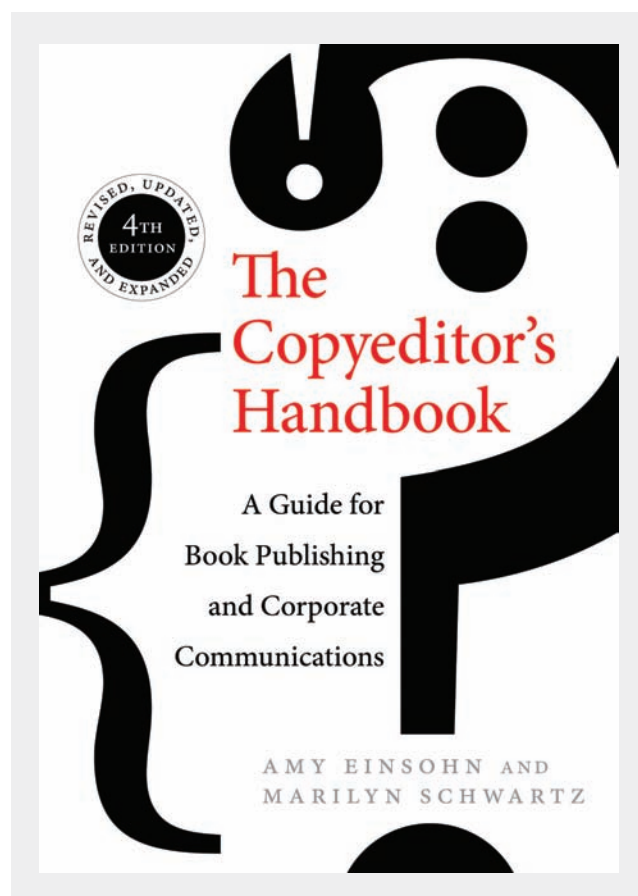# Book Reviews: *The Copyeditor's Handbook* and *The Copyeditor's Workbook*

Barbara Gastel and Courtney Adams

The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications, 4th ed. Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz. Oakland, CA: University of California Press; 2019. 568 pages. ISBN 978-0-520-28672-6.

BARBARA GASTEL teaches science editing and related subjects at Texas A&M University; and COURTNEY ADAMS is a graduate student in science and technology journalism at Texas A&M University.

The Copyeditor's Workbook: Exercises and Tips for Honing Your Editorial Judgment. Erika Büky, Marilyn Schwartz, and Amy Einsohn. Oakland, CA: University of California Press; 2019. 384 pages. ISBN 978-0-520-29435-6.

Although the basic content of copyediting has long remained much the same, the process has changed greatly over the past 2 decades, as editing has become almost entirely electronic. *The Copyeditor's Handbook,* which first appeared in 2000 and has long been a valuable resource for science editors, has evolved accordingly. In particular, the recently published fourth edition offers more instruction on electronic aspects of editing while retaining previous editions' extensive guidance in editing for mechanics and publication style. In addition, whereas the first 3 editions incorporated exercises, the fourth has a companion workbook instead.

The new edition and accompanying workbook also have additional authors. Amy Einsohn, a longtime editor and editing teacher, was the sole author of the first 3 editions, the most recent of which appeared in 2011. After Einsohn died in 2014, Marilyn Schwartz, who was Einsohn's editor at the University of California Press, proceeded with updates, drawing in part on notes Einsohn bequeathed. Erika Büky, an editor who had worked at the Press, joined her in preparing the workbook, which contains many new exercises as well as those already in the handbook. Thus, Schwartz now is co-author of the handbook (which still consists mainly of Einsohn's content). Büky and Schwartz are first and second authors of the workbook, with Einsohn third.

Although one can't judge a book by its cover, a radical change in cover design between editions of a book may well signal a major internal revamping. The 3 Einsohn-only editions all had similar covers[1] featuring images of self-adhesive notes, a mainstay of copyeditors in the more recent decades of the pre-electronic era. These 3 editions also had identical lengths because the updates had to fit into the original pages, which served as camera-ready copy. The new handbook and workbook have a more contemporary cover design. The interior also has been redesigned, allowing more new content.

Like the earlier editions, the fourth has 3 parts—"The ABCs of Copyediting," "Editorial Style," and "Language Editing"—encompassing a total of 15 chapters. Although

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the book has been updated and expanded, these chapters still contain Einsohn's excellent guidance on topics ranging from querying authors, to correcting punctuation and spelling, to dealing with tricky matters of subject-verb agreement. Rigorous without being rigid, the instruction is thorough, thoughtful, and readable and contains many helpful examples. As before, the book also includes a checklist of editorial preferences (with which to record style choices for given projects) and glossaries of copyediting and grammar terms.

The book has been substantially revised, though, to suit what is now predominantly a digital environment. Whereas earlier editions provided brief advice for working on screen (and the 2000 edition spoke of copying files from the author's or publisher's disk!), the current edition says more in this regard. Early in the book, readers receive guidance on editing in Microsoft Word, and in a later section, they can brush up on current use of cyberjargon. The selected bibliography now includes a part on tools for on-screen editing, as well as being otherwise updated and expanded. And many of the workbook exercises are to be completed on-screen, using files available on the Internet. Nevertheless, the elements of off-screen editing have not disappeared from the handbook; readers can still find the traditional copyediting marks and advice for marking changes on hard copy.

In this digital world, copyeditors have increasingly become an online community, or set of online communities. Accordingly, the current edition of the handbook lists websites, discussion boards, email discussion lists, and blogs useful to copyeditors. It also warns against venturing beyond copyediting to do excessive content checking, a temptation now that Internet resources are so available. And the book now includes a section devoted to citing digital sources. Who knew there would come a day when we would cite tweets?

Other new sections include ones on professionalism and ethics, transmittal letters, language corpora, compliance with plain language guidelines, accessibility to users with disabilities, editing material for global readerships, and editing work by authors for whom English is not a native language. The book also has been updated to reflect new editions of major style manuals. In addition, with freelance copyediting and telecommuting becoming more common, advice for freelance copyeditors or others working remotely is now incorporated.

Whereas the third edition of the handbook contained 15 exercises, the now-separate workbook has nearly 50 exercises, including at least 2 per chapter of the handbook. Those with some science-related content include Exercises 2-3 ("Editorial Markup of PDF Files"), 7-2 ("Numbers and Numerals in a Technical Text"), 9-1 ("Medical Abbreviations and Symbols"), 13-2 ("Markup of Instructional Text: A First-Aid Guide"), and 15-1 ("Editing for Bias-Free Writing"). Many of the other exercises, including those on editing tables and graphs, also can aid in developing skills useful in copyediting in science. And if you'd like practice in editing a recipe, there's an exercise for that, too! Frosted chocolate logs, anyone?

In keeping with precedent established with the original 15 exercises, the workbook has detailed answer keys, with thorough explanations and substantial commentary; the exercises and keys emphasize editorial reasoning rather than rote adherence to rules. In part because informative introductions precede the exercises, much of the workbook can be used without the handbook, especially by those with a background in copyediting. Some of the exercises could serve as models for exercises more oriented to science and its conventions. Indeed, perhaps the time has come for *Scientific Style and Format,* the Council of Science Editors manual, to provide online exercises regarding its use, as the *AMA Manual of Style* has done.

Although not specifically on science editing, *The Copyeditor's Handbook,* 4th edition, and *The Copyeditors Workbook* have much to offer those involved with copyediting in the sciences. They can serve as resources for those training new staff members in editorial offices, teaching courses in editing, or studying on their own. Basic enough for a novice, they also are robust enough to provide experienced copyeditors with new information, advice, perspectives, and resources. And the authors' enthusiasm for copyediting seems contagious. Fellow copyediting nerds, you're likely to relish these works!

In reviewing the first edition of *The Copyeditor's Handbook,* now-retired editor Walter Pagel wrote in *Science Editor*: "With this handbook, Amy Einsohn has done a big favor to beginning copyeditors and their supervisors. Experienced copyeditors will also be glad she has written this handbook." He also commended "Einsohn's friendly tone, her open-minded assessments of how to evaluate and repair language difficulties, and her descriptions of the challenge of copyediting." Schwartz and Büky have splendidly carried on Einsohn's legacy, retaining the valuable core of her work while extending this resource and bringing it into the digital age. We recommend these volumes.

References and Links

1. https://www.ucpress.edu/blog/32015/copyediting-challenge/