

Guest Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue: Why Editing and Publishing Programs?

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Abstract This special issue of *Programmatic Perspectives* explores the emerging field of editing and publishing (E&P) within technical and professional communication, highlighting its pedagogical, theoretical, and professional dimensions. While editing has long been a core communicative practice, E&P programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels remain diverse and largely unstandardized. The issue includes four research articles, seven program showcases, and a curriculum showcase. Research examines interdisciplinary program design, freelance editorial practices, and the integration of industry engagement, highlighting challenges and opportunities in program sustainability and professional identity. Program showcases reveal curricular diversity across certificate, undergraduate, and graduate offerings, emphasizing interdisciplinarity, faculty expertise, and professionalization. A curriculum showcase illustrates innovative course-level strategies that balance institutional needs with disciplinary engagement. Collectively, these contributions demonstrate how research, programmatic innovation, and pedagogy can shape E&P as a rigorous, cohesive discipline. This issue fosters collaboration, dialogue, and shared practices, providing foundational steps toward a more unified and vibrant academic community in editing and publishing.

Keywords editing and publishing, technical and professional communication, curriculum development, professional identity, industry

Within the broad field of technical and professional communication (TPC), editing, revising, and preparing documents for publication are essential components of the communication process. While many universities offer individual courses in editing, a growing number have developed full undergraduate and graduate programs dedicated to

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the skills, practices, theories, and business of editing and publishing (E&P). As interest in these programs expands among students, instructors, and scholars, E&P is emerging as a promising area for pedagogical innovation and curricular development.

When we first began surveying E&P courses and programs, our aim was modest: to gain a general overview of how editing and publishing are taught across institutions. We assumed that most programs would converge around a shared set of curricular priorities and pedagogical goals. Instead, we encountered a fragmented landscape, one that lacked a core curriculum or even a common understanding of what an education in E&P should entail. This unexpected finding led to a deeper investigation, culminating in our first study, “In search of a core curriculum: Assessment of editing and publishing programs in higher education” (Baker et al., 2024). That study revealed not only the absence of standardization but also the absence of a shared disciplinary identity. Yet rather than viewing this lack of cohesion as a weakness, we saw it as an opportunity: a chance to cultivate a still-developing discipline through collaboration, research, and shared inquiry.

The academic literature on E&P remains limited and diffuse. As Suzan Flanagan (2019) observed in her review of technical editing scholarship, the field lacks a shared definition, a robust body of empirical research, and a consistent pedagogy. Still, interest in E&P scholarship is growing. The website editingresearch.byu.edu, for example, contains over 130 articles on editing and publishing since 2020, spanning disciplines from creative writing to linguistics. These works—ranging from theoretical explorations to empirical and pedagogical studies—demonstrate the field’s interdisciplinary potential and the need for a more unified scholarly conversation.

A central question animating this conversation is whether E&P should be understood as a distinct academic discipline. Some scholars argue that vocationally oriented fields lack the theoretical grounding of traditional disciplines (Demski, 2007), while others, like Robert T. Craig (2018), advocate for the legitimacy of practical disciplines that integrate both *phronesis* (wisdom) and *techne* (skill). E&P, situated at the intersection of theory and practice, aligns with this vision. Like other branches of TPC and business communication, it raises important questions about disciplinary identity, curricular coherence, and the role of applied knowledge in academic contexts (Carabelli, 2013; Carradini, 2020; Getchell & Lentz, 2019; Melonçon & Schreiber, 2022).

Recent scholarship has begun to treat editing not merely as a subset of writing but as a distinct process worthy of study. Research has examined how readers perceive errors (Beason, 2001; Gubala et al., 2020), how editing intersects with linguistic prescriptivism (Chapman & Rawlins, 2020), and how corpus methods can inform editorial practice

(Smith, 2023). More recently, scholars have turned their attention to the implications of AI for editorial work (Noy & Zhang, 2023; Węcel et al., 2023). These studies reflect a growing recognition that editing is not simply a mechanical or corrective function, but a complex intellectual activity that shapes meaning, clarity, and cultural discourse.

As the demand for practical editing instruction grows, so too does the need for theoretical and empirical frameworks to support it. We concluded our previous study with a call to action: to build professional relationships across programs, to share curricular aims and teaching practices, and to pursue interdisciplinary and empirical research that could begin to shape the contours of E&P education. This special issue of *Programmatic Perspectives* is a response to that call. It brings together scholars who are actively defining and refining the field, offering insights into its pedagogical, theoretical, and professional dimensions. Through these contributions, we hope to foster a more cohesive and vibrant academic community around editing and publishing—one that embraces its interdisciplinary roots while working toward a shared vision for its future.

Overview of the Issue

In this issue, we have focused on gathering articles that represent some of the current research in the discipline of editing and publishing, complemented by showcases of programs and curricula. These efforts represent early steps toward building a shared set of theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical approaches in editing and publishing. This collection of articles, which represents only a small portion of the overall field, also shows the wide variety of the research interests and teaching philosophies in this emerging discipline.

Research Articles

This special issue includes four research articles, each of which examines the place of editing and publishing in relation to the publishing industry and other communities. Holly Baker's article, "UK editing and publishing programs," draws on interviews and an in-depth analysis of program materials from editing and publishing programs in the United Kingdom to show how industry engagement is integrated seamlessly with course curriculum. These programs build professional experiences and opportunities into their curricula to improve student experience and employability while also driving cutting-edge research from both students and faculty. The tight connections to industry maintain the professional roots of editing and publishing while also strengthening the currency of academic work in those programs.

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Kristin Pickering, on the other hand, takes a different approach in “Using advocacy to reach out globally and locally,” a study of an interdisciplinary editing and publishing program at Tennessee Technological University. While the program does focus on skills and employability, it also centralizes concepts of community building. The relationships built through the interdisciplinary work of this program teach students about empathy, care, diversity, and relationships. Pickering argues that establishing these common values not only improves students’ skill levels, but also strengthens their positive identification with the field of E&P. Through the narratives created in the interdisciplinary efforts, students and faculty can increase collaborative opportunities with a growing number of disciplines.

Identity is also a key theme of Rachel Noorda’s article, “Editors as entrepreneurs,” which examines the complex professional contradictions of freelance editors. Noorda draws on interviews with working freelancers to understand how they approach the challenges of their own entrepreneurship. She argues that the lessons learned from the occupational identity of freelancers can transfer to the disciplinary challenges of editing and publishing, especially in balancing the competing demands of “academic legitimacy and vocational relevance, theoretical inquiry and practical application, disciplinary coherence and interdisciplinary openness.” Noorda’s article frames the broad challenges of E&P with the individual challenges faced by students and alumni from the programs.

Finally, in their article “Teaching technical editing today,” Kelly Scarff and Carolyn Commer address the challenges of designing programs and training faculty in E&P. Through a series of interviews with faculty, Scarff and Commer identify the key problems, including a rapidly changing landscape of the publishing industry, based on changing business practices and ever-changing technologies. They also show the importance of more standardized training, curriculum, and practices in E&P programs to make them more sustainable and nimble in responding to industry changes.

The research articles in this issue each open conversations about the place of E&P and identify challenges and opportunities for additional growth for the discipline.

Program Showcases

One of the core goals for compiling this special issue was to create an environment for greater visibility of editing and publishing programs and opportunities for connections and collaborations among E&P programs. The seven program showcases included in this issue accomplish that goal by showing the diversity of programs but also the key overlaps in theoretical and pedagogical approaches.

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The program showcases include a graduate certificate (West Chester University), a master's concentration (University of Arkansas Little Rock), an undergraduate major and minor (Brigham Young University), an undergraduate major concentration (University of Northern Colorado), an undergraduate certificate (University of Cincinnati), and focused editing courses (Miami University and California Polytechnic State University). Each showcase details the history, approach, and structure of its program and discusses the benefits to the students. While each program is unique, there are several connecting threads:

1. **Interdisciplinarity** Each E&P program draws some strength from straddling disciplinary lines, including technical and professional communication, English, creative writing, communications, linguistics, and business.
2. **Faculty expertise** The programs showcased in this issue are led by faculty with extensive expertise in balancing academic research with professional connections. Most faculty have some industry experience and are doing active research in the field.
3. **Professionalization** In keeping with the industry-connected nature of E&P, the programs include a variety of professionalization opportunities, including both on-campus and off-campus work that build editing expertise outside of the classroom.

While those connecting threads are important, the differences between the programs are also important to note. While these programs share important approaches to teaching, they do not share common textbooks or theoretical foundations. These program showcases provide important steps to connecting these programs with the larger (and even more diverse) E&P disciplinary community.

Curriculum Showcase

Erin B. Jensen adds a curriculum showcase to this special issue, "Applied learning in an editing and writing for publication course." This showcase details the development of a single editing and writing course at Midwestern State University Texas. Jensen's development of this course represents the majority of editing courses at universities, which are not part of organized E&P programs and often fulfill advanced writing or communications general education credits. Jensen shows the creativity involved in creating a course that both connects with a broader discipline and meets specific university and student needs.

Conclusion

This special issue of *Programmatic Perspectives* provides a snapshot of programs, research, and pedagogy in editing and publishing. The collection of articles shows how an editing and publishing discipline is emerging from the individual work of dedicated teachers and scholars who have been responding to community and industry needs for decades. But this special issue is only an early part of the conversation. As remarkable as these articles are, the real success of this special issue will be tested by the ongoing growth of E&P as a unified (though diversified), complex, and rigorous academic discipline.

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