

copy-editing

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Yesterday I received the copy-edited manuscript of my new book (to be published Spring 2008) and it occurred to me that some of you may be interested in seeing how that part of the process works.

I mailed the completed manuscript to the publisher some time ago. They turned it over to a copy-editor. The author never meets the copy editor, and she (usually it is a woman) may be different for each book. I suppose it depends on who is available.

The copy editor goes through the manuscript meticulously, looking for typos, misspellings, questions of punctuation, and watching for continuity errors (a character has blue eyes on page 13, brown eyes on page 202?) and simple stylistic questions. The copy editor does not make any changes, but marks all these things...(questions, usually in teensy printing...in the margins. Things like: "You used the word *beautiful* twice on this page. Want to change one?") and using editing marks that indicate what punctuation should be changed. (I always use too many commas, and copy editors always indicate that many of them should be removed).

The author can, theoretically, say "No, I MEANT to use that stupid adverb. Leave it in." That's a stylistic thing and the author can make the final decision.

But formatting issues need to follow the rules, and so I open up the manuscript in my computer, set the copy-edited hard copy in front of me, and go through page by page, deleting commas, making the indicated changes. I've attached two examples here. The first is a snippet from the original manuscript, the one I sent the publisher, but now it has the copy editor's markings on it (in red). Her abbreviations mean that the underlined section should be changed to "small caps" ... and the second example is what it looks like after I have made that change. (If you click on them you can see them bigger).

Yesterday I went through 173 pages, amazed as I always am at the meticulousness with which a

copy editor works. Page by page I changed the manuscript, throwing away all those superfluous commas as I always do.

One thing the copy editor had suggested in her teensy printing was that the final chapter, instead of being Chapter 22, lent itself to being "Epilogue." I agreed with her and made that change.

Then I printed the new, finished manuscript. I burned it onto a disc. And I returned to the publisher the copy-edited original, plus the final version, plus the disc, from which they will now work. (see that comma? I should have typed "the disc from which they will now work").

Oh my, computers have made all of this so much easier!!!!

Next, because this book will have illustrations, the book designer and the editor will deal with the placement of those, and with designing a jacket.

But for now, my part of it is done.



Tags: Untagged