

In the Bookstores

Effective Onscreen Editing: New tools for an old profession (3rd edition)

By Geoff Hart;

Diaskeuasis Publishing, 2016.

ISBN: 978-1-927972-05-2 (PDF).

28.00 USD. 827 pages.

Do you ever see someone else use an unfamiliar shortcut or by tapping a few keyboard keys achieve something that seems to take you an age? Maybe you would like to spend a little less time working at your computer? If so, this could be the book for you.

Available as printed, PDF, and eBook versions, *Effective Onscreen Editing: New tools for an old profession* is now in its third edition, which comprises 18 chapters, four appendices, and a lengthy glossary. It covers all imaginable aspects of editing, from inserting/moving/deleting text in Word documents and using Track Changes to working with other kinds of documents (such as databases and spreadsheets), using style sheets, and proofreading PDFs and online material. Importantly, there is detailed guidance for both PC and Mac users.

The book's author, long-time scientific editor Geoff Hart, uses Chapter 1 to outline his aim – to teach us “how to use the computer for things that computers do better than humans”. He then attempts to persuade those of us still editing paper copies of documents that editing electronic versions is the way forward.

Perhaps displaying some of the conservatism Hart seeks to overcome, I initially wanted to review a printed copy of the book. In the event, I reviewed the 827-page PDF and quickly came to realise that this was more enriching than using a hard copy as it allowed me to test some of the author's tips and tricks onscreen directly after reading about them. I was also able to take advantage of the clickable table of contents and index.

For the averagely skilled Word user there will be much to learn. I myself was delighted to find out about exclusion dictionaries – lists of *correctly spelled* words that you get the spellchecker to flag. For example, you might wish to flag *form* and *from*, incorrect use of which may otherwise be missed. Or *thig*, a Scottish word for *beg* which I accidentally typed while writing this review. I will endeavour to use an exclusion dictionary henceforth.

Hart muses on what authors/clients want or



expect from editors, referring to “authors who feel we're nothing more than glorified spell-checkers and grammar technicians” and “clients [who] often request proofreading of documents that really require moderate or heavy editing.” However, rather than simply bemoaning such problems – ones which I am only too familiar with (!) – he constructively advises on avoiding and resolving them.

At various points throughout the book, Hart troubleshoots anticipated problems and provides advice on working more efficiently by creating or exploiting shortcuts in Word. Further troubleshooting and a collection of useful shortcuts can be found in two of the appendices. Unless you have an encyclopaedic knowledge of shortcuts, you are bound to find something useful here.

Some chapters will be more generally or widely useful than others. Personal highlights include splendid chapters and sections on Find and Replace, Comments, navigating documents, and using macros. I can also highly recommend the author's advice on transforming AutoFormat and AutoCorrect from annoyances to assets.

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Other parts, such as the guidance on editing text received in HTML, XHTML, or other markup languages, are no doubt of more specialist interest. The book's final two chapters, which cover overcoming resistance to and implementing onscreen editing, will inevitably become increasingly redundant as onscreen editing heads for ubiquity.

Hart seems to have thought of everything, offering detailed advice on backing up and protecting your work and your Word customisations and even covering avoiding injury while working at the computer and deciding how much to charge for your editorial services. Are there any deficiencies or limitations? Not many. Cross-references to other sections in the text are not clickable and some overly basic information is included, seemingly at the request of readers of earlier versions of the book. But skipping to the information you need is one of the things this book was designed for and something which the generous yet judicious use of headings and bold text only facilitates.

The author rightly does not view this third edition of *Effective Onscreen Editing* as a finished project. He actively invites input from readers and promises updates to the web versions of the different chapters. He does not yet look beyond Word 2010 (PC) and Word 2011 (Mac), already superseded by Word 2013 and now Word 2016. Other new versions of Word will emerge, each with added, modified, or lost functionality. Major changes to functionality will hopefully be described in future editions of the book or supplementary web pages.

This might just be the most useful book I have ever reviewed. Anyone who does any kind of editing work or who wishes to use Word more efficiently should strongly consider buying it.

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

By Valerie Matarese;

Information Today, Inc. 2016.

ISBN: 978-1573875318 (paperback).

38.88 GBP. 244 pages.

Research editors are rarely visible. Lurking in the background, they suggest simple solutions to solve complex linguistic problems, clarifying text and strengthening the author's voice. They pop into the acknowledgments for a quick thank you and disappear before the references. If an editor has done their job properly, they are discreet and inconspicuous, invisible to the audience. Seldom do we think about their contribution to research, and seldom do we glimpse inside the world of academic editing. *Editing Research: The Author Editing Approach to Providing Effective Support to Writers of Research Papers*, by Valerie Matarese, is a vivid dialogue about research editors, a peek inside their culture, and a practical guide, helpful to anyone starting a career as an editor.

Editing Research commences with a prologue, a third-person narrative about a fictitious post-doctoral fellow named Francesca who is writing her first research paper. Francesca and a not-so-fictitious authors' editor, named V., collaborate to edit and publish Francesca's research. This short story is an archetype of Matarese's ideal editing technique: author editing.

Matarese divides her book into 10 chapters, each with several subsections. Shifting to an informative tone, she proceeds deeper into author editing. Laying the book's foundations in the first four chapters, Matarese chronicles the history and culture of editing. She explains the globalisation of science, the increase in output of research papers, and the expansion of research in non-anglophone countries. As hard as academic writing may be, she argues, it is harder for researchers whose first language is not English. She then explores the etymology of *publish* and *edit*, tracking the words from their inceptions to modern usage. Afterwards, Matarese walks the reader through a quagmire of nonstandard terminology. Proofreading, copyediting, language editing, substantive editing, and developmental editing all have different meanings in different places, and Matarese takes care to explain them, giving each term its own section.

Chapter 3 introduces the crux of the book.

If an editor has done their job properly, they are discreet and inconspicuous, invisible to the audience. Seldom do we think about their contribution to research, and seldom do we glimpse inside the world of academic editing.

Matarese, borrowing wisdom from Sheryl Hinkkanen, defines the authors' editor as:

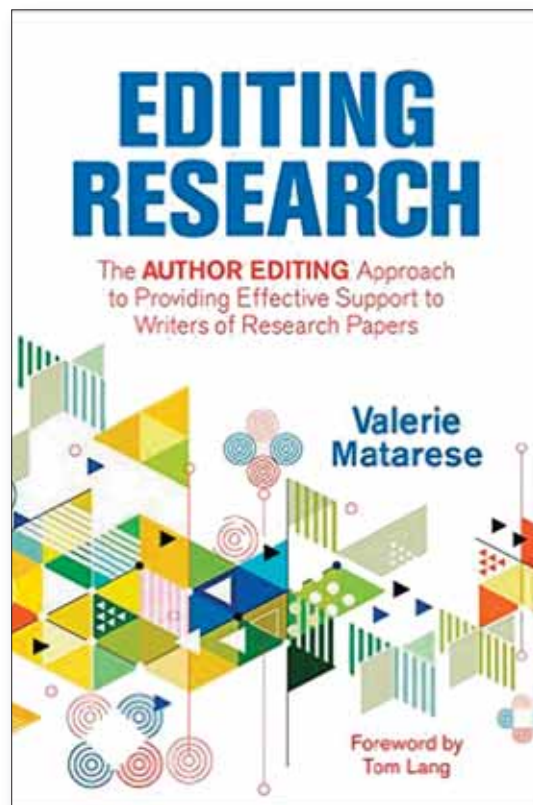
"A person who reads through a draft critically and makes any linguistic, stylistic, or contextual changes deemed necessary to ensure that the intended message is expressed logically, precisely, idiomatically, and appropriately, without cultural interference that could distort the message."

Although Valerie Matarese has extensive relevant experience, she insists that the "first book about author editing be informed by the experience and viewpoints of several highly experienced, dedicated authors' editors." This is why, in Chapter 4, she introduces several *informants*. These informants – who are freelancers, owners of editing services, and academics – bolster, contradict, or add information to Matarese's claims throughout the remainder of the book.

After laying her foundations and her keystone, Matarese moves into the everyday work of the authors' editor. She starts by following a research manuscript through the submission process, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of editing before submission, after a revision request, or after a rejection. She continues by delving deep into reference checks, plagiarism checks, pre-review (a type of pre-submission peer review), dialogue with authors, and the ethical limitations of editors.

In Chapter 7, Matarese answers the question "How do I become an authors' editor?" and provides information on basic and continuing education. Then she transitions into the setting where authors' editors are employed. Here her recruitment of informants pays dividends, allowing Matarese to present insights into working as a freelancer, working as an employee at an editing service provider, and working for an academic institution.

After a short chapter on editing document genres other than research manuscripts (such as



social media content, press releases, and dissertations), Matarese concludes the book with a passionate essay on contributions of authors' editors to research and their ongoing significance.

The book is short, about 200 pages, but its content provides weight. *Editing Research* is a history of author editing, a guide to entering the profession, an escort through a swamp of terminology, an advisor to the research editor, and – most of all – an engaging argument for authors' editors and their work. I would recommend it to anyone interested in an editing career.

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