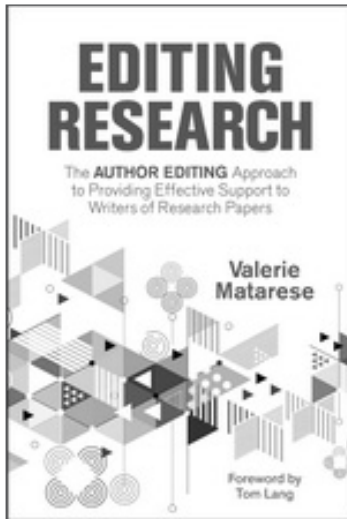


Editing Research: The Author Editing Approach to Providing Effective Support to Writers of Research Papers

Valerie Matarese, 2016, *Information Today, Inc.*



Prodigiously researched and scholarly, yet written in an accessible, readable, and matter-of-fact style, *Editing Research* answers the question, “What Does an Author’s Editor Do?” (which is taken from an article cited in the book’s helpful list of references) to define the characteristics of the profession of author editing, “a *raison d’être*, a history and development, a solid body of literature, membership associations,

and eloquent opinion leaders.” “Its practitioners are aware of the ethical...implications of their work.”

Editing is “...amending and improving’ of written documents to prepare them for their intended use...” The book describes the many levels of editing, ranging from “intensive” (substantive editing) to “superficial” (copy-editing). Although in my opinion the word “superficial” unfairly describes copy-editing, and although the meaning of the word “copy-editing” varies as much as its spellings, copy-editing “prioritizes the publisher’s concerns... The author has little to say in these matters.”

In contrast to rule-based copy-editing, substantive editing, what author’s editors usually do, involves “critical feedback,” negotiating with the author about editorial changes. The author has the final say in accepting these changes. Regrettably too often, the book laments, all that authors want is editing to “fix the English.”

An “essential defining characteristic” of an author’s editor “is author editing: we work *with* [emphasis in original] authors.” “The first goal of author editing is to help [academic] researchers publish well; i.e. in an appropriate journal that provides visibility for their work (and career kudos).” Thus author’s editors are loyal to them for their direct benefit, and not to journal editors and publishers.

But “By the nature of our work, authors’ editors [I prefer the punctuation as “author’s editors.”] are “almost incorporeal” and don’t get much respect. Why? Author’s editors have no role in the decisional process of publication. Authors decide to use the services of author’s editors, and journal editors decide on publication.

Besides, what is the impact of author’s editing? There is little empirical evidence to answer that question, the book explains.

The book asserts that author’s editors, such as “a geologist editing in genetics,” “...are a mixed bunch.” The routes to becoming an author’s editor vary. Some have studied

language, and others, science. Work settings can be down the hallway for an in-house author’s editor who is “embedded” in a university department. Or it can be as distant as another continent with an author or as a subcontractor of an editing services company.

Author’s editors may contribute to other genres, such as grant applications. But I found it concerning that the book does not explain that contributing to these other genres takes education, training, and experience separate from that of an author’s editor. For example, the book notes that preparing grant applications takes marketing savvy.

As a native New Yorker who moved to Italy, where she edits the work of authors for whom English is another language, Matarese pays considerable attention to them. They make “lexical errors” such as “false friends,” using a word such as “pathology” when “internal medicine” is intended. Their English might not be sufficiently proficient to participate in the dialogue with their author’s editor. Yet the book questions “the fallacious assumptions that anyone who spoke fluent English was a good writer.” “Scholarly writing does not necessarily come naturally even to those who are native English speakers.”

Author’s editors are cautioned against “breaching the boundary between editing and authoring” especially when an author’s editor’s revisions are at “level of content,” such as providing references. If the boundary is breached, then the editor ought to be named as an author. An editor not named “despoils the profession of author’s editing.” Although ethical principles are stated, I wish that the book provided directions for an author’s editor to follow when confronted with a situation such as learning that an author has already published the same article in a different, overlapping journal.

And “The first thing an authors’ editor does not do is cover up plagiarism.”

I found that the book’s small type interfered with its legibility and thus with its readability. The incomplete index omitted some pages in which ghostwriting and other subjects are discussed.

In completing this review, I felt exhausted from figuring out what to omit to meet space requirements, but invigorated by learning so much about author editing, a profession that I have been pursuing for so many years. But feeling invigorated surely won’t suffice for Valerie Matarese, a committed champion of author editing as a profession and as one of the profession’s eloquent opinion leaders. The book concludes with, among other things, advice for author’s editors, such as to mentor and be mentored. Author’s editors, including me, ought to heed that and the other advice.

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