



American Copy Editors Society

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When copy editors from different papers gather to talk shop, some disturbing patterns emerge.

We hear about places where copy editors are so overburdened with typesetting duties that they have little or no time to edit. Places where copy editors are forbidden to talk to the writers. Places where copy editors are actively discouraged from raising questions.

Whatever the reasons for these restrictions, whether economic or procedural or simply mule-headed, they are unfortunate, even dangerous. When copy editors are given time to ply their trade and the authority to address issues, the copy gets clearer and more accurate. It is in the publications where copy editors actually edit, where they are permitted to ask the crucial question “Are we sure that we want to do this?” that there is hope of heading off fabrication, plagiarism and libel before publication.

Editing happens when the high command fosters it. If the top editors don’t support the copy desk, there is not a lot that copy editors can do. But that does not mean that they are utterly helpless.

Copy editors can push. They can raise questions. They can go into the editor’s office and make the case for more time or more staff to do better work. They can document the lapses rising from haste, the errors that get through, the articles that could have been improved with more attention. They can form alliances with other editors. Any attempt to improve the situation is better than sitting in a corner and grousing.

Those who do not speak are not heard.

— John E. McIntyre
ACES president

ABOUT US

The American Copy Editors Society, a professional organization of copy editors, is dedicated to improving the quality of journalism and the working lives of journalists.

ACES was founded in 1997 as a professional journalism organization for, by and about copy editors.

Our main purpose is to educate our members – and others in the news business – in ways of improving the standards of copy editing and increasing the value the news industry places on our craft.

While our primary focus is on newspaper copy editing, we welcome editors from other publications, as well as academic representatives and students.

Among our accomplishments, we’ve forged the spirit and community that has helped copy editors take a more visible and constructive role in their newsrooms.