



TRANSCRIPT: BONUS EPISODE
10 THINGS AN AUTHOR NEEDS TO TELL AN EDITOR

Denise Cowle: Hello and welcome to this bonus episode of The Editing Podcast! So today is September 30th, 2019, which means it's ...

Louise Harnby: Which means it's International Podcast Day! And we love a day, don't we, Denise? World Book Day, International Children's Book Day ...

DC: International Literacy Day ...

LH: National Punctuation Day ...

DC: International Grammar Day ... Anyway, in celebration of the power of podcasting, we thought we'd put together a quick bonus episode for you, particularly since we now have downloads in 40 countries.

So this one will appeal to writers and editors because it serves both parties.

LH: Yep! So we're going to talk about 10 things writers need to tell an editor when they get in touch for the first time to discuss a *project, price* and *availability*.

DC: And these are things that really help the editor work out immediately whether those initial best-fit issues are in order, or whether to refer the author to a colleague with a different skill set.

LH: And that saves time for everyone, which is always good because we're all busy. So let's dig straight in. Denise, you start.

DC: Okay, so the first thing an editor needs to know is the **word count**. That's how we create our first best guess of how long the project will take and what it will cost.

LH: Please don't give us page counts because although there's this ancient thing in some editing and publishing circles about a page being defined as 250 words, most people in the real world have never heard that little factoid! A page count really doesn't help us determine a price for you because it depends on

how many words are on that page, and how big the page is, and what the font size is, and so on.

DC: I know what you mean about that 250-words-to-a-page thing! It's so odd. I think it must be a hangover from typewriters, maybe because that's how many words could fit comfortably on a page. But with modern word-processing software, it makes no sense at all. Anyway, whatever the reason, just give us a word count. It leaves no room for confusion.

LH: You can find the word count in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen in Windows if you're using Word. Or go to the ribbon, select Review, look in the Proofing window, and click on Word Count.

DC: So next up is **file format**. Any prospective editor needs to know whether you're working in Word or some other program. Some editors will only work in Word; others work direct in content management systems, or in Google Docs, or in other Office programs.

LH: The point is that the platform can affect the time an edit will take, the complementary tools that can be used, and other issues around onboard functionality. Erin Brenner's episode on editing web content highlights some of the issues here. We'll put a link to it in the show notes.

So the third thing we need to know is the **genre or subject** of the material.

DC: This is really important. So in non-fiction, think about the degree to which a subject specialist will be important. If you're seeking editing for a paper you're submitting to a palaeontology journal, the editor needs to know that. They might be a scientific specialist and know a lot about a variety of science subjects ... except palaeontology! Or they might just hate editing palaeontology! So I specialize in business and education books. That's quite broad but there are still some subject areas I tend to avoid, like maths and science subjects.

LH: And in fiction, the same thing applies with genre. So I specialize in crime, thrillers and mysteries, and I also do horror, non-space-opera-type sci-fi, and erotica. But literary fiction and romance aren't my wheelhouse. So knowing which genre an author is working in really helps me decide whether we're a good fit.

Why don't we put a link to the bonus episode on editing erotica because we talked with Maya about subgenre specialisms there too.

DC: Good idea. Now, number 4 is what **other rounds of editing** the book has been through. That's important because it helps us understand whether what the author's asking for matches what we think would be required. So if someone asks for proofreading but the writing hasn't been edited by anyone beforehand,

I'd be wondering whether in fact copyediting might be more appropriate. It might not be, but it's a nudge for me to dig deeper.

LH: Exactly. Our very first episode covered the different levels of editing, just in case you need a recap. And this issue leads on to the fifth thing we need to know: what **type of editing** you want. Some authors know what the various stages of editing are but not every editor offers all of those services. Telling us what's required helps us work out quickly whether we're a good fit.

DC: Next up is **audience and where you're publishing**. Who are you writing for? The mass market, children, a journal, or just your family and friends? Are you trying to get a publishing contract or representation by a literary agent? These things help us work out whether the type of editing you've asked for is appropriate.

LH: So an example would be if you've written a memoir and you're looking for a proofread. There's been no structural or line work – you want a final tidy-up. Knowing that it's just for distribution to your family and friends will help an editor say yes. Whereas if you were self-publishing to the mass market via Kindle Direct Publishing, we'd likely recommend you commission other levels of editing first so that it meets publishing industry standards and engages even the most pedantic of readers.

DC: And another example would be with that journal paper we mentioned a few moments ago. Knowing that you're planning to submit to a particular periodical will tell us that we'll need to familiarize ourselves with its preferred citation and referencing style, which affect how long the edit takes.

LH: Let's talk about **time frame** now. When do you want the work completed by and is there any flexibility? It's handy to know if you're planning to publish ahead of a particular event or at a special time of the year. The thing is, a lot of editors are booked well in advance, so if we know the what-by-when of your publishing schedule, we can make quick decisions about whether we should continue the conversation with you or refer you to a colleague.

DC: That's right. So the eighth thing you can tell us is whether you've **written anything else**. If it's available online, all the better because that means we can take a look at your writing style and start to work out what we can bring to the table.

LH: One of my new crime-fiction clients did this the other day. He linked to a book he'd already self-published and I was able to see immediately that I loved what he was doing, but also how I could help him. I was even able to give him a few examples in my initial email reply, and he was really grateful because it showed him my style of editing. And so he was able to get an idea of whether *I*

was the right fit for *him*. You must get that with your business clients too, Denise.

DC: Sometimes when it's a business client's first book they may already have a well-established blog, so I can go to that to get a sense of their writing style.

And this leads on nicely to number 9. If you haven't written anything else, or it's not publicly accessible, that's fine. But in that case, let us know if you can send a **sample**. Again, we're talking about being able to evaluate writing style and work out whether we're a good fit. And in non-fiction, it also means getting an idea of what the different elements of the book are. So will there be a lot of complex figures, tables, and other call-outs that will need tagging or styling?

LH: And in fiction, editors will want to see examples of narrative *and* dialogue so we can evaluate where the strengths and weaknesses are. We've done an episode on sample edits, so we'll pop a link into the show notes for that too.

So there's one final thing that editors love to know. And we're being a bit greedy here because of the 10 things we've mentioned this is the only one that really only benefits us!

DC: That's right, it does – so if you'd be good enough to tell us **how you found us** when you get in touch, we'll be eternally grateful. It helps us run our editing businesses more efficiently. And actually, it can benefit *you* because if we discover that a particular directory is where a lot of authors are coming from, we're more likely to add useful information to that.

LH: Yes, so we can add resources there, or other useful links that'll help you on your publishing journey.

So that's it! We hope you've enjoyed this bonus episode. Thank you so much for listening to The Editing Podcast. You can rate, review and subscribe to us via Apple Podcasts, Spotify or whichever platform you prefer.

DC: And if you have any questions, get in touch with us via The Editing Podcast Facebook page. And we've put all the links we've mentioned in the show notes so you can grab everything there.

Mentioned in the show

- The Editing Podcast, Point of view: On editing erotica. With editor Maya Berger
- The Editing Podcast, S1E1: The different levels of editing

- [The Editing Podcast, S1E6: What is a sample edit?](#)
- [The Editing Podcast, S2E9: Writing and editing for the web. With Erin Brenner](#)

The links above take you to The Editing Podcast website but you can catch up with any of the episodes on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, Podchaser, or your preferred app.