Line Editing Guidelines

As the title suggests, a line editor is one who edits a manuscript primarily on the line rather than the word level, reading for sense and addressing other serious issues beyond the accuracy of the language. Areas which may require special attention include logic, structure, writing style, consistency, accuracy, and sensitivity.

Logic
The line editor should read the text for sense and appropriateness, confirming that the ideas follow each other logically and that the arguments are sound. A number of questions might be considered in the editing process:

- Has the author made herself clear? Are his explanations sufficient?
- Are there missing elements in the discussion?
- Does the manuscript contain redundancies?
- Are the transitions smooth?
- Are terms well defined?

Structure
Some passages may need to be reorganized in an effort to achieve clarity or further the goal of the work. In considering the way the author’s discussion is structured, the editor at times must determine that a sentence or paragraph should be moved, irrelevant material deleted, or transitional material added to improve the flow of the work.

Writing style
One of the editor’s challenges is that of improving the flow of the language while retaining the author’s style. A euphonic quality of expression may be attained through a number of methods:

- Seeking to make the writing concise by eliminating wordiness, removing redundant statements, and reducing unnecessary use of the passive voice.
- Being attentive to awkward constructions, vague generalizations, and mixed metaphors.
- Rewriting trite prose and confusing statements.

Consistency
It is important that a manuscript be presented as a coherent whole. The tone should maintain a single voice. Style should also remain consistent; for example, a piece of scholarly writing should not erratically dip into colloquial prose. The line editor should also be alert to lesser forms of inconsistency. Though they need not be addressed, issues such as irregularity in documentation style and the outline of section headings should be reported to the in-house editor for further attention.
Accuracy
Though the line editor need not be concerned with correcting little details that would be better addressed by a copy editor, serious errors should either be addressed or flagged for the in-house editor to resolve. A few examples of such errors can be mentioned:

- Discrepancies in statements of fact
- Allusions to “studies” which are not cited
- Wordings which would lead one to question the accuracy of quoted material, Bible references, and paraphrased sentences

Sensitivity
The line editor must ensure that an author’s language is not discriminatory, revising or querying material which fails to show respect for people in terms of race and ethnicity, gender, marital status, age, and economic status. Slanderous remarks should not be tolerated.

In an effort to make the text gender-inclusive, the line editor should not adopt the singular use of the pronouns “they” and “their,” but rather should use both male and female pronouns or resolve the gender-bias language in another manner. Consider this sentence, for example:

“An author with respect for language will esteem his readers as well.”

The standard way to adjust this sentence for gender inclusiveness would be to replace “his” with “his or her.” But, depending on context, other possibilities may be acceptable and more stylistically pleasing, such as the following:

“An author with respect for language will esteem readers as well.”

“An author with respect for language will esteem the reader as well.”

“Authors with respect for language will esteem their readers as well.”

Queries
When in doubt, query an author on missing or inaccurate information, awkward phrasing, or seeming illogic. Queries should be carefully worded so as not to reflect poorly upon the author’s scholarly ability, powers of interpretation, or understanding of written English.

Communication
Please maintain regular contact with the Press during the editing process. If you have trouble with electronic files, find serious unexpected problems in the text, experience schedule delays, or face other difficulties, please contact the in-house editor, Deborah Everhart, at aupress@andrews.edu or (269) 471-3435.