on the title page.

In most cases, I get thanked in an acknowledgments section if I am mentioned at all. The variants in the credits I get have nothing whatever to do with what I do on the job; I have often been invisible when I have virtually written the thing. Oh, well. Comes with the territory. However, I think there would be nothing improper about your receiving credit on the copyright page as an assistant editor regardless of the location of your work (in the office or after hours at home). You've made a substantive contribution, and credit for such would be appropriate.

This is an interesting and common dilemma. I can only advise on what one research center, as a publisher, would do in this situation. First, the research center defines editorship as follows: "Editorship: Here, the term editor refers to the expert(s) or scholar(s) selected to commission, review, and assemble a collection of papers by a number of different authors into a single manuscript. It does not refer to someone who solely edits the manuscript for sense, grammar, and style (although this could be one of the roles of an editor). Editors must be able to publicly discuss and debate the content of the manuscript. Specifically, the role of an editor is to contribute to the conception of the manuscript, solicit contributions, review and revise contributions, make the final selection of contributions based on scientific merit and originality of content, and assemble the manuscript in a logical manner, including the addition of front matter (such as a preface) and back matter (such as a list of conference participants or an index). . . ." On the basis of this definition, I find it hard to support your listing as editor. I am not too crazy about the "assistant editor" label either, as this is an ambiguous and undefined title. When crediting editorship of a book, manuscript editing is only one factor to consider, and it is a relatively minor factor at that. If this situation were presented to the research center as a publisher, my position would be to advise the editor to give you a glowing acknowledgment, either in the preface or in the acknowledgments. Finally, if the editor strongly supports your listing as coeditor (or assistant editor), it is incumbent upon the editor to communicate his opinion to the publisher. Your word alone, I am afraid, will not hold much weight with the publisher.

NEWS FOR AND ABOUT MEMBERS

BELS Coffee Klatsch. Elizabeth Whitson, ELS, is handling the arrangements for a get-together of BELS members in Boston at the time of the AMWA meeting. This informal affair will probably be a breakfast, which worked out so well last year. Those on the BELS e-mail list will hear from her; others should check the message board in the hospitality room of the headquarters hotel. Please contact Elizabeth (415-225-3369) right away if you have preferences or suggestions.

Wanted: Copyeditor. CBE seeks an experienced (at least 5 years) copy editor for the new CBE GuideLines series—see *CBE Views* 20(3):113. Your résumé and rates, a list of book chapters edited, samples of book chapters edited, references, and any pertinent information in support of your application should be mailed to the managing editor of the series,

Miriam Bloom, ELS
4433 Wedgwood Street
Jackson MS 39211

If you applied for this position in response to the online announcement, your application is already under consideration and there is no need to apply again.

We Have a Winner!

Our very own Julliana Newman, ELS, is the recipient of the 1997 Rose Kushner Award for Writing Achievement in the Field of Breast Cancer given by the American Medical Writers Association/Zeneca Pharmaceuticals. Julie's entry, titled "Early Detection Techniques in Breast Cancer Management," was chosen as the winner in the scientific articles category. This is not the first time Julie's talents have been recognized: earlier this year she won an award of excellence from the Society for Technical Communication for her scholarly article, "The Diagnosis and Treatment of Stroke." My sincere congratulations to Julie on behalf of all her BELS colleagues; we are proud of you.



Officer Shuffle. It's official: Shirley Peterson, ELS, is our new Registrar, which means she will be disseminating information about the BELS certification program and processing applications for the examination. The address to write to is PO Box 8133, Radnor PA 19087-8133. Flo Witte, ELS, has assumed Shirley's old duties and is now the Assistant Treasurer of BELS. Her address is 4373 Clemens Drive, Lexington KY 40514, fwitte@kyspine.com.

New England Chapter to Sponsor Spelling Bee at AMWA Annual Conference. As local hosts for the 1997 annual conference, the New England chapter is arranging the first-ever AMWA medical spelling bee, a team competition that will challenge the best (or at least the boldest) orthographers at the meeting. This special event will take place right after the traditional Wednesday evening membership dinner. Top prizes will be 1-year leases guaranteeing each member of the winning three-person team a share of a commercial beehive's annual honey production, and all competitors will receive mementos for contributing to the fun. Everyone will be invited to cheer on the contestants and enjoy complimentary tollhouse cookies and local apple cider. For more information and a signup form, write to Judy Linn, 37 Forty Acres Drive, Wayne MA 01778, or call or fax 508-358-7071.

Rooms for Rent. If you are looking for budget accommodations in Boston while attending the AMWA conference, you might try these: Chandler Inn, 26 Chandler Street, Boston MA, 617-482-3450; \$64 single. "About a 15-minute walk" from the Sheraton, according to the proprietor. The South Bay Hotel, 617-288-3030, \$84 single, and the Boston Milner Hotel, 617-426-6220, no rate information, are alternatives. We have no personal knowledge of any of these places, so please don't hold us responsible for their quality.

New and Improved Diplomate Process. At its meeting on 6 May 1997, the BELS Executive Council revised the procedure for achieving diplomate status. The new requirements are as follows:

- ☒ To be eligible for diplomate status, a candidate must have been certified by BELS for at least 2 years.
- ☒ An eligible candidate must submit a portfolio that consists of 15-30 pages of edited manuscript and a brief original essay on a subject relevant to editing in the life sciences, and the portfolio must be successfully reviewed.

- ✎ A candidate who has passed the portfolio stage must pass a proctored 4½-hr examination that consists of editing a short paper, condensing a piece of text, and reviewing and commenting on (in writing), but not editing, a paper. The examination has no oral component.

For more details and to learn how to apply for diplomate status, get in touch with Carol Kakalec, ELS(D), secretary for diplomate examination administration. She can be reached at 713-770-2046 (work), 713-669-9539 (home), or ckakalec@wt.net.

BELS Certification Examinations

11 Nov 1997	Boston
2 May 1998	Salt Lake City
9 Sep 1998	Washington
27 Oct 1998	Vancouver

The times of the examinations are 1 to 4 pm in every case. For information and application forms, please write to BELS Registrar, PO Box 8133, Radnor PA 19087-8133.

A Message from David. Each of us knows at least one colleague who ought to be in BELS. You keep this person informed, but you don't want to be pushy. You've mentioned the exam; what else can you do? Bobbie Reitt says that it is becoming more common for people to indicate on their application forms that they heard about BELS from colleagues who are members. We must be doing a good job of talking to our coworkers about BELS, but we need to add their names to our mailing list. Here's what we suggest:

- 🔔 Send the names and addresses of colleagues you'd like us to recruit as candidates for certification.
- 🔔 Forward the names, job titles, and addresses of supervising editors, managers, or clients who might encourage their editors to become certified.

Please take a moment and give this some thought. If you know someone who would benefit from BELS membership [*and who wouldn't!*], jot down the information and put it in an envelope to me at PO Box 6213, Macon GA 31208, and include your own name and phone number. Thanks for your help.

David T Orr, ELS
Chair, Committee on Public Relations

BELS Letter

411 N Washington, Suite 6900
Dallas TX 75246

