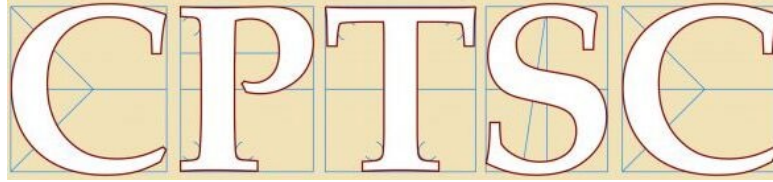


Programmatic Perspectives

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Special Issue on Editing and Publishing

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

Holly Baker

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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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UK Editing and Publishing Programs: How Industry Drives Program Administration

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Abstract Editing and publishing (E&P) programs occupy an important niche within technical and professional communication (TPC), where one of the central challenges for administrators is preparing students for careers in a rapidly evolving industry. In the United Kingdom (UK), postgraduate publishing programs have developed strong, sustained ties to the publishing sector, offering a model for balancing academic rigor with professional training. This study investigates how industry connections shape program administration through an analysis of program materials from 17 UK institutions and interviews with nine program leaders and instructors. Findings indicate that UK programs integrate professional expertise into curricula through faculty industry experience, guest lectures, live projects, and internships, while also responding to student feedback and labor market demands. Students are drawn to these programs with expectations of employability, and administrators actively manage these expectations by broadening students' awareness of diverse publishing roles. The study concludes that the industry-driven strategies employed in UK programs provide actionable insights for TPC administrators in the United States, particularly in designing student-centered, sustainable curricula that balance research, theory, and practice while maintaining strong industry engagement.

Keywords Editing and publishing programs, program administration, industry engagement, career preparation, curriculum design

Driven by government policy and cultural expectations, higher education is increasingly prioritizing programs that demonstrate practical skill development and direct pathways to employment. In 2021, *Harvard Business Review* described a “direct disconnect between education and employability in the US” (Hansen, 2021, para. 1) and argued that the education system needed to refocus on instilling career readiness in its undergraduate population. Just a year later, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that many institutions were responding to this need by overhauling curricula and

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introducing programmatic changes to include an emphasis on skills portfolios, career coaches, internships, and other high-impact learning experiences (Fischer, 2022). These changes at the university level have cascaded down to colleges and departments, where discussions about programmatic change are now driven by growing anxiety over whether faculty are adequately preparing students for careers and keeping their programs relevant in higher education (Sparks & Waits, 2011).

One of the ways universities have responded is by increased promotion of what might be termed the *applied or practical disciplines*. These disciplines instill practical knowledge and skills that are tied closely to industry practices, preparing students for entry-level jobs in specialized fields by the time they graduate. Technical and professional communication (TPC) may also be considered a practical discipline, preparing students for what Saul Carliner (2012) calls a “quasiprofessional” career path in which “individuals participate in the activities of the occupational infrastructure but without the expectation of exclusive rights to perform the work” (p. 49), as in medicine or law. Many TPC scholars have responded to calls for professionalization by addressing the gap between academic research and industry practice (Albers, 2016; St. Amant & Melonçon, 2016), inviting collaborations between industry and the academy through such things as advisory boards (Duin & Tham, 2018), and fostering relationships with industry through internships (Tovey, 2001).

A TPC degree equips students for a range of technical-communication-related roles, even though these positions are not limited to those formally trained in the field. Within TPC, technical editing has emerged as a well-recognized and growing subfield (Flanagan, 2019; Flanagan & Albers, 2019; Murphy & Sides, 2017; Schreiber, 2024), preparing students not only for jobs as editors but also for other careers where editing expertise is essential. Similarly, another practical discipline that is housed in many TPC programs is editing and publishing (E&P), which teaches practical skills such as technical editing, developmental editing, layout and design, publishing processes, and book marketing. In a recent study, Holly Baker and others (2024) described E&P as a growing discipline and gave recommendations for how faculty could prepare students for jobs in the industry, including building a core curriculum that aligns with industry needs. Baker et al. (2024) write:

Many universities have courses designed to teach students how to edit, both within technical and professional communication (TPC) programs and without. These editing and publishing (E&P) courses are often contained within English or writing departments as elective credits that provide students with practical skills for when they enter the workforce. Some universities have gone beyond single courses to

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design entire programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels that teach the skills, practices, theories, and business of editing and publishing. (p. 52)

Acknowledging the importance of developing E&P programs with strong ties to industry practices and that address labor market demands, I turned my attention to a subfield within broader E&P studies, publishing studies, which is still establishing its identity and acceptance among other scholarly disciplines (Baverstock, 2020; Murray, 2007). Nevertheless, because of its success as a practical discipline in preparing students for jobs in the publishing industry, I wanted to learn more about the strategies and practices in place in postgraduate publishing programs. In the United Kingdom (UK), particularly, postgraduate publishing programs have developed strong, sustained ties to the publishing sector, offering a model for balancing academic rigor with professional training (Baverstock, 2020). Like both E&P programs in the US, UK publishing programs are relatively new and have the dual challenges of being acknowledged as a legitimate academic discipline and a practical discipline that prepares students for jobs in industry. Because of its success in addressing both of these challenges, UK publishing programs, especially at the graduate level, serve as a useful subject for analysis.

In pursuit of building sustainable and resilient E&P programs here in the US, my objective in studying E&P programs is to answer three broad questions:

1. What common learning objectives do UK E&P programs consider when designing editing or publishing courses?
2. What is the relationship between UK E&P programs and the UK publishing industry, and how does that relationship impact curricular offerings and course design?
3. How do UK E&P programs recruit students, why do students choose to enroll in UK E&P programs, and what are students' career expectations?

This study is not designed as a comparative study between UK and US schools, but by assessing the history, makeup, design, and objectives of E&P programs in the UK, E&P researchers and program administrators in the US may be able to gain insights into implementing, sustaining, and growing E&P programs here at home through integrating industry-informed coursework into the curriculum.

Literature Review

The Importance of the Practical Disciplines

As institutions continue to push for more programmatic career preparation for students at all levels, and as programs seek to justify their place in the academy, the importance of integrating practical disciplines alongside traditional education becomes more apparent. Practical disciplines distinguish themselves from the traditional academic disciplines in their emphasis on applying knowledge and skills to real-world situations, often involving a combination of theoretical grounding and hands-on experience, the latter of which translates especially well to the career readiness. Practical disciplines have long been part of the academy and have included such disciplines as engineering, medicine, and computer science, but it would be reductive to say that practical disciplines are simply *practical* in the utilitarian sense of the word. Rather, as Robert T. Craig (2018) explained, “a practical discipline cultivates critical, creative, and well-informed deliberation on normative and technical aspects of practical conduct; it cultivates phronesis (practical wisdom) as well as *techne* (productive skill) in a culture’s communicative praxis” (p. 289).

Craig’s (2018) conception of a practical discipline is an attractive model for TPC and especially E&P for several reasons. Arguing for his own discipline, communications—which intersects with, TPC—Craig (2018) details that the aim of any practical discipline is to unify the fragmented parts of the praxis under an “intellectually coherent” field of study that is “useful to society” (p. 290). As Baker et al. (2024) noted, editing and publishing research and courses are found in a variety of disciplinary homes, from English to communications to journalism to linguistics and elsewhere, hampering the formation of a central disciplinary identity. Reimagining itself within the practical discipline framework may pull together its disparate parts into a cohesive whole from which an “intellectually coherent” identity might emerge. Craig (2018) extrapolated the value of the practical disciplines even further, however, saying, “One reason ... to embrace an ideal of practical discipline is to leverage the field’s sociocultural relevance as a source of disciplinary authority” (p. 293), thereby imbuing the discipline with identity, credibility, and importance beyond the academy and into industry and broader society, where it has value all its own.

This notion of engaging meaningfully with industry and society is one of the reasons that practical disciplines are particularly attractive to administrators, students, employers, and other stakeholders. Jennifer Veltsos and others (2022), who named rhetoric a “practical art” (p. 212), argued for the importance of a prosocial, “action-oriented” (p. 203) discipline that connects research and teaching in applied rhetoric to practical applications within the

community. This meaningful interaction with industry is the goal of the practical disciplines: to extend knowledge and skillset beyond the academy and into the communities where we live and work and to help our societies function and advance. TPC, in particular, is well situated as a practical discipline, as it brings together theory and practice with an eye toward preparing students for professional practice in the community. Within TPC as a discipline, as Carliner (2012) has observed, “technical communicators have made significant strides in establishing the infrastructure of the profession” (p. 50) through such programmatic initiatives as professional associations, publications, and certification programs, and Shyam Pandey (2025) highlighted how TPC students prepare to meet employer needs through the research and portfolio work they produce during their coursework. In addition, professional associations that include industry and academic participants—such as IEEE Professional Communication Society, the National Communication Association (NCA), the American Communication Association (ACA), and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC)—provide space to connect disparate applied disciplines like TPC, communication studies, journalism and others. As institutions more fully embrace the practical disciplines as a means of preparing graduates for the workforce, TPC and similar disciplines can serve as models of how best to achieve that goal.

The Growth of Editing and Publishing Programs as a Practical Discipline

E&P research spans a remarkably broad range of disciplines, from communication studies and technical writing to media production and digital humanities, a diversity that Baker et al. (2024) argued demands a unifying core identity to connect otherwise disparate strands of scholarship. Carliner’s (2012) theories of occupations suggest that E&P, as an “aspiring occupation” (p. 49) already qualifies as a discipline in its own right, one with its own emerging body of knowledge, practices, and professional pathways, which can best be realized in programs dedicated to the subject. Programmatic building, however, requires the combination of qualified instructors and grounding in research, which currently is not centralized to one discipline (Baker et al., 2024).

Recent scholarship underscores both the theoretical and practical breadth of E&P as a discipline: From the field of publishing studies, Susan L. Greenberg (2018) integrates the often-separated domains of editing theory and practice; from technical editing, Sam Clem and Ryan Creek (2022) foregrounded the urgent need for inclusivity in editorial work; Jo Mackiewicz and others (2024) studied the practice of editors’ use of style guides; and Suzan Flanagan (2019) offered a critical synthesis of existing research in technical editing,

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identifying both established foundations and underexplored areas. Contemporary technological developments are expanding this scope further, with Rachel Baron (2024), Jenn Mallette (2024), and Renée Otmar et al. (2025) exploring the implications of artificial intelligence for editorial processes. Meanwhile, mass media historian Ross F. Collins (2013) offered a comprehensive overview of editorial roles, production stages, and genre- and medium-specific practices across both print and digital platforms. Together, these contributions reveal a field simultaneously consolidating its disciplinary identity and diversifying through new perspectives, technologies, and professional imperatives and invite the development of programs with an E&P concentration.

In TPC and other writing programs, much work has been done on building and sustaining a program. Susan H. McLeod's *Writing Program Administration* (2007) discussed the history of writing program administration and the development of composition as a field of study, and Meredith Johnson and others' *Lean Technical Communication* (2018) presented lean-program strategies for sustainable, resilient programs. Within TPC programs, E&P curricula have largely been practical, although more recently, scholars have been trying to show that its practicality can be paired with theory and stand as its own discipline, although intersecting with other established disciplines. As E&P program administrators, scholars, and instructors continue to build the discipline and work toward a sustainable future within the academy, they can look to and learn from another burgeoning discipline: publishing studies.

The Practical Discipline of Publishing Studies

Publishing Studies Within E&P In their paper "In search of a core curriculum: Assessment of editing and publishing programs in higher education," Baker et al. (2024) suggested that E&P programs ought to include common curricula in editing, publishing, writing and literature, design and technology, and industry engagement. According to this assessment, publishing studies itself is considered a subfield of E&P and, as a practical discipline, is the primary interest of this paper.

Publishing studies have been around since the mid-twentieth century, which saw the formation of the first vocational courses and publishing programs in higher education as a way to answer the publishing industry need for well-trained professionals with an expected set of competencies (Augustyn, 2022; Maxwell, 2014). Nevertheless, its acceptance as an academic discipline was not immediate, as it was seen to lack academic rigor or a grounding theoretical framework. In fact, most courses and programs were found in

technical schools and so were considered primarily vocational—not academic—areas of study.

Those advocating for publishing studies as a discipline, however, do not view it as one or the other. Researcher Phillip Kalantzis-Cope (2020) reasoned that publishing studies is equally concerned with conceptual frameworks as with practice: “Publishing has specific principles and practices ... We must counter the claim that Publishing Studies has a ‘lack of theoretical and methodological rigor’ as a consequence of its emphasis on the ‘vocational wing of publishing studies’” (Murray, 2007, p. 3, as cited in Kalantzis-Cope, 2020, p. iv). It is this combination of the theoretical and the practical, in fact, that gives publishing studies its strength, one that Alison Baverstock (2020) believes can serve as an example to other more traditional disciplines. In fact, she argued, the nature of publishing studies’ interdisciplinarity places it in a position of strength in that it can draw from a multitude of methodological approaches to conducting research, thereby “providing a broader approach to education than the traditionally narrow focus of academic studies” (p. 3).

Publishing Studies and Its Relationship with Industry Achieving legitimacy as a scholarly discipline within the academy has by and large been successful for publishing studies (giving hope to E&P studies seeking to follow that pathway), but publishing studies has by no means sacrificed its practical side to do so. Rather, it offers governments exactly what they demand from higher education: industry-informed curricula, job-ready skills, and employable graduates.

The connection between publishing studies and the publishing industry is symbiotic, leading some scholars and practitioners to speculate on whether there is essentially a pipeline from one to the other. In the research article “What comes first? Publishing business or publishing studies?” Josipa Selthofer (2015) asked the question, “Can modern publishing studies produce a modern publisher? Or is it the other way around?” (p. 125). Through a comparison study of 36 publishing programs’ course descriptions, Selthofer concluded that students’ competencies in publishing were a byproduct of effective curricula, particularly because those teaching the courses were themselves products of the publishing industry. Many of those who teach publishing in universities are or once were practitioners themselves, providing students with otherwise inaccessible insider knowledge and ongoing industry connections.

Another aspect of “effective curricula” includes “the involvement of [the] publishing industry into publishing courses” (Selthofer, 2015, p. 134), particularly through such

hands-on work as internships. The importance of the connection between coursework and internships is also underscored in the TPC literature by Tiffany Bourelle (2014), who argued that internships are a way to develop professionalism in a particular TPC industry; and Jenny Bay (2020), who adds that internships also proffer the value of developing “soft skills” consisting of “communication, collaboration, ethics, work ethic, [and] critical thinking skills” (p. 13). In publishing studies, internships provide students with experience in specialized areas of the industry, from EPUB production to social media marketing (Hargrave, 2022; Maxwell, 2014).

Indeed, to give students the hands-on, practical experience that replicates real-world work environments in the publishing industry, many publishing programs have created in-studio or on-site press experiences. At the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, master’s students in writing and publishing are required to intern at the Bowen Street Press in what Tracy O’Shaughnessy and others (2019) describe as “learning-by-interning” (p. 43). An internship, like this one, brings together the hard skills of the craft with the soft skills required of industry professionals: “For every hard skill—such as copy-editing, proofreading, laying out pages or seeking copyright permissions—there is an equally important soft skill that future producers need to master: from basic professional communication to diplomacy, persuasiveness, resourcefulness and time management” (O’Shaughnessy et al., 2019, p. 44). Nevertheless, the assumption that industry-related experiences provide administrators and instructors with models and practices to adopt into their programs (Schreiber 2024; 2025) is belied by the fact that such models are not always successfully incorporated into curriculum, and models developed by academics on emerging practices like accessibility have not necessarily been developed in industry. This disconnect demonstrates the need for stronger communication and collaboration between the academy and industry.

The Demand for More Programs

As publishing studies continues to grow as a discipline and enrich E&P studies generally, the demand for such programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels is increasing (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2014; Maxwell, 2014). Editing and publishing programs both work hard to prepare their students for the workplace (Hargrave, 2022), and the data shows that “postgraduates are highly employable” (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2014), with an average of 85% employed full-time within six months of graduation. More studies are being conducted that emphasize the growing need for practical editing skills in the labor market (Canty & Watkinson, 2012), and E&P programs are uniquely positioned to prepare students for such labor market demands. As state governments and university administrators push

harder for practical disciplines and programs that prepare students for the demands of the labor market (Tillery & Nagelhout, 2016), publishing studies can point to its track record as meeting the needs and expectations of students, governments, and employers alike.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to learn about the relationship between publishing programs (as a subfield of broader E&P studies) and the publishing industry through interviews with relevant program administrators. In this section, I describe the methods of my study, which was submitted to my university's Institutional Review Board in the spring of 2025 and subsequently was determined to be exempt (Brigham Young University, IRB Number IRB2025-130).

To more fully understand the relationship between diverse E&P programs and the extensive E&P industry, I conducted a study in which I collected information from programs at 17 UK institutions hosting master's degrees (or equivalent qualifications) in E&P or closely related E&P disciplines (refer to Table 1), including program descriptions on public-facing websites and other promotional materials. I chose post-graduate programs as sites of explicit preparation to enter the publishing industry workforce as my research focus, and because they parallel US post-graduate programs in publishing. Nevertheless, the insights I was seeking to gain with respect to career preparation can be applicable at the undergraduate level as well. To attain deeper insights into my query, I also interviewed nine key players in programmatic administration and course instruction employed at nine of the identified institutions, which provided the primary data for this research.

Program Identification and Recruitment

Because E&P programs are found at various levels of education (undergraduate, master's, and doctoral) and yield various qualifications (certifications, tracks, minors, majors, and post-graduate degrees), I found it necessary to place parameters on the subject of my inquiry for a study this size. Therefore, I limited my focus to the publishing side of E&P programs as a discipline with well-established links to industry, and to keep the scope narrow, I restricted the study to post-graduate programs. I also restricted my research geographically to the UK, seeking an international perspective to expand our knowledge of the potential of our discipline. While there are a growing number of E&P programs being established or expanded throughout the US (Baker et al., 2024), E&P programs in the UK have a lot to teach us about growing an E&P program designed to prepare students for the dynamic, challenging, and ever-changing publishing industry. In the UK, ties between publishing programs and the publishing industry—which is more concentrated than the

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industry in the US—are strong. Although the history of publishing in the UK is longer than that in the US, publishing studies is in the same position as E&P in seeking to establish a coherent disciplinary identity through research and programmatic administration (Baverstock, 2020).

Relevant master’s programs in publishing were identified through previous research assessing E&P programs throughout the English-speaking world (refer to Baker et al., 2024). Key players in administration in each program, including course leaders and instructors, were identified through web searches of faculty pages. I reached out to multiple individuals at each institution, provided an overview of my study, and invited contacts to participate in an interview. After receiving multiple responses, I confirmed in-person interviews with nine individuals at nine different institutions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Postgraduate-Level Publishing Programs in the UK

Institution	Program Type	Interview
Anglia Ruskin University	MA in Publishing	No
Bath Spa University	MA in Children’s Publishing	No
Bournemouth University	MA in Creative Writing and Publishing	No
City St George’s University of London	MA in Publishing	No
Edinburgh Napier University	MSc in Publishing	Yes
Kingston University	MA in Publishing	Yes
London School of Publishing	CPD* in Copyediting	Yes
Manchester Metropolitan University	MA in Publishing	No
Northumbria University	MA in Publishing	No
Oxford Brookes University	MA in Publishing Media	Yes
University of the Arts London	MA in Publishing	Yes
University of Central Lancashire	MA in Publishing	Yes
University College London	MA in Publishing	Yes
University of Derby	MA in Publishing	No
University of Exeter	MA in Publishing	No
University of Reading	MA in Communication Design	Yes
University of Stirling	MLitt in Publishing	Yes

*CPD: *Certificate of professional development*

Interviews

The primary method of data collection for this study was the semi-structured interview (SSI), which allows for follow-up questions and more open dialog, providing participants more freedom to answer questions reflecting their own experiences and opinions (Adams, 2015). Interviews have been used in previous studies to assess industry needs by

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professionals directly engaged in the work, specifically in academic and professional publishing in the UK (Canty & Watkinson, 2012; Rosselot-Merritt, 2020). Before contacting potential participants, I had prepared 15 open-ended questions (refer to Appendix A) to address my research questions. Interviews were designed to last about an hour, as recommended by Adams (2015), “to minimize fatigue for both interviewer and respondent” (p. 493). I also chose to do in-person interviews, rather than remote interviews via Zoom or over email, as a way to build rapport (Irvine et al., 2013) and because some participants invited me to visit some of the studio, lab, and workspaces students used on campus.

The 15 interview questions were initially designed to address my research questions:

1. What common learning objectives do UK E&P programs consider when designing editing or publishing courses?
 - Interview questions 1–5 (RQ 1) were designed to understand the history, structure, and evolution of a particular program, as well as its objectives, goals, and intended outcomes.
2. What is the relationship between UK E&P programs and the UK publishing industry, and how does that relationship impact curricular offerings and course design?
 - Questions 6–10 (RQ 2) were specifically geared to answer questions about the impact of the E&P industry on hiring, program and curriculum development, and student exposure to industry practices.
3. How do UK E&P programs recruit students, why do students choose to enroll in UK E&P programs, and what are students’ career expectations?
 - Questions 11–15 (RQ 3) were aimed at understanding recruitment strategies, qualifications for admittance to the program, student expectations with respect to the program, and future career prospects.

However, I did adapt the questions slightly for each interview depending on the specifics of the program and the role of the participant. With permission from each participant, interviews were recorded on an app called Voice Record and subsequently saved as MP4 files to a secure Box folder. These files were then uploaded to Otter.ai to render transcriptions, which were later cleaned up and presented to participants for verification of the authenticity and accuracy of their words. Participants have been anonymized but are associated with their respective programs (refer to Table 2).

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Because this is a study of programs and not program leaders and is considered exempt from regulatory requirements (Doksum & Jarboe, 2021), I did not collect personal demographic information on each participant (e.g., age, ethnicity, marital status), as this was considered irrelevant. Relevant demographic information (e.g., educational background, employments, etc.) was publicly available online or came up during the interview, yielding the following: Participants each worked in postgraduate-level E&P programs, were educated in the UK, had prior and/or ongoing industry experience, maintained connections to professionals in the industry, and held various positions within their programs, including lecturer, senior lecturer, course leader, associate trainer, associate professor, and professor¹ (refer to Table 2).

Table 2. List of Interview Participants from E&P Programs in the UK

Participant	Job Title	Program Type	Institution	Industry Experience
A	Professor	MA in Publishing	Kingston University	Yes
B	Associate professor	MA in Publishing	University College London	Yes
C	Associate professor	MSc in Publishing	Edinburgh Napier University	Yes
D	Course leader and senior lecturer	MA in Publishing	University of Central Lancashire	Yes
E	Lecturer	MLitt in Publishing	University of Stirling	Yes
F	Course leader and senior lecturer	MA in Publishing	University of the Arts London	Yes
G	Senior lecturer	MA in Publishing Media	Oxford Brookes University	Yes
H	Professor	MA in Communication Design	University of Reading	Yes
I	Associate trainer	CPD* Certification in Copyediting	London School of Publishing	Yes

*CPD: Certificate of professional development

Analyzing the Data

Reflective Memos All interviews took place between June 16, 2025, and July 10, 2025. Interviews lasted an average of 67 minutes and yielded over 600 minutes' worth of transcribed text. After completing each interview, I wrote a reflective memo to capture my

¹ Academic rankings in the UK versus the US are not perfectly equivalent; a lecturer (UK) is roughly equivalent to an assistant professor (US). For further distinctions and descriptions, refer to "Academic positions," n.d.

initial thoughts, summarize the discussion, reflect on my research questions and how they correlated with participant responses, and begin initial assessment work. Melanie Birks and others (2008) described memoing as an effective analytical tool that can be used at any stage of research, citing its benefits: “Data exploration is enhanced, continuity of conception and contemplation is enabled and communication is facilitated through the use of memoing” (p. 68). Memos are also useful in maintaining momentum during gaps in the research process (p. 71). Although initially written as a form of freewriting, reflection, and making connections among interviews, the memos proved a useful tool in launching the second phase of my analysis: coding for themes.

Coding One of the central purposes of my study was to understand how academic programs (particularly E&P programs) can better strategize to prepare students for careers through heightened awareness of and connection to industry. To that end, I completed two phases of coding the transcripts and program websites. The first phase was to code broadly, looking for content that answered one of my three research questions and coding them accordingly: RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. Coding allows for overlap in these categories, but largely these were three distinct codes: “Publishing Curriculum,” “Industry Influence,” and “Student Experience.”

In the second phase, I used descriptive coding, as described by Johnny Saldaña (2021) to code for topics. Examples of initial codes included “curriculum” and “student feedback” (RQ1); “visiting industry professional” and “internship” (RQ2); and “diversity” and “employability” (RQ3). I used QDA Miner Lite to code the transcripts and used the “retrieve segments” feature to examine all the text tagged with a specific code. I was then prepared to analyze the coded text for themes and insights into the relationship among UK E&P programs, industry, and student preparedness for future careers.

Summation of Interviews: How Industry Drives Program Administration

Interviews with key players from nine UK E&P programs and online promotional materials provided a wealth of information, more than can be fully discussed in one paper. I restrict my focus, therefore, to ways in which master’s level publishing programs in the UK utilize their connections with industry with respect to designing courses (called *modules*) and preparing students for future careers. As observed in the online promotions materials of the 17 institutions hosting master’s degrees in E&P, these programs aim to attract students by appealing to their aspirations to work in the publishing industry. To that end, three keywords are used frequently in all programs’ promotional materials: *industry*,

practical or *skill*, and *career*. Sample statements pulled from online promotional sites can be found in Appendix B. The implicit promise contained in these statements and the websites generally is that students enrolled in master's publishing programs will be taught by industry professionals, will develop the practical skill needed by industry, and will ultimately land jobs in the industry. The question, then, is how program administrators make good on that implicit promise through curricular strategies.

In this section, I present key talking points in the three key areas addressed by my interview questions (Curriculum, Industry Influence, and Student Experience) and subsequent principles and approaches identified through coding. I then extrapolate strategies that TPC administrators and instructors might apply to their own TPC programs, particularly with respect to an industry-driven approach to the curriculum.

Publishing Curriculum

In this section, I present three areas that interviewees highlighted as important to their curriculum, including balancing the academic and practical sides of the discipline (*disciplinary focus*), the practical, hands-on work students are expected to produce (*student work*), and reactions from students that have impacted the program (*student feedback*). These three areas of interest were extrapolated from the following codes during the second pass of coding: *academic discipline*, *curriculum*, *history of the program*, *practical discipline*, *student feedback*, *student research*, *student work*, and *teamwork*.

Disciplinary Focus The origin of any given publishing program has, in many ways, impacted the tensions between the academic and practical sides of the discipline. Participant E explained that the many polytechnics and trade-based schools were unilaterally converted to universities in 1992, creating a distinction between pre-'92 and post-'92 universities, with pre-'92 universities seen as more academic while post-'92 were regarded as more vocational (refer also to Scott, 2012). Many publishing programs in the UK today are born out of the polytechnic tradition and still emphasize those practical-skills and industry-training objectives. Examples of programs coming out of this polytechnic tradition include Oxford Brookes and Edinburgh Napier, among others.

Regardless of origins, the push toward establishing publishing programs firmly in the academic tradition is prevalent in many staff and curricula. Participant A, a pioneer in the field of publishing studies, asserted that "publishing studies is ... a blend of academic thinking and practical professional practice at the highest level," while Participant B stressed the importance of academic work in publishing: "We're very concerned with developing, at a disciplinary level, publishing studies here." One way of achieving that

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disciplinary identity, as Participant H suggested, is through reading what is going on in other discipline like business, linguistics, or literature: “That kind of interdisciplinarity is at the heart of what is interesting about the discipline.”

The most striking element of the academic-or-practical-discipline debate is that none of the staff I spoke with saw it as an either-or question. Participant C, for one, noted how the practical and academic worked in tandem, saying, “The underlying principle of our program is not only industry focused, but also industry focused with a really clear research underpinning.” Providing an example for his coursework, Participant E demonstrated how one approach did not exist independent from the other: “[Students’] knowledge of the industry needs to feed into the [academic] poster, and their knowledge of the theoretical background actually needs to feed into the [practical] portfolio.” At the heart of it, he said, the programs strives to “find the balance between ... publishing as an academic subject and publishing as training.” Balance, as stated by multiple participants, was the primary consideration in developing course modules for master’s students.

Student Work When it comes to student projects and assessments, one word came up repeatedly with respect to assignment creation: *authentic*. “We try to make as many assignments as possible broadly authentic, so that students are doing what they will be doing in the workplace” (Participant E). Many participants spoke of replicating publishing production workflows to capture industry practices in a controlled environment. Participant F described putting students in teams of five to produce student publications (e.g., magazines, books of poetry, which Participant F shared with me during my visit to demonstrate the level of quality and professionalism students were capable of producing) “where they’re deciding who’s going to be the designer, who’s going to be the commissioning editor,” and so forth, reflective of publishing roles in industry that help students develop specialized skills. In a similar collaborative project, Participant D explained how students working on a book would need to “do all the editorial, the typesetting, and all the skills that you would need to go into the industry,” leaving the course with “something tangible” to take to job interviews.

Not only were some assignments designed to mimic an authentic publishing environment, but some interviewees described industry connections that enabled students to work on “live” projects, adding irreplaceable value to students’ vocational experience extending beyond the classroom and into the real world. Participant A described a routine practice of securing assignments from industry as follows:

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I would always get a live project from a publisher so that the students were working on something which had a trajectory into the future, and often, we could then tie that into an event where the author or the publisher would come and speak. I would always submit the best work to the publisher and ask for feedback, which of course, they could then say on their CV that they'd had ideas that had been adopted by, or had influenced, the publisher.

Other projects mentioned during the interviews included the editing of practice sentences (Participant I), value chain reports and competitors' analysis (Participant E), books and ebooks (Participant A) and magazines (Participant C; Participant F), cover designs and layout (Participant B), and typography design (Participant H), giving students practice doing the kind of work that would prepare them for jobs in industry, though not at the expense of research. As stated before, and as many interviewers commented, the two go hand in hand: "Every practical assignment requires research, doesn't it?" (Participant A).

Student Feedback As program administrators design their programs to align with industry practices, they also respond to student feedback when making changes, and in many cases, it's the students' interests and needs that take precedence. As Participant D said, "I know my students, I know the students that come on to this course, and that really takes priority." She continued: "I lean on the student voice." Indeed, centralizing students in curricular decisions creates for more appealing and preparatory programs. Participant H, speaking to the regularity of seeking student feedback, especially in the immediate aftermath of a project or workshop, said, "We have very frequent contact with the students. It's very easy to have these conversations about what works or doesn't work." Another student resource that one of the interviewers utilizes is the pool of former students: "I just mentioned our alumni. We have a huge pool of resources when it comes to saying, 'How did you find it? What did you find that you needed to learn more of?' And then we could adapt to that" (Participant C).

Among some of the examples of what students request from their programs include specific assignment types and clearer explanations for why they were assigned certain projects. Participant G explained that "students wanted more live stuff to work on in marketing ... more real examples of marketing campaigns.... And we can do that. That's something you could action really quickly." Clearly, students see a lot of value in working on live projects, the kind that industry is currently undertaking, adding legitimacy to their education. Additionally, Participant E shared an example of receiving feedback from multiple students that "suggested that they didn't really understand how all of [the course modules] fitted together." The faculty understood that students tended to see the modules

as “siloes” and so addressed the concern by explicitly describing the workflow connecting marketing, editorial, production, rights, and translation modules. Listening to student voices helped interviewees strengthen the curricula of their respective programs, even though Participant A cautions that care should be taken to respond to feedback in an appropriate manner.

Industry Influence

Faculty Industry Connections A commonality across all interview participants and their colleagues (as stated during interviews) is that nearly all department staff (including instructors at every level) has a professional background in the industry, although to varying degrees with respect to years working and jobs performed, from book sellers to editors to marketers to designers and much, much more. Speaking of his own program’s faculty, Participant E, said, “We’ve all on the course got publishing experience to varying degrees.” Participant A connected that experience to the value of the program, saying, “The three staff members are all on contracts, and we’re all publishers by background. That’s always been a key part of the course.” In fact, during my interviews, I asked participants whether professional backgrounds in the publishing industry was a requirement for hiring, and Participant F responded, “It is required for the full-time staff, or the part-time staff. If you’re going to be on staff, well, you need some sort of experience.”

Many of the faculty do not just have professional backgrounds in the publishing industry; they are still active participants. Speaking of a colleague, Participant A said, “She still manages freelance projects every summer,” and Participant D described the ongoing work of establishing and running—with a colleague—a small publishing house where students can work on live projects, drawing on her “own industry experience” when instructing students. Keeping current with industry practices is important to the running of the program, Participant D said, and that requires some degree of involvement: “Just attending industry conferences and staying informed is incredibly important ... I need [students] to understand how to be professionals in the workplace.”

Student Exposure to Industry One of the ways that students become familiar with industry trends and practices is through contact with it, a promise made by every UK E&P program (refer to Appendix B, especially keyword *industry*). Participants detailed many ways that they expose students to the industry, though two strategies were particularly prominent: visiting guest speakers from the industry and industry events.

Participant D explained the value of visiting industry professionals, saying that “when they get somebody from industry ... the message lands with much more impact.” In addition,

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Participant B described the benefit to the student experience: “Certainly the students regard [visiting industry professionals] as a very important fact. They like to see guests engaging with their courses ... It gives them insight into the world they’re working in.” Visiting professionals also help the faculty address the breadth of the publishing industry: “We have guest lecturers coming in all the time from industry ... making sure we’re covering a lot of the different sectors and different functions” (Participant F).

While all participants agreed that the visiting industry professionals was of great value to student education, how they involved those guests differs widely across programs. For example, Participant B explained that while some visitors offer a single lecture, others “deliver entire modules.” Participant C, speaking of the classroom environment, said, “We have guest speakers, we have master classes, we have industry professionals come in and critique briefs,” which demonstrates very direct involvement between the professional and the student. Participant E described a visitor speaker program that he runs every year, and how he has started a podcast: “I would interview the person and do a sort of 20- or 30-minute podcast, and then they would join us online for an hour-long Q&A.”

To find visitors from industry, faculty use their connections, either from their own professional backgrounds, from the networks they have evolved during their academic careers, or even by tapping into an established advisory board made of publishing professionals, as Participant A created at their university, to “reflect the industry as a whole.” One example of taking advantage of personal connections from industry came from Participant G:

One of my friends is the global marketing officer for a large coffee company, which their focus is getting homeless people off the street. ... He just likes to help. So he comes in and does a guest lecture. He helps me teach the undergrad class. Comes in from London every week, just because he likes to.

Finally, publishing faculty facilitate student exposure to the industry by encouraging them to participate in industry-related events, including, for example, the London Book Fair, the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Society of Young Publishers Conference, and others. These are places where students can meet publishing professionals from a variety of sectors, including editorial, marketing, design, translation, sales, and so forth. There, they can make connections and begin to form networks of their own.

Internships and Placements One critical way in which students can engage directly with the publishing industry is through internships and placements, two terms often used interchangeably, although Participant B argued that “the terms *work*

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experience, placement, shadowing, [and] internship have often become slightly interchangeable in everyday speech [when], in fact, they mean very specifically different things, and they ought to be certain things.” From what I observed during the course of my interviews, the term *placement* was preferred and generally referred to a short period of work, often a total of two weeks (or ten days, not necessarily concurrently), sometimes longer, in an industry environment. Largely, these experiences are unpaid work, which is one of the reasons that faculty work to keep them short: “If it’s unpaid, then it shouldn’t be more than a couple of weeks” (Participant B).

In some cases, placements were built into the program as requisite or elective. Participant E, for instance, spoke about an elective module involving internships: “We have a module that’s based around internships, so it’s called Publishing in the Workplace, and you can only do that if you’ve arranged an internship.” Participant C spoke about another program utilizing the module format: “We organize placements for students ... Every year, students get placements. Some of them get two. Oftentimes, some get three. You know, it just depends on how proactive they are.” Participant C also stressed that placements are required because they “replicate the real world” and give students insights into the industry roles they may or may not want to pursue after graduation.

In the case of placement modules built into the curricula, students earn university credits in lieu of pay. Most placements and internships, however, are unpaid, and for this reason, some interview participants explained, internships were discouraged. In fact, two participants spoke at length about negative and exploitative experiences past students had had in unpaid positions:

On occasion those undertaking an industry placement don’t get a particularly good experience. I hosted one such individual through the Spare Room project, and she’d been packaging up beautiful books beautifully to send out to reviewers, but nobody had explained to her *why* she was doing that. ... I was constantly explaining to her why and how things worked. My thinking was that, if they were getting free labor to do this, they ought to have been a bit more supportive of the experience.

(Participant A)

Often, some of the places where the experiences were taking place, they’d ask, “Please stay on for a little while, a little bit longer.” And this had extended into multiple months and of unpaid work. ... We’d get approached by the student at the end of the summer, saying, “I just want to check with you, I’m still doing so and so for X, and they’ve suggested, maybe there’ll be a job coming up in the next year or

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something. Should I still do this?” And I’m learning about this and going, “Okay, I need to sit and have a word with that employer.” (Participant B)

To maintain fairness and opportunities for all students, some programs have developed strategies to manage student industry work experience in-house. Participant H said, “We have a scheme where we bring lots of clients in. It’s been running for a few decades. Instead of sending students to placements and things like that, where we don’t know what they do, we have a very good network of clients that come in.” Participant D described the “student-led publishing house” that has become its own commercial entity, providing all master’s students with the opportunity to work for a publishing house prior to graduation. For Participant I, whose students are often already in the publishing industry but are seeking further credentials, she works as an advisor to them on live projects for freelance or in-house clients. In all cases, the internship/placement experience is supplanted by internal programmatic structures the faculty can facilitate and control without sacrificing the authenticity of an industry experience, preparing students with the skills and expertise they will need upon entering the workforce.

Student Experience

In this section, I present more insights into how UK E&P programs sustain their student populations through recruitment efforts (*Recruitment*) and why students choose to enroll and what they expect out of their master’s program, as perceived by the interview participants (*Student Expectations*). These two areas of interest were extrapolated from the following codes during the second pass of coding: *recruitment, employability, diversity, mentorship, post-graduate paths, student demographics, student interests, student expectations, and value of degree*.

Recruitment The health of any program in higher education relies on attracting students year upon year. For UK E&P programs, recruitment strategies take a variety of forms. Promotional materials on university websites (refer to Appendix B) are, naturally, many students’ first point of contact when searching for a program. Some programs, however, rely first and foremost on their reputation, as both Participant A and Participant H mentioned first when asked how they recruit students to the program: “It’s word of mouth, really, is the most thing, and we’ve got a good reputation. I’m very pleased to hear you know people know us” (Participant A).

Aside from relying on websites and marketing departments, many programs seek to get to know the incoming cohort through interviews, which administrators can use to strategically build the next class of students. Participant B said, “What I’m looking to do in

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a year when I interview everyone is to build a class ... [and] to balance out those different skill sets ... bringing in a variety of different kinds of strengths.” What strengths are programs looking for? Aside from a basic undergraduate qualification, Participant F said, “We’re looking for evidence of some sort of observation of publishing,” or in other words, that they have a basic understanding of what publishing is as a discipline. Participant A agreed, adding, “You need to say why the industry fascinates you. I’m generally looking for a broad-minded approach, ... not just ‘I love books,’” with Participant H using the word “curiosity. Yes, intellectual curiosity is the number one thing.”

There are, however, some declarations made by students in personal statements or interviews that make publishing program administrators wary. Participant D gave an anecdote that was echoed across multiple interviews: “I think sometimes there is a misconception, if you are a writer, that you’ll get published or that this will mean you can get published. So obviously, I want to make sure that they’re coming onto the course for the right reasons.” Participant B put it more bluntly: “If we get applicants to the publishing course from a creative writing background, ... their statement might lead me to believe that they have authorial ambitions. The course is not designed and cannot teach you how to be published.”

Because so many of the graduates from E&P master’s programs in the UK do end up in the publishing industry, the work of selecting students to join the program is important, a responsibility Participant D felt keenly: “I’m educating the next generation of publishers, so I need them to understand how to be professionals in the workplace.” She went on to describe the need to “recruit more diversely” so that diversity would be reflected in the industry as well. “What we’re doing is preparing people for an industry that needs diversity of viewpoint ... because literacy is needed by everybody in society,” said Participant A. Ensuring that diversity, therefore, begins at recruitment. Participant B addressed recruiting both domestic and regional candidates to bring a variety of perspectives to the publishing landscape:

I think one thing we haven’t talked about is the makeup of our students at the moment. ... Traditionally, we would have thought of our class of 50 to 60 students as being very roughly split down the middle between what I would have called UK students and international students. ... Obviously, there’s a large European component, which, up until a few years ago, didn’t have to be considered international, but sadly, does now and then. Obviously, we have US students. We have a few Canadian students. We have lots of Chinese students. We have some Indian students. We always have a number of students from South America.

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Many program administrators addressed their interest in recruiting more international students, an effort that has been hampered since Brexit, when the UK left the European Union, and with the changes to Britain's immigration policies in recent years.

Student Expectations Not surprisingly, students enroll in E&P programs because they want to work in the publishing industry. "They expect a job," stated Participant C. "If you're talking about what they want on the first day, they want a job. So I'm not saying that we can deliver jobs, but we deliver contacts and opportunities, experience through a variety of different things." Nevertheless, at the outset, program administrators observed that students do not necessarily have a clear understanding of what it means to work in publishing. Participant G estimated that "90% of students come in and they're like, 'I want to be an editor and work in England and find the next Sarah J. Maas.'" Others observed the same aspirations in students wanting to work for Penguin or Faber in an editorial capacity before they understand reality of the job or the job market. Participant B said, "Most students coming onto the course imagine themselves wanting to be an editor ... They've got a slightly romanticized idea of what that entails, as well. They often don't really know what an editor today does or looks like ... and they don't really know ... about the other roles that exist in publishing."

Like Participant D, who said that one of her motivating factors in designing and delivering the courses in the program is "making sure that the students get everything that is promised to them," many program administrators recognize the need to prepare students for multiple roles in the industry. Participant B shared an anecdote about what he does on the first day of induction, telling students, "My job basically is to make the 70% of you that right now want to be an editor ... go down to about 20%, and make another 30% of you want to work in rights, and another 30% of you want to work in production..." Indeed, participants mentioned dozens of alumni throughout the course of my interviews who ended in working in a variety of roles in industry. Managing unrealistic expectations while at the same time opening eyes to the vast possibilities of the profession was a key role for many program administrators. Participant A explained how she advised students toward more realistic but fulfilling goals: "Don't necessarily assume that going to one of the Big Five [publishing houses] is your best option, because you may have a better learning experience being part of a smaller company, where you have the chance to listen to debates about what to publish, what's come in, how sales are going, and so on. A small organization may be a better place to learn about how the industry works."

By and large, UK E&P programs are successful in preparing their students for the job market, which, as stated, is one of the primary reasons students enroll. Participant I said

regarding enrollment in her copyediting course, “It gives them confidence and something to show on their CV.” Participant C agreed, saying, “[The students] absolutely see the rewards of why we do what we do. I think we surpass their expectations.” Indeed, CV-building and workshops were commonplace across programs, instilling in students confidence in applying for jobs. When I asked each participant about whether the UK publishing industry regarded a master’s degree in publishing as important, the responses were essentially unanimous: a degree makes a student competitive, although it is no guarantee of hiring. “An MA in publishing will get candidates an interview,” said Participant A, “but after that, it’s up to them.” Participant D concurred but added that her program design ensured competitiveness, even an advantage, on the job market: “The industry doesn’t particularly ask for an MA in publishing, but ... when I look at the job adverts that are out there, when I listen to that student voice, when I listen to the industry, when I go to the conferences, that’s where I see what the graduate attributes need to be, and then I design backwards from there.”

Recommendations for TPC Program Administrators

“We’re in a moment,” said Participant D, “particularly right now, with a lot of emphasis on universities to really demonstrate employability.” Indeed, many departments across higher education have long felt anxious about responding to the ceaseless pressure from university administrators and state governments to produce career-ready graduates (Ball et al., 2015; Jackson, 2021; Okolie et al., 2019), and students themselves waver in their optimism about their employment prospects upon graduation (Donald et al., 2018). Nevertheless, publishing programs in the UK have demonstrated their relevance to the institution in their ability to marry academic scholarship and practical skills and prepare students for careers in their field. Additionally, students coming out of these programs are prepared to shape and develop industry practices, not simply perform existing practices. Although this is just one niche discipline, administrators and instructors in other TPC subfields, and TPC generally, can glean principles from the practices employed abroad in order to build and sustain industry-aligned TPC programs here at home.

After analyzing the data and considering my initial research questions, I have compiled a short list of recommendations for principles and practices that TPC program administrators—specifically but not exclusively E&P administrators—may consider in the future administration of their programs.

Industry-Engaged Faculty

The vast majority of faculty working in publishing programs have direct experience working professionally in the publishing industry, although some faculty members certainly had less direct experience than others and were more academic-minded in their approach to the curricula; nevertheless, they were by no means less industry-engaged than their colleagues. The importance of industry awareness, engagement, and preparation when designing courses remained for all in the foreground. Though perhaps not possible for every instructor or program to implement them all, here are several suggestions for ways that program administrators and instructors can become more engaged with the TPC industry.

- Hire instructors with direct industry experience and leverage that expertise into more authentic course designs, assignments, and assessments.
- Create and grow a network of industry professionals currently working by maintaining contact with past colleagues, attending industry conferences, connecting with new contacts on LinkedIn, and keeping in touch with alumni who have gone into industry.
- Invite guest speakers from industry to address students or participate in classroom workshops; consider a guest speaker series involving professionals from a variety of sectors.
- Organize collaborative projects between students and industry professionals so that students can experience working on “live” projects with real-world stakes and stakeholders.

Student-Centric Curricula

When designing TPC courses, it is essential to balance industry awareness, engagement, and preparation in ways that remain student-centric. Courses should embrace practical disciplines without neglecting research objectives, ensuring students are grounded in both theory and application. A continuous feedback loop among administrators, instructors, students, and industry professionals will help align diverse perspectives toward a common goal—student flourishing and success—even as each group defines that goal differently.

- Solicit student feedback to discern what is most valuable to growing practical skills and help them understand how different courses and assignments are interconnected within the wider production workflow.
- Encourage students to gain work experience in the industry of their choosing through placements or internships, but be mindful that the work they sign up for is helping students meet the outcomes of the course and is not exploiting students’

time or talents; internships should primarily benefit the student, before the employer.

- Help students become career-ready through CV workshops, portfolio creation, and mock interviews.
- Design practical assignments that require research and grounding in theory, and theoretical assignments that have application in the real world; guide students in understanding and embracing the balance between TPC as an academic subject and TPC as a practice.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Given the narrow focus on post-graduate E&P programs in the UK, this study has some obvious limitations. For one, there was no direct comparison between UK and US programs, which provides future researchers with a fertile field of inquiry. Nor does this study consider undergraduate programs in the UK that may prepare students for graduate work or career preparation. The study also does not examine the publishing industry itself for diverging practices, either from academic programs or from US industry practices. All of these areas ought to be explored further to get a more comprehensive understanding of how industry impacts higher education, and what value a post-graduate degree in E&P fields adds to industry.

Looking Forward

This study, based on interviews with nine key figures in UK E&P master's programs, highlights a range of principles and practices that shape program administration—only some of which have been addressed here. Opportunities remain to extend this work through comparative analyses across publishing programs internationally and within the United States, as well as across different levels of higher education. Even so, the findings suggest clear applications for TPC programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Students enter these programs with strong expectations of employability, and administrators play a critical role in shaping those expectations by introducing students to the breadth of professional opportunities within publishing. Ultimately, the industry-informed strategies observed in UK programs offer valuable, transferable insights for TPC administrators in the US, particularly in the design of student-centered, sustainable curricula that effectively balance theory, research, and practice while maintaining robust industry engagement.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The following questions function as general questions, which may lead to program-specific questions, follow-up and clarifying questions, and organic conversation about the program, curriculum, and pedagogical aims. Interviews are expected to last anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. *The Routledge Reviewer's Guide to Mixed Methods Analysis* and *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research* (4th edition) provide a foundation for the interview approach.

Research Questions

1. What common learning objectives do UK E&P programs consider when designing editing or publishing courses?
2. What is the relationship between UK E&P programs and the UK publishing industry, and how does that relationship impact curricular offerings and course design?
3. How do UK E&P programs recruit students, why do students choose to enroll in UK E&P programs, and what are students' career expectations?

Interview Questions

(Participants were asked to state their name and job title at the start of the interview, as well as audibly affirm their consent for the interview to be recorded.)

1. When and why was your program first established?
2. How has it changed since its inception?
3. What common learning objectives do administrators consider when designing editing or publishing courses?
4. Who is involved in curriculum development? What forces shape its development?
5. What challenges does the program face today?
6. What is the makeup of the faculty, and how do their educational and professional backgrounds contribute to the value of the program?
7. What is the relationship between UK E&P programs like yours and the UK publishing industry?
8. How does that relationship impact curricular offerings and course design?
9. What opportunities are there for students to engage in the industry before graduation?
10. How have changes in industry trends impacted the program?
11. How do UK E&P programs recruit students?
12. Why do students choose to enroll in UK E&P programs?
13. What are students' career expectations?

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14. What opportunities are there for students to participate in research?
15. What feedback from students has impacted changes in curriculum?

Appendix B: Frequent Keywords Appearing in the Online Promotional Sites of UK E&P Programs

Institution	“Industry”	“Practical” or “Skill”	“Career”
Anglia Ruskin University	“Books and creative digital content development are at the heart of this industry-focused and flexible publishing course.”	“ Practical workshops give you the space to learn new skills and experiment, making full use of your creativity and imagination.”	“Tailor assignments to your career ambitions and interests, and develop a highly transferable skillset.”
Bath Spa University	“This creative, industry-focused MA Children’s Publishing course is the first of its kind, offering a deep and immersive learning experience across editorial, sales and marketing, rights and contracts, and design and production.”	“Creative, studio-based and practical course focusing on an internationally successful, high-growth area of publishing.”	“Develop a wealth of indispensable digital skills that you can take into your future career. ”
Bournemouth University	“You will also benefit from regular guest lectures from industry. ”	“Work on real-life projects with BU’s own Bournemouth Journal, providing you with invaluable practical experience and a strong portfolio that will impress potential employers.”	“Join a diverse international cohort, expand your global perspective and prepare for a dynamic publishing career. ”
City St George’s University of London	“Explore topics shaping the industry such as A.I., diversity, BookTok, fan fiction, and sustainability through modules led by industry experts.”	“Acquire the skills needed to thrive in publishing.”	“If you are interested in exploring a career in the publishing industry ... our programme is ideal.”
Edinburgh Napier University	“Our intensive, industry-focused publishing programme is the ‘standard bearer for publishing education in the UK’ and will open doors for you.”	“Through hands-on projects, and collaborations with industry partners, you’ll gain practical experience working in various sectors of the publishing industry.”	“You’ll emerge as a skilled and adaptable publishing professional, ready to pursue a career in publishing houses, literary agencies, digital media companies, or self-publishing platforms.”
Kingston University	“Its relevance is ensured by input about employers’ needs from our advisory board of publishing professionals, resulting in a course that evolves alongside the industry. ”	“Break into a competitive industry and build the skills to succeed. Kingston University’s Publishing MA will give you the theoretical knowledge	“You’ll develop key skills and get prepared for a career in all sectors of the book and journal industries, and across all specialisms.”

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		and practical expertise you need to kickstart a highly rewarding career.”	
London School of Publishing	“LSP pioneered skill-based, industry-focused short courses and workshops delivered in-person or online, empowering thousands to advance their publishing careers.”	“LSP offers practical, intensive, skill-based certified courses on the latest industry standards and trends in editing, digital media, writing, podcasting, and visual design.”	LSP pioneered skill-based, industry-focused short courses and workshops delivered in-person or online, empowering thousands to advance their publishing careers. ”
Manchester Metropolitan University	“All our tutors have extensive experience in the industry and excellent contacts.”	“The emphasis is on getting you the practical skills and experience to enter the highly competitive publishing industry.”	“This course will equip you with the knowledge and skills needed for a variety of careers in publishing. ”
Northumbria University	“ Industry Insights and Skills Development” [header]	“ Practical Experience and Career Readiness” [header]	“These modules will help you develop the skills and knowledge you will need for a career in publishing ”
Oxford Brookes University	“Our strong links with the publishing industry mean our course content is highly relevant and topical, so will equip you for your dream career.”	“You’ll get hands-on experience of publishing through a range of practical activities.”	“Our students have been successful in building fulfilling careers with a wide range of publishers.”
University of the Arts London	“You’ll develop a unique and flexible skillset for your future career through ... engagement with industry networks and participation in professional activities.”	“MA Publishing combines theoretical and practical approaches to publishing media.”	“You’ll learn skills that are highly transferrable and could lead to careers in the wider content, intellectual property and audience-centred creative industries.”
University of Central Lancashire	“We have an extensive network in industry – working across different genres and publishing houses – who visit regularly to support student learning.”	“The curriculum has been designed so every component is incredibly practical. ”	“This is a highly vocational MA programme designed to support CV building. It’s ideal for those needing more work experience or for career changers.”
University College London	“You’ll learn from research experts and publishing practitioners, benefiting from access to professional guest speakers and	“The programme is delivered through lectures, workshops, and seminars, and the content is a mix of	“You will be able to launch your career with a qualification from a university that

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	networking opportunities with industry influencers.”	theoretical knowledge and practical skills.”	the industry recognises and values.”
University of Derby	“Be inspired by a huge range of industry professionals.”	“Your work will be assessed using a wide range of methods, including ... practical work in areas such as editing, production, marketing, design and digital publishing.”	“This programme provides a comprehensive and well-balanced training to enter a wide variety of careers in publishing and beyond.”
University of Exeter	“Draws on the teaching expertise of industry professionals and researchers.”	“Develop the critical contexts and practical skills to engage with global publishing models across print and digital environments.”	“Equips you to build your career in the fast-changing publishing industry.”
University of Reading		“[The MA] combines the development of practical skills with the study of historical and theoretical issues.”	“We have an excellent employment record. Overall, 93% of graduates are in work or further study within 15 months of graduation.”
University of Stirling	“Learn from expert course tutors with many years of publishing industry experience.”	“You will gain practical skills by producing your own publication.”	“Focus on developing career skills and publishing industry contacts to enhance your employability.”

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Using Advocacy to Reach out Globally and Locally: Developing Relationships Through an Editing and Publishing Certificate

Kristin Pickering

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Abstract In this article, I argue that the concepts of advocacy, community connections, and relationships help establish the identity of an editing and publishing certificate program in ways that emphasize theoretical and practical value to institutional administrations, students, and community stakeholders. These types of theoretical connections promote career skills development while anchoring to valued, interdisciplinary concepts, including empathy, care, and diversity of community and relationship stories and narratives. After introducing these concepts and their relationship to the fields of technical and professional communication and business communication, I provide a case study of an editing and publishing certificate that joins faculty and students from technical and professional communication and creative writing programs at Tennessee Technological University, as an example of how an editing and publishing program might connect these concepts and skills while also combatting hyper-pragmatist framing. Illustrating ways that core courses in this certificate address theory as well as practice, I discuss ways that this program solidifies its identity by further connecting to values presented in the university's strategic plan and the certificate program's outcomes goals. The article also addresses special challenges that editing and publishing programs face and presents recommendations for establishing and maintaining such programs.

Keywords editing, publishing, certificates, advocacy, community, relationships, empathy, narratives

English departments have experienced declining enrollments in recent years (Ballentine, 2022; Cartwright, 2015; Sánchez, 2025) along with other humanities fields. Some of these lower numbers are likely due to continued negative perceptions about the value of English, the potential for well-paying jobs in a slowing economy, and a persistent

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gender gap: “[M]ore women major in English, women are underpaid, and thus the gender gap in wages disproportionately affects English majors” (Krebs, 2024, p. 1). However, organizations such as the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the affiliated Association of Departments of English (ADE) and its *Ad Hoc* Committee on English Majors’ Careers report that English majors with bachelor’s degrees continue to obtain well-paying jobs that apply skills learned as undergraduates (2024). These graduates also report high levels of job satisfaction and that their jobs provide “intellectual challenge and connection to others” (Krebs, 2024, p. 1; see also the ADE and its “Report on English majors’ career preparation and outcomes,” 2024). Despite this positive news, some English departments within colleges and universities have experienced increasing pressure to justify their programs’ existence and relevance; this pressure has the potential to increase even more with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and a perception among students and some members of industry that human writers are not as necessary, now that we have generative AI tools. This perception contradicts preliminary research that indicates generative AI can subvert *or* augment writers’ roles (Noy & Zhang, 2023) and that, in fact, the importance of editors has increased, due to AI (Baker, Rawlins, & Pierson, 2024; Teixeira da Silva, 2022).

In response to these perceptions, pressures, and the need to establish continuing relevance, the MLA recommends that “[d]epartments should develop curricular and cocurricular programs that walk through the career-preparation process with clarity and support” (Krebs, 2024, p. 2) and “[d]epartments must develop sustainable career-preparation programs that account for local contexts” (Krebs, 2024, p. 2). Many English departments have tried to accomplish this, but still, departments often struggle with the perception that English degrees are not preparing students for industry. Fernando Sánchez’s (2025) work illustrates the importance of this ongoing issue; he found that students in a qualitative study majored in English due to their love for the literary, but they added a second major to help prepare them with skills they could use in industry. Students in his university’s English program at the time had just two tracks: Literature and Creative Writing, and students did not seem to be able to readily make the leap to conceptualizing ways their English degree could apply to the workplace, even though his department did offer some courses in professional and technical writing. He states, “arguments about the ways in which English opens up career opportunities fell flat for participants [in his study] when thinking about life after graduation...at which point they decided to seek out majors that were more legibly career-focused” (p. 253). One way to address these concerns and recommendations about the relevance of the field of English is to develop interdisciplinary certificate programs, housed within English departments, that draw upon already existing courses and that combine skills that were previously available only through one

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concentration or minor, for example, in a way that emphasizes the development of career-ready skills for students and justifies these programs for university administrations in positive ways. An example of this type of collaborative effort is the Editing and Publishing Certificate at Tennessee Technological University.

Focusing on the research question, “How can a disciplinary identity be established for editing and publishing (E&P) programs,” I argue that creating this disciplinary identity requires tying into established theoretical frameworks in the technical and professional communication (TPC) and business communication (BC) fields, namely those of advocacy, community, and relationships. More specifically, drawing upon theories of an ethic of care and empathy can provide a theoretical grounding for E&P programs in ways that not only help faculty and students relate to the goals and missions of nonprofit organizations but also grow students’ developing self-awareness of cultivating emotional intelligence qualities and soft/essential skills that will serve them when interacting with similar public audiences in the future. Such grounding has the potential not only to unite programs within English departments but also to situate E&P programs within global and local communities in ways that highlight skills development as well as theoretical context. This theoretical framing provides necessary disciplinary context within courses and internships that often can be viewed as skills-based only.

The persistent viewing of TPC programs within a hyper-pragmatist context (Scott, Longo, & Wills, 2006) has likely contributed to a continued devaluing of these types of programs, many of which are housed within English departments. Scholars such as Heidi Lawrence and others (2023) argue that this hyper-pragmatist orientation can contribute to lowered enrollments and students’ becoming “agnostic to the communities they join” (p. 61) through internships and service learning, for example, when what is actually needed is more authentic relationship development among these programs, students, and the communities and industries that they serve (refer also to Kimme Hea & Wendler Shah, 2016). Lawrence et al. recommend an “accountability model” in which “[f]aculty build programs that improve and support the communities to which they are best suited to contribute” and where “[s]tudents become responsive and responsible to one another as a collective” (p. 61). E&P programs can benefit from this type of collaborative, community approach, and, as a result, they can position and define themselves more strategically in ways that can combat hyper-pragmatism and build more effective relationships among the students and between students and industry. Such a positioning is vital for the developing identity of E&P, since the E&P field risks being perceived as hyper-pragmatist, based on the prominent roles of editing and publishing within it.

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Following a literature review in which I connect E&P to scholarship on community relationships and advocacy, I present a case study of a partnership between creative writing (CW) and TPC programs at a regional university that serves rural populations. This collaborative, certificate-program, advocacy approach complements a communities-of-practice orientation, from which students can branch off through different courses that contain service-learning and community-based projects. This approach and case study illustrate ways that students can create stronger relationship connections not only among themselves but also with communities and industries they work with as part of their certificate in E&P.

Literature Review

E&P programs involve editing various types of documents, including text, images, design, and multi-media elements. Delivering those documents via some type of technology is also a focus, including the web, mobile devices, other digital devices, and even, in some cases, hard copy. The documents are often produced using publishing software, such as the layout tool Adobe InDesign, and appear in a variety of formats, such as Microsoft Word documents, PDFs, blogs, image files, audio files, videos, and websites. According to Holly Baker and others (2024), these programs have been gaining popularity in recent years, possibly as a result of AI, which is impacting the publishing industry. Also, as Carolyn Gubala, Kara Larson, and Lisa Melonçon (2020) discuss, industry professionals very much care about errors in documents, especially public-facing ones, so industry may be calling for and supporting these programs in an effort to increase communication professionalism in the workplace, as well as enhanced publishing skills, due to technological advancements.

Baker et al. (2024) provide an excellent overview of such programs, including their prevalence throughout the United States and the English-speaking world (pp. 64–65). E&P programs exist in multiple configurations, including the undergraduate major, minor, and certificate, as well as the graduate certificate and graduate degree (Baker et al., 2024, p. 65). These programs are located “in English departments (to include such departments as English and Philosophy, English and Creative Writing, English and Writing, and Writing and Literature). E&P programs are also hosted by business, communications, journalism, media and creative arts, publishing, typographic and graphic communications, and linguistics departments” (Baker et al., 2024, p. 65). One thing these scholars have noted, however, is that despite their prevalence, E&P programs lack a common curriculum and therefore a common identity, which has caused this evolving field to struggle to maintain a

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unified status as an academic discipline (Baker et al., 2024; Card, Chambers, & Freeman, 2016).

Situating E&P programs within established disciplinary theories, such as those from TPC and BC, is one way to begin establishing the identity of such programs. A lack of a common theoretical framework within the E&P field could be leading to a more skills-based view of these programs currently (Baker et al., 2024); but building on these theoretical foundations can create and elevate unique connections within their local academic contexts and communities, establishing them more as academic fields, as well as useful sets of skills. Two theoretical concepts that have established themselves within the fields of TPC and BC and that also resonate well with goals of E&P programs are advocacy and community relationships, including their stories and narratives. Connecting to these types of theoretical concepts provides an anchoring theoretical foundation that allows E&P program administrators to advocate for these programs in ways that connect specific skills students are learning with broader purposes for those skills, as well as relationships. While developing career-ready skills provides a prominent selling point, the theories help locate these skills within a context that faculty and administrators from other disciplines can recognize, as well, and connecting skills with foundational theories will help further legitimize E&P programs for both academic and community audiences, increase their visibility, and ensure that relevant theories are informing skills development and application.

Advocacy

In TPC, the concept of *advocacy* often relates to some type of need and cause that students and/or professionals can then identify with and help address through communication. Kirk St. Amant (2018) defines advocacy as “effective access to information” (xxi), including the “interlocking parts” of “availability” and “comprehensibility” (xxi). Others connect it to social roles of citizenship and civic engagement (Agboka & Matveeva, 2018, p. xxv). Scholars also apply the concept of advocacy to technology through “multimodal advocacy” which addresses “personal and collective agency, technological processes and implications, and design-as-social action” (Tham & Jiang, 2023, p. 130). Especially important for E&P programs, “design advocacy” (Jiang & Tham, 2019) emphasizes “multimodality within design-driven efforts [that can] promote social advocacy” (Tham & Jiang, 2023, p. 130), such as through “activating change, understanding needs, challenging status quo, and manifesting tangible and desirable differences” (Tham & Jiang, 2023, p. 131). These concepts apply to TPC through service-learning projects and work for nonprofit organizations through internships.

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For example, a partnership among students, faculty, and the nonprofit organization Authors Inside helps students develop professional communication, editing, and publishing skills while working with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated writers (Gaisie et al., 2024). This program, a community-based advocacy program, is titled Editing for Justice and helps give voice to those who may not be heard otherwise while also facilitating student skill development, including the use of technological tools. This type of collaboration reflects the related social justice emphasis within TPC (Clem & Cheek, 2022; Walwema, Colton, & Holmes, 2022), the idea that “[s]ocial justice is collective and active” and that “we must work collectively and consider collective forces and effects of oppression” (Walton et al., 2019, p. 50), as well as be willing to take action against these forces and effects. Rather than only calling for the need to address social justice within the field, Rebecca Walton and others (2019) emphasize the need to address inequalities by putting specific actions into practice, such as Christopher Andrews and Charles Etheridge’s work with Hispanic students enrolled in a Writing for Non-Profits certificate program (2022); these faculty researchers found a way to listen to and address students’ social justice concerns by conducting semi-structured interviews with certificate students and then acting upon what they learned from them. These writers state that while calling attention to social justice needs is important, much more should be done through practice.

An advocacy orientation is one way to address these inequalities, as marginalized voices, for example, present needs and concerns that are then addressed through nonprofit organizations (Andrews & Etheridge, 2022; Baddour, 2022; Gaisie et al., 2024; Kramer-Simpson & Simpson, 2018), community partnerships (Kramer-Simpson & Simpson, 2018; Rea et al., 2018), government collaborations (Hirst, 2016; Pickering, 2024), and local governing bodies (Endres, 2023). Broadly conceived, the concept of advocacy provides a situating framework for service-learning projects and internships for many different types of organizations and interactions such as these.

The concept of advocacy as part of this theoretical grounding for E&P programs is dynamic and works reciprocally: While students initially might feel that they are contributing their skills to help others (and they are), they are also learning more about the types of documents and communication needed in many different settings for various businesses, organizations, industries, and groups of people with diverse needs. They are also learning that the type of editing and publishing they are doing does not exist in a vacuum: Getting to know others and their needs, advocating on their behalf, and helping them produce

communication that is important to them and represents their voices all are part of the process of working in relationships with others.

Community Connections and Relationships

In addition to building upon the theoretical concept of advocacy to ground their disciplinary identities, E&P programs can also emphasize the importance of community connections and relationships, based on scholarship in relevant fields. While some outside the E&P discipline might view these programs and courses as decidedly skills-based, tying in to broader theoretical concepts and purposes anchors these programs as relevant and needed not only for individuals but also for organizations. From this perspective, scholarship in BC is helpful for emphasizing the importance of developing relationships while navigating communication needs. For example, BC scholarship especially focuses on “soft/essential skills” needed for effective communication in business settings (Anthony & Garner, 2016; Fletcher & Thornton, 2023; Robles, 2012); the use of these skills is often framed within a context of conducting business effectively and maintaining relationships, with special consideration given to audiences’ expectations, needs, and feelings. The use of soft skills extends to communicating interculturally for business purposes (Quintero, 2025; Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2025). Mohammad Moninoor Roshid and Anne Kankaanranta (2025), in discussing research on this topic, state the importance of intercultural audience awareness to facilitate communication: “[E]ffective communication in a lingua franca environment requires adapting to different communication styles and cultural norms and focusing on clear and concise language use” (p. 103); others discuss politeness strategies to mitigate possibly negative feelings associated with communicating within global business settings (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

Many international business transactions do contain a relationship component that applies these soft skills in enhanced ways, such as transactions that involve extending pleasantries, addressing cultural norms (such as conversing about family members and other personal interests such as hobbies), hosting business guests at culturally significant events, and making special efforts to ensure that international guests are comfortable. While some of these characterizations of cultivating effective business relationships sound cliché based on potentially reductive cultural stereotypes, their continued and recent emphasis in scholarship, frequency of occurrence within business interactions, and the time devoted to these relationship-building strategies suggest more than just capitalistic motivations (i.e., the need to simply “get business done”). Instead, many communicators and negotiators in the business world understand the importance of

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relationship building as essential to accomplishing joint business and communication goals, networking, and maintaining business alliances with collegiality at their core.

These soft skills, including audience awareness, emotional intelligence, and emotion management/regulation, while accepted as core essentials within BC, have been gaining more emphasis in TPC scholarship recently (Pickering, 2018a, 2019; Sánchez, 2025; Wolfe & Powell, 2022). Because E&P programs also involve relationship-building skills through service-learning projects, internships, and collaborations with community members and stakeholders, focusing on these soft skills and developing relationships provide opportunities to integrate foundational concepts from the related fields of BC and TPC that E&P programs can then build upon to further establish their disciplinary identity. Particularly important here is not just encouraging the development of soft/essential skills at a general level but providing ways that these can actually be applied through service-learning projects and internships in E&P programs.

Sánchez (2025) recommends emphasizing such emotional connections in these projects to generate more student engagement, and Jason Tham and Jialei Jiang (2023) discuss the same idea, that faculty are motivated to invest in projects that resonate with them emotionally and connect with personal feelings, which in turn relate to “perceived agency” (p. 150). This type of emotional investment ensures more authentic connections among students and faculty that remain with them long after these projects and internships end. Specific concepts related to relationship dynamics that can further establish the identity of E&P programs and that require application to specific interactions include:

- Demonstrating empathy and care and
- Developing awareness of and addressing diversity of stories and narratives.

I have chosen these two elements to illustrate developing community connections and relationships based on Paul Dombrowski’s foundational work, *Ethics in Technical Communication* (2000). As part of his chapter titled “The ethics tradition,” Dombrowski discusses an ethic of care, which continues to gain traction within TPC, especially, since it helps interrogate traditional science and technology value systems and encourages care as a value system, as well as the value of “relationship” instead of valuing only expediency. The focus on empathy and care within TPC (particularly the recent focus on users’ needs in information and user design and design thinking [refer to Colby, 2023; Jones, 2016; Keinonen, 2024; Pope-Ruark, Moses, & Tham, 2019; Rose & Turner, 2024; Wible, 2022]) illustrates the continued application and usefulness of these concepts within the field that also extend to E&P programs, including their emphasis on producing documents intended

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for diverse audiences using ever-evolving media. In addition, stories and narratives convey emotions as well as individual and community values that E&P programs can also address.

Demonstrating Empathy and Care

Scholars of rhetoric have documented the importance of emotions, pathos, and connections to technical, scientific, and business communication in ways that tie in to care and meaningful social action (Dolamore, Lovell, Collins, & Kline, 2021; Gogan & Belinsky, 2022; Koponen et al., 2025; Mackiewicz, 2011; Sánchez, 2025; Weedon, 2020). Valuing ethical emotional appeals in this communication process, as well as communicators' and audiences' feelings, stems from the ethic of care orientation and the need to connect compassion and empathy with civic tasks and goals (Dombrowski, 2000). The basis of this care ethic is relationships: “[W]hen relationships develop, human beings start to care about other persons and their needs as care is an essential feature of the human condition” (Antoni & Beer, 2024, p. 280) (refer also to Nel Noddings, 2015, p. 73). These relationships are formed through interdependency, rather than independency (Antoni & Beer, 2024, p. 281). Offering a nonlinear perspective on care and relationships, Annemarie Mol’s (2008) work *The Logic of Care* emphasizes, as well, collective, social action and the indeterminate, process-oriented activities and actions that surround nurturing care, including reciprocal dialogue (refer also to Joan Tronto, 1993). Emotions, such as empathy, occur within the context of these relationships, and then those emotions precede action: “To be motivated to act, we must *feel* something” (Noddings, 2015, p. 75). Such feelings indicate caring *about* those experiencing need, those with whom we interact in relationships, and ideally would translate to caring *for*, according to Noddings, through specific actions addressing needs. While the care process focuses on innovation and improvement, Mol clarifies that the improvement is messy and unpredictable, that the care process involves moving forward even when failures occur. Caring communication involves conversations, rather than confrontation, “marked by an exchange of experiences, knowledge, suggestions, words of comfort” (p. 76).

Technology is an inevitable part of this process, including the rise of AI technologies. An ethic of care framework accounts for the use of technologies to care, as Mol (2008) clarifies when she states that “care...is not opposed to, but includes, technology” (p. 5). While technologies have often been associated with science and rationalism, they do play a vital role in caring for others. An ethic of care orientation allows for technologies to evolve and be modified to meet local needs (Mol 2008); as Irina Zakharova and Juliane Jarke (2022) clarify, “Once designed, digital technologies are not rigid scripts or stable entities, but continue to be the subject of change and transformation” (p. 97). One issue

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complicating the use of digital technologies and an ethic of care is that the technology allows for the possibility that the intended communication will reach much further than the original or localized audience. Jared Colton, Steve Holmes, and Josephine Walwema (2017) address this complexity in their work: “Especially in the age of digital networks, we can [not] assume that the only beings affected by our actions are those to whom are [sic] actions are directed” (p. 64). While scholars emphasize that various technologies can be adapted to address local and evolving needs, the reality is that the needs of those impacted by the technologies will be constantly changing and sometimes difficult to identify, since communicators may not always be aware of who is accessing and using their work.

Many jobs within TPC do involve writing for and about technological processes for industry or nonprofits, such as writing documentation for software programs, video games, and repairing technological devices; nonprofit website content management; drafting technical specifications; and social media management, for example. Connecting with these public audiences involves feeling empathy and demonstrating care: As Laura Patterson writes, “The first step towards an engagement with another audience is empathizing with them to understand their needs” (2019, p. 194). Addressing this need to incorporate empathy and care into communication, particularly within TPC and BC, has ranged from regulating emotions stemming from caring to emphasizing them more openly. For example, some scholars have focused on regulating emotion in order to accomplish goals and maintain a professional ethos while doing so (Fuglsby & Veeramoothoo, 2023; Pickering, 2018a, 2019) and to avoid negative repercussions of gender stereotypes in male dominated fields (Wolfe & Powell, 2022). Others discuss emotions, such as empathy, more openly in connection with professional communication goals (Bowden, Pigg, & Mansfield, 2014; Coffelt, Grauman, & Smith, 2019; Fuller et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2023) and public welfare (Patterson, 2019, 2020, 2021). Attending to emotions and an ethic of care specifically appears to be a new development as TPC and BC continue to incorporate ethical theories outside “dominant moral philosophies such as Kantianism, consequentialism, liberalism, Rawlesian theory of justice or virtue ethics” (Antoni & Beer, 2024, p. 281), and this new orientation is one that E&P programs can claim through required internships and service-learning projects, for example. Moreover, since an ethic of care requires a response from those cared for (Mol, 2008; Noddings, 2015), internships and service-learning opportunities locate students in contexts that can provide them with a chance to hear back from those they are serving.

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Defined by Patterson (2019), service learning is “an experiential learning technique that combines service to not-for-profit organizations with the academic learning objectives of a course and requires students to reflect upon those experiences” (p. 194) and can include internships as well as projects incorporated into courses (Bouelle, 2012; Carlson, 2022; Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999; Pickering, 2018b, 2019; Sapp & Crabtree, 2002; Scott, 2004). These types of projects incorporated into courses for E&P programs (such as internships completed for course credit and courses such as *Technical Editing* at my university that contain a service-learning component) can also be opportunities to emphasize ways students can cultivate empathy toward others, demonstrate caring about and for others and their needs, and receive feedback from targeted audiences while accomplishing communication and publishing goals. At times, instructors draw upon feelings such as empathy when designing these projects and therefore can emphasize their importance to students (Sánchez, 2025; Tham & Jiang, 2023). Patterson (2019, 2020, 2021) discusses ways she helped engineering students develop empathy through a technical communication course at her university; she documents how empathy can help enhance engineering students’ relationship to public welfare, a need that is also present in E&P programs, which likely all require some type of service learning projects that connect with the public and their needs on some level.

Other examples of internships and course-specific projects that illustrate ways students can demonstrate empathy and care for their audiences include “grassroots knowledge diplomacy” involving collaborations between students and international diplomats (Chaban, 2024, p. 158), working to learn the culture of the Y-12 National Security Complex to understand this government organization’s purposes and goals and then make sure those are represented using plain language for various audiences and technological backgrounds (Hirst, 2016), and connecting to real-world clients through online internships, such as through creating brochures and other documents for nonprofit organizations, including a food bank (Soria & Weiner, 2013). These internships involved making close connections with internship partners as students represented groups they were truly invested in; that enthusiastic investment transferred to students’ helping to meet these organizations’ goals.

As part of practicing empathy and care, students in E&P programs can learn more about their audiences through addressing diversity of community and relationship stories and narratives. In fact, part of the process of addressing others’ needs is attending to others’ responses, including narratives and stories and the values they convey. This process involves listening to stories, empathizing and identifying with them, and then helping

convey those stories and values to the public through the publishing process, facilitating needed action. Organizations communicate their values through stories, using emotion, as well, and ensuring students understand how to tap into these values helps develop more successful partnerships between E&P programs and the outside partners they serve.

Addressing Diversity of Community and Relationship Stories and Narratives

As students in E&P programs complete service-learning projects and internships, they are becoming parts of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to various degrees, learning what it means to be part of discourse communities, including values embedded in them. These values often reveal themselves in organizational stories and narratives; if students can tune into these early on, they can more easily demonstrate empathy and care, as these stories and narratives often are developed to resonate with broad audiences. Mol (2008) writes when discussing a logic of care: “[P]owerful stories work by evoking people’s imagination, empathy and irritation. While conflicting arguments work against each other, conflicting stories tend to enrich each other” (p. 76). In addition, the values communicated through these various stories become readily apparent as students develop relationships during these “apprenticeship” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) opportunities.

One issue that complicates the process of becoming a part of these communities of practice is the relatively short period of time that students are working within them. Typically, service-learning projects within courses last for part of a semester or the length of a semester only, and internships can have similar time constraints, although some programs allow for the completion of more than one internship for the same organization.¹ Even though time is limited, students still need to advocate for these (oftentimes) nonprofit organizations with unique requirements and demonstrate care and empathy in order to promote organizations’ missions and goals most effectively. Ideally, students would be able to empathize with these missions and goals, based on their individual experiences or experiences of people they know. This empathy can translate to students’ moving from a focus on earning good grades to a heightened sense of responsibility to helping community partners accomplish their missions and goals (Soria & Weiner, 2013). E&P program administrators and course professors need to identify ways to help students adjust to these communities relatively quickly yet authentically. This task can be a real challenge,

¹ For example, students in the Professional and Technical Communication program at Tennessee Technological University have the option to complete up to nine credit hours for their internships, and students can complete these at the same organization.

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since authentic relationships should not be rushed, yet the documents that students are producing during these collaborations (such as letters, proposals, brochures, and social media communication [Bourelle, 2014]; and thank-you letters, handouts, and newsletters [Soria & Weiner, 2013]) need to accurately reflect the organizations they represent and are often high-stakes documents that are requesting funding and other support from stakeholders (Bourelle, 2014). These required, authentic relationships that are a prerequisite for effective communication during service-learning projects and internships require a knowledge of organizational values that students in E&P programs can then help the organization convey. In addition, authentic relationships are at the heart of ethic-of-care practices.

When students learn organizational stories even before beginning their service-learning and internship projects, they can not only empathize more with the organization's goals, in many cases, but they can also more accurately and authentically represent the organization to its stakeholders and public audiences, in essence, advocating on behalf of the organization. These stories and narratives reveal themselves in many different ways. For example, some nonprofit organizations are founded based on a personal experience of a founder or founders who recognized the need for the nonprofit after suffering some type of loss, and learning about this loss through stories allows students to empathize with the organization's cause. For example, the nonprofit organization Visioning Beyond Violence states its belief that those people who have experienced the trauma of violence in some form "hold the keys to break the cycle" of future violence ("Our history"). The organization promotes training and events that include workshops, exhibitions, community dialogues, and systemic change efforts. On the About page where training instructors are listed, each brief biography includes information on why that instructor has been personally motivated to work with this organization, including stories of violence and marginalization. Students partnering with such an organization could read through these bios and grasp a sense of the various personal motivations for the instructor contributions. Even if the students have not experienced the same type of violence or marginalization themselves, they could be encouraged to develop empathy and care for these individuals and those the organization assists; if the students could empathize with these stories, they would be more likely to convey Visioning Beyond Violence's mission "to empower communities to create solutions to gun violence by fostering visionary thinking through the power of art, education and systemic change efforts" ("Our mission").

Other nonprofit organizations might profile stories from individuals they serve in order to communicate their values, and students can learn, empathize, and begin to care about

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these individuals and values based on these stories, as well. For example, the faith-based organization World Vision shares stories of communities and children in need from around the world in order to increase empathy for those living in poverty, with the goal of recruiting various forms of assistance (n.d.). St. Jude Children's Research Hospital communicates testimonials from pediatric patients and their parents/caregivers in their own words and voices to highlight the Hospital's mission "to advance cures, and means of prevention, for pediatric catastrophic diseases through research and treatment" (n.d., "Our mission statement"). Based on stories and narratives that these organizations promote, students can identify these organizations' values early on and learn ways to highlight them in public-facing documents produced during E&P partnerships. While many nonprofit organizations host websites that easily display information on their missions, goals, and communities/populations they serve, not all nonprofits will display such information prominently. In these cases, students may need to research their organizations further, such as how they represent themselves on social media and how they are perceived in communities through online news articles, social media communication, and feedback about the organization posted by the community. Students and faculty can also interview nonprofit organization members to hear their stories, if they don't appear to be publicly available.

At times, values may be communicated through seemingly negative publicity and stories told by those outside of the organization. Businesses and nonprofit organizations may seek help through service-learning projects and internships because they may be having difficulties gaining needed support and community participation. In some cases, "counterstories" (Delgado, 1989; Dunn, 2019; Martinez, 2020; Rea, 2021) published in the news or by those receiving services have damaged the organization's or business's reputation. These stories focus on experiential knowledge (Martinez, 2020, p. 9), and, when conveying alternative perspectives to dominant organizational narratives, can be important motivations for change, in part because the counterstories are so specific and personalized. Counterstories create opportunities for agency for those who are outside dominant narratives (Butts & Jones, 2021, p. 14; Martinez, 2020) and have the potential to change those narratives. Even though these stories counter the images the organizations desire to convey, including the images of nonprofit organizations, students could still learn about organizational values and help determine if any inaccuracies or misrepresentation might be occurring and then address these difficulties through revised organizational documents and communication.

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Learning organizational values through stories and narratives from these different perspectives encourages student *identification* (Burke, 1969) with these organizations, the process of conveying and recognizing similar motives and values among communicators and audiences (Walton, 2013). This identification connects to the ethic of care and empathy needed to develop relationships between students and organizational representatives. These relationships are needed so that students can convey organizational missions and values effectively through their publications in order to successfully advocate for these organizations and meet their needs. Including these types of theoretical concepts in course descriptions, syllabi, and assignments highlights them for students and administrators at a general level and suggests ways to analyze organizational narratives and stories for the benefit of academic and organizational partnerships/relationships in E&P programs.

Summary

This overall theoretical grounding through the concepts of advocacy, community connections, and relationships unites ethical concepts of caring and justice in ways that move civic action forward. As Dombrowski (2000) mentions when referring to the work of Peta Bowden (1997) and Martha Minnow (1987), “the possibility of an alternative ethic of care grounded in citizenship that embraces caring and egalitarian principles should be explored” (p. 64). We have seen evidence of this type of foundational work in the service-learning movement in TPC, and these efforts translate, as well, to E&P programs, since many contain service-learning components at their core. In addition, combining a caring and empathetic approach with addressing community and relationship narratives ensures that communicators are identifying with the values essential to advocating for nonprofit organizations, especially.

Below, I present a case study of an E&P certificate at Tennessee Technological University, a four-year university located in middle Tennessee serving mainly the surrounding region. Not only does this certificate exemplify an application of the theoretical grounding discussed above through serving local and global communities through an advocacy, empathy, and care approach; it also serves as an example of interdisciplinary collaboration that can unite English department faculty while increasing students’ abilities to gain and discuss marketable skills. This type of certificate also has the potential to increase positive emotional investment for students who may be struggling in their identities as English majors and enhance their investment in future writing and communication careers. These benefits, in turn, can be used to justify these programs to university administrators (through assessment data and public-facing documents such as

brochures, websites, and other marketing materials) and emphasize these programs' value to industry and nonprofit organizations, also leading to meaningful partnerships and future career opportunities for students.

Case Study of an Editing and Publishing Certificate: A Partnership Between Creative Writing and Technical and Professional Communication

In 2023, faculty in the CW and TPC² concentrations within the English Department at Tennessee Tech designed an E&P certificate as a cross-disciplinary effort that required courses from these two concentrations. The English department that houses the certificate offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with concentrations in Literature, CW, TPC, Rhetoric and Language, and Theatre. The department also offers two minors and a certificate in Technical Writing and Communication. The E&P certificate demonstrates collaboration between the two disciplines of CW and TPC, strengthening investment from within the department and pooling resources. This certificate also serves as an example of ways to tie in to already existing theories within TPC and BC³ to strengthen the identity of the E&P discipline.

Methods

In preparation for conducting this case study, I identified the two core courses in our E&P certificate at Tennessee Tech as ones that most comprehensively demonstrate the values of the program. Two different faculty members teach these core courses, one from the TPC concentration and one from the CW concentration. Because this case study focuses on our program, rather than the faculty working within it, IRB approval was not required. Instead, I drew upon the historical context and general mindset we had when creating the certificate and based the case study and analysis on those, as well as the administrative documents, syllabi, current projects, and activities included in these core courses.

² At Tennessee Tech, the concentration's name is Professional and Technical Communication, but I chose to use "TPC" for consistency throughout the article, since that title seems to be more widely used in the discipline.

³ Creative writing is a different discipline from business communication; however, I intend to show through the case study that theories from business communication also apply to the types of student, community, and university relationships encouraged in the required CW core course included in the E&P certificate.

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In discussing the dynamics of these courses' content, including the various relationships developed within them, I apply the TPC and BC concepts discussed above to analyze ways these courses address those concepts, to illustrate one example of how courses that focus on the practical skills of editing and publishing can also address these broader concepts and the process of relationship development through them. While somewhat overlapping, the disciplines of TPC and BC have generated practical and theoretical discussions that apply to and can be expanded upon within E&P programs, to their benefit, as the case study below illustrates. TPC has provided a useful context for advocacy, including addressing social justice, as well as incorporating technologies to communicate in ways that demonstrate understanding of user needs. BC provides an emphasis on relational awareness, including soft or essential skills and emotional intelligence, needed to maintain relationships, including interpersonal and intercultural communication dynamics required for effective business and organizational functioning. Both TPC and BC address the importance of emotion, emotion regulation, empathy, and care as components of ethical communication. Both fields support the role of stories and narratives in communicating personal, organizational, academic, and community values. These concepts, key to recent theoretical discussions in TPC and BC, serve as useful foundations for E&P programs as they strive to expand beyond the hyper-pragmatist perceptions assigned to them, at times.

The E&P certificate requires two courses in its core: PC 4940/5940 (*Technical Editing*) and ENGL 4460/5460 (*Literary Magazine Editing*). Faculty teaching these courses contextualize the editing, design, and publishing skills students learn through the lenses of advocacy and community relationships. This orientation not only provides a broader framework through which students can anchor these skills, but it also unites faculty and students within these courses in cross-disciplinary efforts that have enhanced the English department and university's goal of encouraging students to develop career-ready skills. Below, I draw upon unique examples from each course to illustrate ways the concepts of advocacy and community relationships apply to pedagogy and practice, as well as serve overarching goals of the certificate program. I also discuss ways these courses have connected to broader university support frameworks to tie in more closely to university-wide outcomes and increase visibility.

PC 4940/5940 and iFixit

Close to the inception of the E&P certificate, changes were made to one of the core courses. PC 4940/5940 (*Technical Editing*) was revised according to the university's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) in compliance with accreditation. This revision

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introduced a focus on a creative inquiry question, “How can addressing diverse audiences’ needs through centralized technical documentation empower readers and viewers to pursue better quality lives?” Several assignments in the course linked to this question, but the main one was a final project students completed for iFixit, “a global community of people helping each other repair things” for free (n.d.). Designed to empower consumers by helping them fix their own devices (many imprisoned by proprietary technology that prohibits them from doing so) and save money, this nonprofit also helps keep “broken” technological devices out of landfills here and overseas, including the Global South.

During the project, students create device component replacement guides for various electronic devices, such as robotic vacuums, game controllers, and laptops. These guides are created on iFixit’s online platform, where students write concise instructions; take, edit, and upload photos; and revise based on input from iFixit’s technical writing team. However, this project involves much more than drafting, editing, revising, and publishing work using iFixit’s interface. As students learn more about iFixit’s mission, they develop a growing awareness of the problem of ewaste, including marginalized communities where this waste is shipped and processed. While the electronic device “junkyards” provide work and income for these populations, people’s health and the environment are suffering, as students can clearly see by viewing videos on iFixit’s website as they begin their projects. Students learn that extending the life of electronic devices through the right-to-repair movement not only reduces ewaste and the problems it causes; their repair efforts also save consumers money on a very practical level by empowering them to repair their own devices. Because all of our students own many electronic devices and have experienced the need to have them repaired or have been forced to buy new ones due to “planned obsolescence,” they readily identify with this problem and iFixit’s mission, although many students at the beginning of the course are not aware of the extent of this environmental and social problem, beyond their personal experiences with it.

Students discover that iFixit’s platform, to which they are contributing their instructional guides throughout the semester, has a global audience; as a result, instructions and graphics must be very clear. In fact, ideally, audiences would be able to perform repairs using just the graphics, if needed, according to the iFixit technical writing team. Students begin to view their work empathetically through the eyes of others in a more global context, at first because they are required to by iFixit. Developing this empathy for international audiences’ needs becomes even more pronounced when international students, particularly graduate students who are conducting their own research, are part of the course.

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At Tennessee Tech, the TPC MA program recently has experienced growth in its international graduate student enrollment, and TPC MA students sometimes take the graduate version of this course alongside students enrolled in the undergraduate version. When both PC 4940 and 5940 are offered, graduate students serve as project managers as students complete their team final projects. When undergraduate students work with an international graduate student project manager, they receive the benefit of direct interaction with someone who can provide feedback, both oral and written, on these electronic component replacement guides, from the perspective of an international audience member. In Spring 2024, for example, a TPC graduate student taught a module on intercultural communication, including perspectives from her native country of Bangladesh. The student told a personal story of how, growing up, she remembered her family having difficulty assembling devices they had purchased because the instruction manuals were not written in their native language; only translations in the “most common” languages were included in the manual. While creating the component replacement guides did not include translation, students in *Technical Editing* learned more about the potential translation and language limitations of their guides, and these conversations led to discussions about greater empathy for audiences’ needs in relying more on visual representations of component replacement.

By considering the question, “How can addressing diverse audiences’ needs through centralized technical documentation empower readers and viewers to pursue better quality lives?”, students have to ask themselves what might possibly be improved about these diverse audiences, their quality of life, and their needs regarding technical documentation. This thought process encourages students to empathize further with these audiences. Even if they are not able to compile these guides and edit their photos from the exact perspective of international audience members, their awareness grows during the course and is emphasized through other assignments students complete throughout the term, such as reflections based on prompts the course instructor creates, addressing outcomes goals developed for the QEP. The course professor also completes a report for Institutional Assessment that documents students’ attaining the outcomes goals using quantitative and qualitative data.

In addition to general, global audience awareness, students also learn about empathy for accessibility concerns while exploring the creative inquiry question through the final project. In Spring 2024, another undergraduate student team was managed by a graduate student who was conducting her own research on disability rhetorics. The student taught a course module that included discussions about accessibility and images, as well as other

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accessibility issues, such as color blindness, the audience's use of screen readers, and mobility concerns, such as having to scroll through large blocks of text and images in order to view the instructions. Based on the knowledge gained, students were then able to apply these concepts to developing their own replacement guides in ways they had not thought of before, such as considering headings, the number of steps included in each guide, and the colors of bullets used in the instructions. In some cases, students divided larger troubleshooting guides into multiple ones, resulting in more manageable guide length.

Students also consider the implications of recommended tool use for various audiences as they repair their devices because some audience members may not have those tools available or may not be able to afford purchasing (or waiting to purchase) them from iFixit's site. Audiences require accessible images, as well, especially if international viewers may be relying only on the images to complete repairs. Going beyond the actual text instructions, students ensure that their photos are accessible regarding lighting, clarity, and point of view so that they can stand alone, if needed. While iFixit provides guidance through its technical writing team, students benefit from the graduate student instruction and perspective, which can lead to greater empathy development as students complete these projects.⁴

One dynamic impacting ways these students develop empathy for the international iFixit audience is that the students' work is developed on iFixit's platform, which means that students never really interact with the "other" to ensure needs are being met. At the beginning of the course, students learn about iFixit's values as an organization (the right to repair, environmental conservation and preservation), and the videos and narratives on the iFixit site support the communication of those values. The ethos and pathos of iFixit's site encourage empathy development in the students; they *care about* the causes as represented by iFixit as well as the people impacted by these issues. *Caring for* the other in this case involves the action of creating the guides. Because the only way that the audience can respond is through comments on iFixit's site after guide publication, the students rely on the feedback from iFixit's technical writing team, in the meantime. The mediating work of the team provides a guiding response to help students improve their guides and build upon what they are doing well, as well as provide feedback on how well the guides will be meeting the audiences' needs, including those of international users.

⁴ While the Spring 2024 *Technical Editing* instructor tailored the global communication and accessibility modules to match the graduate students' interests, the module topics could be adjusted in the future, if different graduate students were participating, or guest speakers might speak on relevant course topics to broaden students' perspectives and understanding.

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Some comments that demonstrate this type of early mediating feedback include the following:

- Try to keep your device in the same orientation throughout your guide. Rotating your device or changing its position from one step to the next can be confusing and disorienting to your readers.
- You did a great job shooting your photos in first-person perspective. This is very helpful for readers, as this orientation shows what they will see when undertaking the repair.
- Remember to give each guide a descriptive introductory paragraph. The introduction should contain any background information a reader would need before they begin. Think about what you would tell a friend before doing this guide.
- Photos and other visuals are a really important aspect of technical communication—particularly on iFixit, where you have a global audience and not everyone reads English equally well. **Ideally, your readers should be able to complete the guide using *only* the photos, or *only* the text**—each independent of the other.
- Thank you for uploading your photos in their full, original resolution. This is especially important in guide photos where having the ability to inspect small details at full resolution can be really important.
- You’ve done a good job of telling the reader what to do, but you should also tell them **how** to do it. A common pitfall in communication is making the assumption that your audience can fill in the gaps. Keep in mind that a good replacement guide will be helpful to both first-time fixers and veteran repairers alike.⁵

Through this mediating feedback from the technical writing team, students learn more about iFixit’s values, including clarity, context, visibility, understandability, and completeness. Empathizing with these values, which are based in iFixit’s communication and videos, leads to meeting others’ needs through the replacement guide platform.

Faculty chose *Technical Editing* to be part of the certificate originally because of the importance of editing skills; however, in discussions with the CW faculty, we learned that technical editing is not taught in the same way for CW students as in our TPC program. In CW, editing might focus on tone, length, or genre, for example, and editing in TPC might focus on editing for completeness, accuracy, audience expertise level, and technical

⁵ These comments were authored by iFixit’s technical writing team and were provided to students taking *Technical Editing* in Spring 2024 and Spring 2025.

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detail. The role of ethics seemed to be stronger in the editing textbook used for the course, as well. The CW faculty felt that students could gain important perspectives from this TPC course, as well as additional career-readiness skills. The course's QEP components also emphasized a broader framework of issues important for both CW and TPC: Students learn to advocate not only for a cause but also for global and local communities while also being a part of the iFixit community. Through an environmental justice perspective (Butts & Jones, 2021; Haas & Eble, 2018; Haas & Frost, 2017; Sackey, 2018; Stephens & Richards, 2020), students empathize and sympathize with the needs of those who are managing e-waste shipped to them from more industrialized nations. This empathy extends to anticipating the needs of diverse users and designing component replacement guides with their needs in mind. While the type of writing and editing completed for this course is more technical, rather than creative, the broader themes and goals of the iFixit project resonate with students from both disciplines, encourage positive emotional engagement through empathetic identification, and carry over to a completely different project students complete for the second core course, *Literary Magazine Editing*.

ENGL 4460/5460 and the *Iris Review*

Similar to ways the *Technical Editing* core course connects to broader university goals through the QEP, ENGL 4460/5460 (*Literary Magazine Editing*) ties itself into university goals and missions by applying a Faculty Academy Grant, offered through the university, to incorporating technological tools into this magazine editing course. In this case, students use Adobe InDesign to publish a literary magazine titled the *Iris Review*. This journal is published in hardcopy form once a year, in addition to its online platform. This publication draws submissions from students, faculty, and writers from the surrounding area, but anyone is encouraged to submit work. Within *Literary Magazine Editing*, students review entries, recommend revisions, and then upload the resulting works into InDesign. The course has a strong collaborative ethos, since students are invested in accomplishing the same goals for the magazine throughout the term, and many students already know each other from other CW courses they have taken for the CW major or E&P certificate.

Before the Faculty Academy Grant that also enabled the journal to be published online for the first time, the course instructor was frustrated, because some students had Creative Cloud on their computers, but some did not; they did not have access to the same publishing platforms. Some used the free online platform Canva, even though the instructor said not to. Students in the course did not have access to the same media; some students could not afford the same software for their personal laptops that others had purchased using their own funds. The grant enabled the publishing lab to more closely

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mimic a professional environment in class so that students could receive training and experience, using the same current, technological resources standard in the field. Creating a course that more closely resembled a professional environment was important for this instructor, who learned the editing and publishing process by working in the field: Working at a literary journal and then becoming the editor provided industry experience that she introduces students to in the course. Through this industry experience, she built transferrable skills that she now passes along to students, in spite of the lack of texts on these skills from a CW and design perspective. Students will be applying similar skills in a required internship for the certificate.

While the course obviously focuses on teaching students skills in editing and publishing for a literary journal, the course also contributes a community and university partnership approach: Students are helping to publish works by authors outside the university as well as within it. Through their connections to the university and journal community, students demonstrate empathy and care by interacting in diplomatic and professional ways with authors. For example, not all work is accepted for publication in the journal. Students write rejection letters and also send responses to authors about ways to revise their work for future consideration. Under the guidance of the course instructor, students learn more about the investment writers have in their work and the sensitivity that naturally goes along with it; these students are writers themselves and have been practicing giving each other feedback in workshop courses during their program. In addition, some of the topics of the narrative essays authors submit can be very personal, such as trauma experiences or difficult family relationships. Topics can also include unique cultural experiences that require empathy and understanding, even if reviewers are not from the same region. Students are encouraged to apply an empathetic, *caring about* perspective when responding to these personal essays. This process can be somewhat difficult, since students are not interacting with the authors personally, at this point; they are physically distant from the authors when reading the submissions and providing feedback. The instructor's encouragement for students to identify with the authors as fellow writers and to empathize with their personal topics and cultural experiences motivates the students to *care for* these authors through providing feedback. In some cases, the students receive responses from the authors through revision submission letters, and students can see if their revision suggestions were incorporated or were helpful. After revision, the journal can then represent diversity of narratives and stories through publication. Relationships also develop during this process: Students develop relationships with other students as they work on this collaborative effort, they develop connections with authors (many of whom are alumni), and they facilitate relationships with community members and administrators

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who also have a vested interest in the success of this locally produced journal and the public events associated with it.

This core course includes many different ways to promote the work completed for the literary journal to various stakeholders. One event involves organizing and hosting a launch party that university and community members attend and listen to authors read their work. This event and the publication efforts themselves represent multiple modalities for publishing, including online, print, and these public readings, providing opportunities for diverse voices to be heard. Even though administrators have attended some of these events and readings, though, not all see the benefits of this collaboration. To help increase visibility and provide students with the opportunity to showcase their work, students present professional portfolios to faculty and other students as they near completion of their certificates. Multi-disciplinary faculty and students attend these presentations, gaining knowledge about not only skills these students have developed but also opportunities they have to engage with broader issues such as advocacy and community relationships. Many students apply the skills learned in this course to their internships, further expanding the reach and application of their work.

Through these core courses of *Technical Editing* and *Literary Magazine Editing*, students from TPC and CW benefit from scholarly foundations in advocacy and community from the disciplines of TPC and BC; these focuses enhance scholarship in the field by connecting to conversations in responsible technology use and environmental preservation, for example, as well as increased technological skills development when serving local communities and empathetically attending to writers' needs when revising their work. Students also learn the importance of audience response to ensure that needs are actually being met through the communication process. Instructors and students work together to attend to relationship dynamics, as well, through scenarios that position empathy and emotion as prerequisites and motivations for caring, social action (Noddings, 2015, p. 75).

This pairing within the E&P certificate also answers Susan Lang and Laura Palmer's (2017) call to "consider not only one course in editing but potentially a sequence of courses that incorporates the fundamentals and new digital competencies required for editing" (p. 308); the pairing of *Technical Editing* with *Literary Magazine Editing* introduces students to multiple technologies, contexts, audiences, networking opportunities, and relationships. In addition, this E&P certificate, which joins the disciplines of CW and TPC, helps unify department faculty and create various types of community and relationships: Within student teams in these core courses, within the region surrounding the university through recruitment of local writers, within the university itself as it sponsors events surrounding

publication of the literary journal, and even within global contexts as students within the *Technical Editing* course learn to share technical information with multi-lingual audiences.

Discussion and Challenges

When viewed from a holistic perspective, the E&P certificate at Tennessee Tech ties into established theoretical grounding within the related fields of TPC and BC to strengthen the program's foundation and provide a context for the advocacy and relationships approach that the program promotes. Instructors apply these concepts differently to the core courses within the program: *Technical Editing* accomplishes this task a bit more overtly with its creative inquiry focus on service learning for the university's QEP, and *Literary Magazine Editing* extends this application to a more local community. While *Technical Editing* promotes a more global focus through the iFixit platform that has an international audience, *Literary Magazine Editing* has a more personalized and local focus. The complementary pairing of these core courses emphasizes both global and local applications for advocacy and relationships, providing experiences for these students that extend clearly to transferrable skills opportunities, since these students are writing for "real world" audiences and connecting to broader, over-arching concepts. Rather than emphasizing hyper-pragmatism through this skills development, though, the E&P certificate I discuss contextualizes these skills within broader concepts and contexts, including university missions and goals.

Connecting E&P programs with university missions and goals, as well as individual program learning outcomes goals, further solidifies developing E&P disciplinary identities in overall institutional efforts. Doing this will further establish the relevance and need of such programs. For example, similar to how the MLA recommends that English programs promote "career-ready skills" to continue to emphasize relevance, Tennessee Tech includes a similar goal in its strategic plan: "Tennessee Tech innovates in all we do, embracing and deploying our technological foundation in our education, research, service, and stewardship" (Tech Tomorrow Strategic Plan, Goal 2, 2025). The discussion of this strategic plan goal goes on to emphasize "career-ready graduates," which is "a priority action in the strategic plan." Our E&P certificate at Tennessee Tech connects to career readiness in its outcomes goals. Outcome three of the E&P certificate states, "Students will investigate existing professional opportunities through hands-on work in print and digital editing and publishing fields and use their observations to assess potential entrepreneurial job paths" (Hoover, 2025). This outcome connects work done in the classroom, internships, and service-learning class projects to potential job opportunities. In addition, another goal in the strategic plan at Tennessee Tech is "Engagement for

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Impact”; the description mentions partnerships with nonprofit organizations as part of the goal (Tech Tomorrow Strategic Plan, Goal 4, 2025). The continued partnerships through service-learning course projects and internships in the E&P certificate emphasize the connections our certificate courses have with nonprofit organizations, directly connecting to the university’s strategic plan. This type of outcomes goals alignment stresses to administrators how these programs tie in to overall university goals, highlighting their positive impact.

Another way to connect with institutional missions and goals is through accreditation and other valued efforts, such as incorporating technological advances into the classroom. At Tennessee Tech, the *Technical Editing* course benefitted from a QEP grant to enhance creative inquiry efforts, such as partnering with the nonprofit organization iFixit and further demonstrating ways that the course aligns with QEP outcomes goals, in addition to more program-specific outcomes goals. And the *Literary Magazine Editing* course took advantage of another university program, a grant that focused on integrating technology into the course in ways that enhanced accomplishing program outcomes goals. Through this Faculty Academy Grant, the *Literary Magazine Editing* instructor acquired Adobe Creative Cloud for her class to use when creating and publishing the literary journal, and she was able to establish a consistent, online presence for the journal for the first time. Connecting to university accreditation goals and technological efforts in these ways further grounds E&P programs within institutional efforts, draws positive attention to them, and provides support that these programs need to establish themselves at the ground level. In addition, these cross-disciplinary collaborations benefit more than just one program (in this case both TPC and CW programs) and can draw attention to innovative program development from different types of stakeholders.

Developing these cross-disciplinary connections through such a certificate does present challenges. For example, in our E&P program, the certificate requires an internship, but, if program growth occurs too quickly, faculty may have difficulty finding enough internships for students in the rural area where the university is located. Because our TPC concentration and certificate also require internships, competition for internships is growing, and, although the TPC and CW programs currently share internships, tension may develop in the future if students in one program are not able to obtain their desired internship because a student in the other program has already been assigned to it. Similarly, faculty may not want to duplicate service-learning projects from the same nonprofit organizations into these core courses, so making additional connections with

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other nonprofit organizations and communities may be necessary. These types of collaborations take time to build.

Another concern is that faculty do not currently receive release time for supervising student internships or integrating service-learning projects into courses, and the time investment required to maintain these industry and nonprofit connections could result in unseen and unpaid labor as the E&P certificate grows. Another challenge is student recruitment and scheduling: The certificate requires 18 credit hours, and some students are limited in the number of elective hours needed to complete the certificate, due to financial aid and program-of-study restrictions. If students can fit the certificate into their programs of study, they usually have to add it as freshmen in order to ensure they can complete all of the required courses using elective hours before graduation. These restrictions can prevent transfer students from enrolling in the certificate. In Tennessee, students have the opportunity to complete two years of community college tuition free if they meet eligibility requirements, so students who choose this option may not be able to enroll in the certificate, due to a lack of available elective hours, once they transfer to our four-year institution.

Yet another issue is ensuring that students in core courses for E&P programs have access to current technology, preferably technology used in industry. While students can gain some technological expertise through internships and other projects, ideally, resources would be available at the institutional level to assist these programs, although that support can often be absent. In addition, as Lang and Palmer (2017) caution, “Digital technologies and emerging media courses are hotly contested commodities in higher education. Programs in communication studies, new media, instructional design, and more all lay claim to the digital domain and argue vigorously against other programs or departments adopting technology-focused classes” (p. 307). Lang and Palmer encourage advocates of editing courses to frame them “carefully” (p. 307) so that they can survive the committee review process. This caution seems especially fitting for those advocating for E&P programs, since both editing and publishing processes require technological applications and multiple forms of media.

While some of these concerns relate to program growth and academic restrictions, others are related to disciplinary issues closely connected to the field of E&P. For example, TPC has already been experiencing these problems, such as the need to justify the legitimacy of paid labor for coordinating internships and service-learning projects, as well as advising and administering programs, including assessment efforts for accreditation and ongoing review purposes. Connecting theories and concepts from TPC, for example, to E&P in an

effort to further establish its identity as a discipline could also associate E&P programs with professionalization, production/labor, and compensation challenges TPC and other related disciplines have already been seeing.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This certificate program encourages positive affective experiences related to students' disciplines in English, which can result in improved recruitment and retention efforts. Referring to his study of students and why they chose English as a major, Sánchez (2025) writes,

However, that participants' positive emotive language was immediately directed at specific people or experiences when discussing their English major, suggesting that if PTW instructors want to show students that PTW is more than just a means to an end, we need to do more to build in positive emotional experiences for these students. These experiences could include discussing how stories play an important role in TPC as they do in literature or creative writing, focusing on the good that develops from their writing via client-based projects.... In short, building positive emotional associations may help students bridge the connection between past experiences and future goals in English. (p. 257)

The type of positive emotional associations that Sánchez recommends encouraging for our students could be key to helping students recognize the value of the English major, rather than their growing concern that the English major alone doesn't yield skills they can apply in the workplace upon graduation (2025).

The advocacy and community relationships framework that this E&P certificate program supports includes the potential for student growth, also. As Lawrence et al. (2023) mention when discussing their accountability model for Professional and Technical Writing curricula, "Students become responsive and responsible to one another as a collective" (p. 61), ideally, in successful programs. Despite their diverse identities so far, emerging E&P programs have the potential to teach students career-ready skills and unite departments, increasing faculty and students' investment in this discipline. While establishing a unique, disciplinary identity for E&P programs may not be completely feasible at this time, due to the lack of a core curriculum (Baker et al., 2024), tying in to established theories and concepts (recommended by Baker et al., 2024) recognized and respected by multiple disciplines is one way to increase the field's visibility, indicate its relevance in recognizable ways, and avoid encouraging hyper-pragmatist views of the field by stressing the importance of relationships at all levels.

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This article encourages an E&P theoretical grounding similar to the fields of TPC and BC, although the E&P discipline could extend this grounding in areas such as demonstrating care and empathy more explicitly and identifying core organizational values through narratives and stories, then publicizing them to academic and professional audiences more widely. Students and E&P program administrators can then apply that knowledge to establish purposeful relationships resulting in advocacy and publications that reflect authentic collaboration. In addition, the results of these efforts could be documented in assessment reports and other institutional and public-facing documents for broader, administrative audiences and could emphasize the benefits of such programs in a time when related disciplines are trying to justify their existence and build enrollments. Drawing upon common theoretical concepts, such as the ones discussed here, might be a way to establish a more common identity for these programs. While core courses might be different in their theoretical grounding and resulting applications, these programs could share a common theoretical orientation that could lead to more unity within the field. In addition, following Sánchez's (2025) recommendations, this theoretical orientation could help students develop more positive emotional investments in E&P, which could apply also to increasing positive views about the relevance of degrees within English.

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Editors as Entrepreneurs: Reframing Occupational Identity in Publishing

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Abstract This article examines how freelance editors in the twenty-first century book publishing industry develop entrepreneurial identities by navigating rather than resolving inherent professional contradictions. Drawing on 15 qualitative semi-structured interviews with freelance editors, this study identifies three core paradoxes that define contemporary editorial entrepreneurship: risk/stability tensions in business growth, culture/commerce conflicts between artistic integrity and market demands, and editor/entrepreneur identity contradictions between collaborative service orientation and competitive self-promotion. The findings reveal that editorial success depends on developing a paradox mindset: The capacity to simultaneously leverage contradictory demands rather than integrating or resolving them. Successful editors employ sophisticated strategies including diversification, values-based business positioning, and contextual identity performance. Rather than choosing between competing orientations, paradox-mindset editors create business models that provide both risk and stability, make cultural commitments the foundation of commercial strategy, and develop hybrid professional identities that transcend traditional categories. This study contributes to the emerging disciplinary identity of Editing and Publishing (E&P), and these findings suggest that E&P programs should teach paradox navigation as a core competency to prepare students to be editor entrepreneurs. This study contributes to entrepreneurship theory by demonstrating how creative entrepreneurs can transform inherent contradictions into competitive advantages, with broader implications for understanding professional success in the increasingly complex gig economy.

Keywords editors, entrepreneurship, paradox mindset, occupational identity, freelance

Freelance editors in the twenty-first century are entrepreneurs as well as editors, which requires that they manage the contradictions between business and culture. Being a creative entrepreneur is fundamentally paradoxical “because conflicting tensions arise between the market and the arts” (Koch et al., 2023, p. 281). This paradoxical environment, characterized by the tension between cultural capital and economic capital (Bourdieu,

1984), defines the contemporary landscape for freelance editors who must function as entrepreneurs to sustain their careers. However, in this context, editors develop entrepreneurial identities by navigating rather than resolving the inherent professional contradictions of being a creative entrepreneur.

The book publishing industry has undergone dramatic transformation over the past several decades, fundamentally altering the nature of editorial work and career trajectories. Three macro events have been particularly impactful on editors as entrepreneurs: the outsourcing of editorial work and downsizing of publishing companies, the explosive rise of self-published authors seeking professional editorial services, and the COVID-19 pandemic's acceleration of remote work and industry disruption. These shifts have created what Padmini Ray Murray and Claire Squires describe as “a more fragmented and atomized work culture” where “fledgling companies are more likely to be built as lean start-ups” that employ people “only when a need for a certain skillset is demonstrated” (2013, p. 12).

This transformation has pushed editorial work increasingly toward freelance arrangements, creating a professional landscape where editors must develop entrepreneurial mindsets to navigate successfully. The shift represents more than industry restructuring, fundamentally signaling a reorientation of how editorial expertise is valued, practiced, and compensated within the publishing ecosystem. Traditional employment categories blur as editors discover, evaluate, and exploit opportunities to create services (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), while accepting the inherent risks that define entrepreneurship (Dollinger, 2008; Mokaya et al., 2012; Koudstaal et al., 2016).

However, existing research has largely overlooked the unique challenges facing freelance editors as they construct and maintain professional identities that span both creative and commercial domains. This study addresses this gap by examining how freelance editors navigate and develop their entrepreneurial identities within an industry characterized by persistent contradictions between artistic integrity and market demands.

The Entrepreneurial Turn in Editing

Freelance editorial work has been characterized as entrepreneurship (Akhmetshin et al., 2018), particularly within the publishing industry (Noorda, 2021; Stanworth & Stanworth, 1997). Editorial freelancers qualify as entrepreneurs because they discover, evaluate, and exploit opportunities to create services (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Risk-taking, a defining characteristic of entrepreneurship (Dollinger, 2008; Mokaya et al., 2012; Koudstaal et al., 2016), is also inherent in freelance editing work. The entrepreneurial turn

in editing has created a spectrum of entrepreneurial identity for editors, where traditional employment categories blur and new forms of professional agency emerge (Noorda, 2021).

The entrepreneurial imperative facing contemporary editors extends beyond individual career choices, encompassing broader questions about the future of editorial expertise in the publishing landscape. Publishers have traditionally served as gatekeepers in the industry, but self-publishing has disrupted that system, flooding the marketplace, which “creates a problem both for the author and for the potential reader” (Hviid et al., 2019, p. 373). In this context, freelance editors have emerged as crucial intermediaries, providing quality assurance and professional guidance both inside and outside traditional institutional frameworks.

The Feminization and Freelancification of Editorial Work

The contemporary landscape of freelance editorial work cannot be understood without examining its historical context. Editing was originally a male-dominated profession, but by the late 1970s and early 1980s, two-thirds of editors were women (Reskin, 1990). This feminization occurred alongside industry consolidation, creating what Debra Osnowitz (2007) argues were mutually reinforcing dynamics: “Freelancing thus seemed gender appropriate, an arrangement for women, for whom paid work could appear to be a secondary pursuit” (p. 463).

The gendered nature of freelance editorial work has significant implications for how editors construct entrepreneurial identities. Women editors have historically been more willing to accept freelance arrangements and lower compensation rates, often due to having “another source of income, placed low priority on earnings, or lacked better-paying alternatives” (Reskin, 1990, p. 103). This pattern persists today in publishing, illustrated even in the language used in job descriptions. In the UK, for example, Miriam Johnson demonstrated that publishing job advertisements in *The Bookseller* with strongly feminine-coded language earned an average of £34,600 compared to £42,556 for strongly masculine-coded positions (2024).

However, characterizing freelance editors merely as victims of industry restructuring or gender discrimination oversimplifies the story and ignores their agency. As Christine Larson (2020) argues, “To deny the dark side of insecure employment seems disingenuous and short-sighted; to dismiss the potential opportunities of self-entrepreneurism, however, precludes the potential of resistance and resilience in the face of new economic

structures” (p. 1893). This article aims to address both the challenges and opportunities of entrepreneurship for freelance editors, based on the narratives that freelance editors tell about themselves and their occupational journeys.

The Rise of Self-Publishing and Editorial Demand

The growth of self-publishing has fundamentally transformed the editorial services market, creating unprecedented opportunities for freelance editors while simultaneously challenging traditional publishing gatekeeping functions. The introduction of ebooks and print-on-demand technology, particularly following the 2007 launch of the Kindle, facilitated explosive growth in self-publishing (Hviid et al., 2019). According to Bowker data, in 2017, the number of self-published ISBNs topped one million for the first time (Milliot, 2023). By 2023, only six years later, that number was 2.6 million, a 160% increase (Albanese & Milliot, 2024).

This dramatic expansion has created substantial demand for professional editorial services outside traditional publishing houses. Self-published authors increasingly recognize that professional editing is essential for market competitiveness, as one author explained in Henrik Fürst's study: “You have to get filters. I tested my manuscript on friends and family. But I understood that this was not a sufficient test. I hired a freelance editor. I asked her for her tough opinion” (2019, p. 493). This recognition has driven significant growth in freelance editorial services as well as membership in editorial trade organizations, with Editorial Freelancers Association membership growing from 2,200 to over 3,300 in the past decade.

The economic impact of this shift is substantial. For example, the freelancer marketplace Reedsy estimates that in 2025, self-publishing a book costs roughly between \$2,940 and \$5,660, data based on over 230,000 freelancer quotes on Reedsy (Villirilli, 2025). The cost for editing, specifically (for an 80,000-word book) is estimated to be between \$2,000 and \$4,720. Of course, editing costs specifically depend on the length of the book, the type of editorial work needed, and the experience of the editor. Nonetheless, what this data does reveal is that editorial costs are the bulk of the cost for self-publishing a book. Unlike traditional publishing where editors are employed by houses, self-publishing creates direct author-editor relationships that bypass institutional intermediaries. This market structure enables editors to command higher rates while building ongoing relationships with productive authors who publish multiple titles annually.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated these trends, as traditional publishing workflows were disrupted (Guren, McIlroy, & Sieck, 2021) and authors increasingly sought

direct access to editorial services (Greenberg, 2010; Poliakova, 2021). Layoffs and furloughs hit in-house editors hard during the pandemic (Milliot, 2020; Tracy, 2020), and many turned to freelance work as a result (Terrell, 2020). Simultaneously, book sales soared (Milliot, 2021; Curcic, 2023) despite global supply chain issues, demonstrating both the vulnerability and resilience of freelance editors while highlighting their capacity to adapt quickly to changing market conditions (Berliner, 2020).

Paradox Theory and Creative Entrepreneurship

Paradox theory offers a particularly apt lens for understanding the challenges facing contemporary freelance editors. Wendy K. Smith and Marianne W. Lewis define paradox as “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (2011, p. 382). Unlike problems that can be solved through rational analysis or tensions that can be resolved through compromise, paradoxes represent persistent contradictions that require ongoing management rather than resolution.

For creative entrepreneurs, these paradoxes are especially pronounced. Eric Knight and Will Harvey assert, “by definition, creative industry implies an inherent tension. Creative organizations seek to produce novel, innovative conceptions, yet they are simultaneously called on to be efficient, repetitive, and exploitative” (2015, p. 822). The creative industries are characterized by what Richard Caves (2000) calls “nobody knows” properties: high uncertainty about market reception combined with the need to maintain artistic integrity. This creates an environment where traditional business logic often conflicts with creative imperatives: a fundamental paradox. Research shows several examples of paradoxes in the creative industries. For example, the fashion industry exemplifies tensions between artistic design logic and market-driven business logic in a sustainability paradox as the industry has shifted from art-centered to market-centered production; in this paradox, sustainability ethics are juxtaposed with the push to mass produce fast fashion (Dzhengiz et al., 2023). Arthur De Vany & David W. Walls (2004) demonstrates that successful films follow a Pareto distribution with infinite variance, meaning traditional statistical prediction methods fundamentally fail: This is the “nobody knows” properties that Caves mentioned as marketing and artistic integrity come into tension for high-risk markets. Michael Pokorny, Peter Miskell, and John Sedgwick (2019) explore this tension, noting the central paradox: “The film industry is a creative industry in which novelty is an essential aspect. As a consequence, it is characterized by high levels of uncertainty for both producer and consumer. Yet the firms that dominate global film distribution have remained remarkably stable over the last century” (p. 23).

The concept of paradox mindset is particularly relevant to understanding how successful creative entrepreneurs navigate their professional identities. Rather than viewing contradictory demands as problems to be solved, individuals with a high paradox mindset “leverage experienced tensions to achieve beneficial outcomes” (Miron-Spektor et al., 2016). This approach acknowledges that the tensions inherent in creative entrepreneurship are not problems to be fixed but features to be managed dynamically. Individuals with a paradox mindset have been shown to be more creative than others (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011) and more innovative (Liu et al., 2020), essential qualities for entrepreneurship (Bolton & Thompson, 2000).

Gender also inflects the context of the paradox mindset. Lydia Amaro and Caren Brenda Scheepers (2023) found that women, particularly, faced paradoxical tensions and expectations. In their study of women leaders, the researchers found that authenticity and awareness enabled women to adopt a paradox mindset and that this mindset helped the women adapt to the work environment or curate their own subenvironment. Given the feminization of editorial work over the last 50 years, this gender context is also relevant to understanding the paradox mindset in editors as entrepreneurs.

This study addresses the following research question: How do freelance editors develop and deploy paradox mindset to navigate the inherent tensions of creative entrepreneurship? By focusing on paradox navigation rather than paradox resolution, this study contributes to both entrepreneurship literature and publishing studies.

Methodology

Entrepreneurial identity formation is a complex process that involves what Mats Alvesson, Karen Lee Ashcraft, and Robyn Thomas (2008) term “identity work”: the ongoing effort to construct, maintain, and modify professional self-concepts. For freelance editors, this work is particularly challenging because it requires integrating often contradictory elements: creative and commercial orientations, collaborative and competitive behaviors, service and leadership roles.

This study employs a discursive approach to entrepreneurship, representing what Denise Fletcher has termed the “fifth movement in entrepreneurial research” in which entrepreneurial knowledge is produced “through language and discourse” (Fletcher, 2003). Narrative, as a discursive practice, provides a methodology for investigating how entrepreneurship processes are “socially constructed through language” (Jones et al., 2008). Audretsch and Lehmann argue that all entrepreneurs are storytellers, and narrative serves scholars of entrepreneurship “as an inductive methodology employed to analyse

entrepreneurship ... and everything surrounding and influencing that phenomenon” (2023). Moreover, entrepreneurial narratives “have the potential to influence an individual’s perceptions, intentions, and decisions about the entrepreneurial process” (Dong & Bao 2024), making them both objects of study and active forces in entrepreneurial practice.

The narrative approach is grounded in the understanding that identities are fundamentally produced through narrative (Down, 2006; Downing, 2005; Hamilton, 2014). Narratives perform critical functions in entrepreneurial identity construction: They give meaning and value to events, mediate experiences, and “play a critical role in the process of sensemaking” (Byrne & Shepherd, 2015, p. 376). Crucially, “we are always reinterpreting our identity, drawing on narratives available to us via our culture embedded in our social and historical context” (Hamilton, 2014, p. 706). Identities thus emerge not from fixed characteristics but through ongoing narrative work.

The recognition that entrepreneurial identity is itself a narrative construction (Down, 2006; Downing, 2005; Hamilton, 2014) has led to the increasing adoption of narrative approaches and methodologies within entrepreneurship scholarship. Studies employing narrative methodologies have examined how entrepreneurs construct identity through stories (Bjursell & Melin 2011; Johansson, 2004), how narrative serves as a discursive resource for identity work (Larson & Pearson, 2012, p. 250), and how entrepreneurial innovation is contextualized through narrative perspectives (Garud, 2014). This body of work demonstrates that entrepreneurial narratives “assist in understanding what motivates individual entrepreneurs and how their businesses operate” (Fillis, 2015, p. 432).

The narrative approach has significant implications. Interviews themselves function as a type of narrative, allowing researchers to explore how interviewees rhetorically position themselves, with emphasis on “their description of their practices and processes rather than the practices and processes themselves” (Squires, 2021, p. 205). As Squires argues, “These discursive positionings are both part of their practice ... and [are] actively constitutive of those practices” (Squires, 2021, p. 205).

Interviews thus operate on two levels: as narratives in their own right, and as sites where interviewees deploy discursive practices and rhetorical positions rooted in socially embedded cultural narratives of entrepreneurship. This dual character makes interviews particularly valuable for examining how entrepreneurs construct and perform their identities through narrative resources available within their specific social, cultural, and historical contexts.

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In order to utilize the narrative approach in this study, I employed a qualitative methodology to understand how freelance editors construct and navigate entrepreneurial identities. Given the complex, contextual, and processual nature of entrepreneurial identity formation, qualitative interviews provided the most appropriate method for capturing the nuanced ways editors experience and make sense of their professional roles.

The Institutional Review Board at Portland State University reviewed and exempted this research (Protocol #850). Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with freelance editors recruited through the Editorial Freelancers Association. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure geographic diversity and range of editorial specializations. The sample included editors from across the United States, and a few from outside the U.S.: Arkansas, California, South Carolina, Colorado, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Montana, New York, Toronto, Serbia, India, and Pakistan.

Participants represented diverse editorial specializations in editorial types (developmental, copyediting, proofreading, etc.) and areas (academic, medical, children's, fiction, nonfiction, etc.). Experience levels ranged from emerging freelancers with 2–3 years of experience to established professionals with over two decades in the field.

Semi-structured interviews lasting 60–90 minutes were conducted via Zoom during 2025. Questions were framed to encourage narrative responses (refer to Appendix A), allowing participants to construct and share stories about their professional experiences. Interview transcripts were analyzed using a grounded theory approach combined with content analysis, with the concept of paradox mindset emerging inductively from the data.

The research questions were designed to explore editors' entrepreneurial identities and experiences through an intersectional, biographical lens along key themes of identity construction and self-perception, sensemaking and defining entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial practice, context and constraint, and career trajectories and decision making. Interviews provided data about whether editors see themselves as entrepreneurs, the relationship between professional identity and entrepreneurial identity, how social identities shape entrepreneurial experience, how editors conceptualize entrepreneurship and negotiate public perceptions of entrepreneurship, daily operations and routines, risk navigation and adaptation strategies, business management and branding, industry-specific challenges and affordances, geographic/location influences, structural changes and responses, pathways into editorial work, and work-life integration choices.

The questions progressed strategically during each interview from general to specific, past to present, and descriptive to reflective, allowing rapport-building while capturing both objective circumstances and subjective meaning-making. The questions were designed to surface tensions between traditional employment and entrepreneurial self-understanding in the creative industries. Thus, the interviews provided a phenomenological inquiry with elements of narrative/life history methods, critical/intersectional analysis, and grounded theory orientation. In particular, the grounded theory orientation was crucial to the methodology and design, where open-ended and exploratory framing could avoid imposing predetermined categories and minimal theoretical presumption leaves classifications open in a process-focused inquiry that surfaces gaps between expectations and experiences to explore where interesting theoretical tensions lie.

Once the interview data was collected, recorded, and transcribed, content analysis was conducted to develop themes. The online free qualitative content analysis tool Taguette was used to organize the content analysis tags and themes. Tags were derived inductively from the data and included personal and demographic characteristics (age, family, location, etc.), entrepreneurial pathway, human capital, brand and business identity, financial management and risk, services and operations, client acquisition and marketing, social capital and networks, industry context and change, and work structure and lifestyle.

Findings

Analysis of the interview data revealed that freelance editors must navigate three core paradoxes to build sustainable entrepreneurial careers: **(1) the risk/stability paradox** in business development, **(2) the culture/commerce paradox** between artistic integrity and market demands, and **(3) the editor/entrepreneur identity paradox** between collaborative service orientation and competitive self-promotion. Rather than resolving these tensions, successful editors develop a *paradox mindset*: the ability to simultaneously embrace contradictory demands and leverage them for professional advantage.

This section examines each paradox in turn, demonstrating how editors with a paradox mindset transform inherent contradictions into competitive advantages through sophisticated navigation strategies. The analysis reveals that editorial success depends not on choosing between competing orientations, but on developing the capacity to hold contradictions in productive tension.

Paradox 1: Risk/Stability Tensions

The risk-stability paradox represents the fundamental tension between entrepreneurial growth and professional security. Risk is a crucial aspect of entrepreneurship, which Ulrich Bröckling characterizes as one of the four main functions of an entrepreneur: risk-bearer (2015). To build a successful business, an entrepreneur must take risks, juxtaposed with measures of stability. Growth and innovation require experimenting with new clients, services, pricing strategies, and market positioning, which are all inherently risky endeavors. Yet quality editorial work demands consistency, reliability, predictable workflows, and stable client relationships. Freelance editors manage this paradox through three primary strategies that enable them to embrace both risk and stability simultaneously.

Reconceptualizing Risk as Competitive Advantage

Editors with a paradox mindset demonstrate sophisticated approaches to risk reconceptualization. Rather than viewing risk as a threat to be minimized, they position uncertainty as a competitive advantage. One editor explained their market positioning: “Send us your nightmares. If you really can't figure out how to get something done, we'll figure it out for you.” By specifically targeting the most challenging projects that other editors avoided, this editor earned premium rates while satisfying their need for intellectual stimulation.

Another editor demonstrated paradox mindset by placing individual risk within broader economic context: “The kind of micro business that we're running... is lost in the noise on that economic curve... There's somebody who can afford our services and wants it.” This perspective acknowledges macroeconomic uncertainty while highlighting the resilience that comes from operating at smaller scale, viewing economic volatility as creating opportunities for nimble, specialized service providers.

Strategic Diversification

Using a paradox mindset, editors employed diversification strategies that embraced rather than resolved the risk/stability tension. These strategies operated across multiple dimensions: balancing steady, regular lower-paying clients with one-off higher-paying clients; maintaining 8–10 clients with intentionally varied payment levels and schedules; and expanding into complementary services while deepening core editorial expertise.

Several editors balanced self-published authors with small publishers and other client types. Generally, self-published authors are higher-paying but less predictable, while

publishers are lower-paying but steadier. As one editor explained: “I try to keep no customers ever more than 30% of my work” to avoid over-reliance on any single revenue source. This approach provides multiple payment schedules that maintain cash flow while preserving flexibility for diverse projects.

Structured Flexibility

Perhaps the most sophisticated manifestation of paradox mindset was what emerged as structured flexibility: the ability to maintain both rigid planning and adaptive responsiveness. One editor described their approach: “I like to have as much of my schedule for the next year planned out as possible” while simultaneously maintaining openings for last-minute work. Rather than choosing between careful planning and flexible responsiveness, they built systems that enabled both through planned time off and predictable project schedules alongside capacity for urgent, premium-rate opportunities.

Paradox 2: Culture/Commerce Tensions

The culture-commerce paradox reflects broader tensions within the publishing industry, where books are simultaneously cultural artifacts and commercial products (Koegler & Norrick-Rühl 2023). For freelance editors, this tension is particularly acute because they must personally embody both orientations within their individual practices. Editors navigate this paradox through values-based business strategies that make cultural commitments the foundation of commercial success.

Values-Based Business Positioning

Editors with a paradox mindset implement business strategies driven by personal values that simultaneously create distinctive market positioning. One editor focused specifically on serving first-generation college students and women writers while running a profitable business, leveraging social commitments to create deep client loyalty rather than viewing values as constraining business potential.

Another editor chose to work with non-native English speakers, finding this rewarding because “I understood [the writers] had to publish in English, and they were at a disadvantage... I knew I was contributing to their career as well as getting paid.” This values-driven positioning created both meaningful work and sustainable competitive advantage in an underserved market segment.

Relationship-Centered Philosophy

Successful freelance editors prioritize authentic relationships over transactional professionalism, recognizing that book publishing is fundamentally a relationship business (Thompson, 2012). One editor noted: “I’ve always felt like we all do ourselves a disservice by not seeing that there’s a human on the other side of the equation.” This relationship focus extends to author development over immediate transactions: “My goal as an editor is to help my authors become better writers.”

Importantly, this relationship orientation coexists with sophisticated business practices. Editors maintain strict commercial boundaries through detailed contracts, kill fees, and immediate termination of abusive clients while simultaneously investing in long-term client relationships and community engagement. As one editor explained: “I don’t promote myself as ‘hire me’ but ‘I can help you,’” demonstrating how cultural values become commercial strategy.

Volunteer work is another way that editors build relationships in their communities. One editor maintains relationships with low-paying clients not for commercial reasons but for cultural and relational ones. Another editor provides free consulting that takes significant time for a volunteer nonprofit organization: “I’ve always treated the volunteer things as being as important as the work things because they achieve what I want to achieve and give me lots of credibility and profile.” This creates a paradox where unpaid work directly fuels commercial success. One editor volunteers extensively in local government and the library, demonstrating a commitment to community values while noting: “I have met people through these opportunities who then refer clients to me or approach me about editing their own manuscripts, which is a nice perk, but it’s something I also enjoy on its own merits.” Thus, this editor maintains genuine community engagement while staying attuned to business benefits.

Strategic Authenticity

Editors leverage personal identity as cultural currency while building professional authority. One BIPOC editor had initially hidden their identity due to bias but recently began authentic self-presentation: “I was flooded with people, and it was amazing.” Rather than abandoning cultural values to attain commercial success, this editor monetized cultural expertise while creating more representative editorial services.

Another editor wrestled with social media feeling “false” while recognizing its purpose for their business. They resolved to find authentic ways to market themselves on social media, focusing “more about my style than about my editing” on Instagram. Genuineness and

make-up free photos on social media are contrasted by other investments in professional marketing materials and web design. In discussing their brand, one editor said, “I just want to be my normal natural self. And I hope that that comes off as very clear on my website that I'm not stuffy and corporate.”

Technology Adaptation

Many technological changes have impacted the publishing industry in the last few decades: ebooks, print on demand, the internet, platforms, and design software. But the large technological shift currently is GenAI.

Perspectives ranged amongst editors. From “I hate AI with every atom of my being” to “you need to understand what it can do ... and figure out how to use it.” In some ways, AI exemplifies paradox and editors struggled with the tensions of both the practical realities and the ethical complexities. While some editors did not use AI at all, others talked about how they or their authors used it: for dictation, generating contract templates, image enhancement, and non-native language editing, for example. Several editors talked about losing jobs and clients to AI. What became very clear was that there is value in a human editor, but that in the age of GenAI, editors needed to work harder to articulate that value to clients.

One editor took a pragmatic approach: “Are you going to pay me my regular rate? Because if you’re going to pay my regular rate, I don’t care [if you use AI].” This stance illustrates sophisticated navigation of technology tensions, adapting services to maintain relevance while preserving editorial expertise.

Many editors have, over the years, adapted their services and offerings to accommodate a holistic editorial experience, incorporate writing, and generally move more toward relationship-building and other aspects of editorial work that are untouched by AI. When AI threatened traditional editing, they invested heavily in learning new editorial skills: structural rewriting, visual abstracts, and translation management, for example.

Regarding technology, particularly GenAI, editors demonstrated paradox mindset by neither fully embracing nor rejecting technological change.

Paradox 3: Editor/Entrepreneur Identity Navigation

The third core paradox involves integrating the traditionally service-oriented, collaborative, craft-focused identity of the editor with the self-promotional, competitive, profit-focused identity of the entrepreneur. This paradox is particularly challenging because editorial

training typically emphasizes self-effacement and behind-the-scenes work, while entrepreneurial success requires visibility and self-advocacy.

Reconceptualizing Entrepreneurship

Freelance editors show significant resistance to identifying as entrepreneurs, instead preferring terms like “small business owner,” “solopreneur,” or “independent service provider.” This reluctance stems from several factors: many associate entrepreneurship with growth-orientation and scaling businesses rather than simply earning a living, while others view editorial freelancing as an established service rather than innovative entrepreneurship.

One editor defined entrepreneurship as “someone who sees how to scale a business,” while describing themselves as “driven to get enough money to live” rather than build a growth-oriented enterprise. Another explained: “I would not describe myself as an entrepreneur. I would definitely say that I have entrepreneurial skills, but an entrepreneur is someone who is starting a business and scaling up.” This distinction between possessing entrepreneurial skills and embracing entrepreneurial identity reveals sophisticated identity work that preserves editorial values while acknowledging business reality.

Hybrid Professional Identity Construction

Editors with a paradox mindset construct hybrid professional identities that integrate both orientations rather than choosing one over the other. One editor described their approach: “I don’t call myself an entrepreneur, although that is what I am.” Many editors preferred terms that captured both service orientation and business sophistication, with one explaining their preference for “small business owner”: “I’m established, and I tend to think of entrepreneurs as people who are still trying to get it off the ground.” This choice of professional terminology reflects deeper identity integration strategies, allowing the editor to acknowledge their business acumen while distinguishing themselves from startup culture’s growth-oriented rhetoric that felt inconsistent with editorial values.

Contextual Identity Performance

Most importantly, editors with paradox mindset demonstrated sophisticated understanding of when and how to emphasize different aspects of their hybrid identities. One editor described positioning themselves differently for three client types: as a knowledgeable guide, a reliable professional, and a systematic expert. This contextual

approach illustrates how editors avoid rigid identity consistency, instead adapting self-presentation to client needs while maintaining core professional integrity.

All interviewed editors could be defined as entrepreneurs and demonstrated clear business thinking: risk management, strategic diversification, client management, and brand building. However, they generally saw themselves as “editor first and business owner second,” while simultaneously acknowledging: “I realize that maybe I am more of an entrepreneur than I give myself credit for.” This real-time paradox recognition illustrates the ongoing identity work required to navigate entrepreneurial editing successfully.

Paradox Mindset as Competitive Advantage

The analysis of interviews with freelance editors demonstrates several strategies that freelance editors use to manage the paradoxes of risk and stability, commerce and culture, and editor and entrepreneur identities. When it comes to risk and stability, editors reconceptualize risk and also diversify clients, payment schedules, editorial areas, etc. to hold both risk and stability simultaneously. For commerce and culture, there are particular business strategies and philosophies that editors use for the paradox, focusing on values-based and relationship-centered approaches in addition to strategic authenticity. Technology adaptation, particularly adaptations to GenAI, illustrate how editors use a paradox mindset to manage industry change. Finally, freelance editors hold the two often conflicting identities of editor and entrepreneur by reconceptualizing what an entrepreneur is and exploring alternate terminology, in addition to developing hybrid and contextual professional identities.

The findings reveal that freelance editorial success is not determined by resolving professional contradictions through skills acquisition or identity integration, but rather by developing the capacity to hold contradictions in productive tension. This capacity (a paradox mindset) represents a fundamental reorientation toward complexity and ambiguity that enables creative entrepreneurs to thrive in inherently contradictory environments. Traditional approaches to professional development often emphasize integration and resolving of tensions and contradictions. The findings of this study suggest that such approaches may be counterproductive for creative entrepreneurs who operate in inherently paradoxical environments.

Editors with a paradox mindset don’t eliminate contradictions; they leverage them. Rather than choosing between risk and stability, they create business models that provide both. Instead of resolving culture and commerce tensions, they make cultural and creative authenticity the foundation of commercial strategy. Rather than integrating editor and

entrepreneur identities, they develop contextual competence in performing both roles as circumstances require.

The findings have significant implications for how editing and publishing programs prepare students for contemporary professional realities. First, education for editing and publishing needs to include and emphasize business skills and entrepreneurship development alongside technical editing skills. Second, building a paradox mindset should be a core competency to aid students in identifying and navigating the contradictions of contemporary editorial freelance work. Students would benefit from activities that help them identify paradoxes and build a paradox mindset, activities such as case studies, experiential learning, and real-world projects that require simultaneous attention to cultural and commercial considerations. Third, identity work is also branding and positioning work. E&P programs might include explicit attention to professional identity construction, helping students develop capacity for hybrid role performance rather than assuming consistent professional identity. Finally, situational awareness and flexible, agile, and adaptive capacity in different professional contexts is crucial for freelance editors, and E&P programs would benefit from working to develop these qualities rather than teaching “universal” business principles.

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. The focus on primarily U.S.-based freelance editors limits generalizability to other roles in the publishing industry or creative entrepreneurship contexts. The interview methodology captures sense-making rather than real-time paradox navigation that could observe paradox mindset in action. Future research might also explore how a paradox mindset develops over time and what environmental factors support or hinder its development. Quantitative research could test whether paradox mindset predicts entrepreneurial success better than traditional measures of business knowledge or personality traits. Additionally, research examining how paradox mindset operates in other creative entrepreneurship contexts (freelance designers, writers, or artists) could illuminate whether these findings extend beyond editorial work to creative entrepreneurship more broadly.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that challenges facing contemporary freelance editors reflect broader transformations in creative work requiring new approaches to professional identity and career development. By applying paradox theory to understand freelance editorial practice, this study contributes theoretically informed, empirically grounded research that strengthens the emerging disciplinary identity of E&P. The shift toward freelance

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arrangements represents not merely an economic phenomenon but a fundamental reorientation of how creative expertise is utilized and valued.

The concept of paradox mindset offers a useful framework for understanding how creative entrepreneurs can thrive in inherently contradictory environments. Rather than viewing tensions between culture and commerce, risk and stability, or editor and entrepreneurial identities and orientations as problems to be solved, editors with this mindset leverage contradictions as sources of competitive advantage. This theoretical lens demonstrates how publishing scholarship can engage meaningfully with contemporary organizational theory while remaining grounded in industry realities, bridging what Andrew Ciofalo (1988) identified as the need for “a deep and meaningful connection” between academic institutions and industry (p.3) while avoiding what Simone Murray (2007) critiqued as the field’s vulnerability to being seen as merely “a fringe intellectual undertaking” (p. 3).

The study’s approach parallels E&P’s own revolution. Just as freelance editors must navigate multiple, often contradictory professional orientations simultaneously, the E&P discipline is learning to productively hold tensions between competing demands: academic legitimacy and vocational relevance, theoretical inquiry and practical application, disciplinary coherence and interdisciplinary openness. Jocelyn Hargrave calls this the “shared vocabulary and editorial understanding” necessary to “connect industry with academia” while contributing original theoretical insights to broader scholarly conversations about creative labor and professional identity (2022, p.3).

For editing and publishing education, these findings suggest pedagogical approaches that prepare students not just with technical skills but with the cognitive and emotional capacity to navigate complexity. The vision of editors as “digitally savvy communication consultants, coders, teachers, mentors and advocates for accessibility and inclusivity” reflects this expanded professional identity (Lee, 2019, p. 17). This study provides empirical evidence for what such preparation must entail: developing students’ capacity to recognize, articulate, and productively leverage professional contradictions rather than seeking to resolve them.

This study contributes to E&P’s disciplinary legitimacy by demonstrating methodological rigor and theoretical engagement. Rather than offering purely descriptive accounts or vocational advice, it employs systematic qualitative research methods and draws on established theoretical frameworks to generate new knowledge about contemporary editorial practice. This approach addresses the field’s historical challenge of being perceived as lacking “theoretical and methodological rigour” (Murray, 2007). By showing how organizational theories of paradox can illuminate creative professional practice, the

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research expands E&P's theoretical toolkit while maintaining focus on the material realities of publishing work, offering a scholarly contribution that is theoretically and empirically grounded and practically relevant. The implications extend beyond publishing to creative entrepreneurship generally, yet the study's grounding in specific editorial contexts demonstrates E&P's potential to contribute distinctive insights to broader conversations about the future of creative professional work.

The path forward for editors lies not in choosing between competing professional orientations but in developing the capacity to embody multiple orientations simultaneously. For freelance editors, this means being fully both editor and entrepreneur, cultural advocate and commercial strategist, collaborative partner and competitive business owner, which is a source of sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly complex creative economy. For the E&P discipline, this study demonstrates how theoretically informed research into contemporary editorial practice can simultaneously advance scholarly knowledge, inform industry practice, and enrich educational pedagogy: embodying the “industry-relevant research that provides market-ready, employable students with strong industry links” while maintaining academic rigor (Baverstock, 2020). In modeling this approach, the research not only illuminates freelance editorial practice but also demonstrates how E&P scholarship can establish its legitimacy as a discipline that productively occupies the spaces between theory and practice, academy and industry, stability and change.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Tell me about your professional background.

Tell me about your educational background.

Would you describe yourself as an entrepreneur? Why or why not?

How do you define the terms “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship”?

What do you see as the general public perception of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship?

Have you had any experiences in which you have had to describe, defend, or engage with these perceptions?

Are there particular aspects of your personality that you see as especially well suited (or not) to the entrepreneurship lifestyle?

Tell me about your work/life balance.

How (if at all) has your gender identity, race and socio-economic background influenced you as an entrepreneur?

Why did you become an editor? Talk me through that decision process.

What challenges do you face as an editor that other book publishing professionals do not have to deal with? How have you tackled those?

What advantages are there to being an editor, particularly in comparison to other roles in the industry?

What aspect of being an editor most surprised you?

Tell me about what the business side of being an editor looks like for you.

What does a typical workday look like for you?

How does where you currently live influence your business?

Are there particular networking opportunities that you find especially useful and/or enjoyable as an editor?

What are the power structures and gatekeepers in the industry that both help and hinder you as an editor?

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Teaching Technical Editing: Teacher Perspectives on Pedagogical Challenges and Implications for Teacher Training

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Abstract This article presents a case study of the evolution and pedagogical challenges of teaching an upper-level undergraduate *Technical Editing and Style* course at a research-intensive university in the Southeastern United States. Drawing on interviews with six instructors across ranks—from graduate students to instructors to tenured faculty—we explore how the course has changed over time in terms of textbooks, industry alignment, and technology integration. Our findings reveal that while the course structure has remained largely consistent since its creation, instructors have adapted materials and assignments to reflect shifts in editing practices in various ways and often note the course as being one of the most rewarding to teach, citing its impact on students’ professional development and rhetorical awareness. We then identify five key pedagogical challenges and advocate for greater support and resources for instructors, especially as editing pedagogy must now address the implications of AI and evolving workplace demands. This study contributes to broader conversations about the future of Editing and Publishing (E&P) programs and underscores the enduring value of technical editing instruction in a rapidly changing communication landscape.

Keywords technical editing, editing and publishing, technical communication pedagogy

As editing and publishing (E&P) programs continue to grow, programs are increasingly faced with concerns about how to prepare students with editing skills. Holly Baker, Jacob Rawlins, and Aubrey Pierson’s review of E&P programs found that only 10% of the courses focused on editing skills, which they note as a “shortcoming” for E&P programs (2024, p. 75). In another study, Susan Lang and Laura Palmer observed that “technical

editing receives relatively little attention in the academic world of technical communication, and, as such, the course has remained relatively static” (2017, p. 297). Together, these findings underscore a critical issue: while editing courses are key to E&P programs, they lack disciplinary attention and research. At a time when the emergence of generative AI raises concerns for the future of editing in the publishing industry, we believe there is need to turn more focused attention to the status of editing courses in E&P programs and technical and professional communication (TPC). Conducting research on editing courses could help these courses stay aligned with the evolving nature of the field and could help E&P and TPC program administrators make more informed decisions about curricular design and how such courses fit into the broader goals of degrees and certificates.

As teachers of technical editing and as administrators of writing and communication programs ourselves, we are acutely aware of how difficult it is to teach (and staff) technical editing courses. The current challenge, as we see it, is not just *what* to teach in technical editing courses today, but *how* to prepare and train educators to teach these courses effectively, and to keep pace with shifting professional and technological developments. To gain a better understanding of how we might better prepare teachers for technical editing courses, we started with two research questions:

- 1) What challenges have instructors previously encountered when teaching technical editing courses?
- 2) How have technical editing courses evolved in response to technological changes and industry best practices?

While we had our own experiences to draw from to answer these questions, we wanted to understand how other teachers of technical editing perceived these issues as well.

Since the character of individual E&P programs and editing courses often depends on many institutional factors and idiosyncrasies (Baker, Rawlins, & Pierson, 2024), we chose to focus our preliminary study on a qualitative analysis of one technical editing course. The course we selected was *Technical Editing and Style*, an upper-level undergraduate course that has been taught for several decades in our English Department with a Technical and Scientific Communication undergraduate major (formerly called Professional and Technical Writing) at an R1 university in the Southeastern US. Though we are not officially an E&P program, our program highlights editing and publishing as a concentration in our curriculum, and we see the technical editing course as crucial for preparing students to pursue careers in editing and publishing.

To understand the nuances in the pedagogical approaches to this course over the last two decades, we conducted interviews with teachers of multiple ranks who have taught this course. Since we have both taught this course, we also chose to include our own interviews as part of our data set because there have been relatively few instructors of its course over the last twenty-five years, and our perspectives are key to understanding the pedagogical history and evolution. We selected only people who had been listed as the instructor of record for the course; out of the six invited to be interviewed, four accepted our invitation. Therefore, the dataset for this study comprises interviews with four former instructors of the course, as well as the interviews we conducted with one another. In all the interviews, we asked questions about course design, pedagogical challenges (including technology and industry trends), teacher training, and course impact and significance (refer to Appendix A for list of interview questions). Our goals in the interviews were to understand how other teachers perceived the goals of the course, the degree to which teachers aligned course content with industry expectations, and the distinct challenges that teachers faced in teaching the course.

Our initial hypothesis centered on course evolution, assuming that changes in course curriculum over time would bring to light insights about the challenges in how technical editing has been taught. However, our interviews revealed a different story: rather than uncovering significant curricular evolution that informed how the course was taught, we found that teachers perceived pedagogical challenges differently according to their individual training and professional backgrounds. This finding shifted our focus to pedagogical training and the need to support new or novice teachers assigned to editing courses—an issue that directly impacts how the course functions within a broader programmatic framework.

Our study thus highlights the critical need to train and support instructors who teach technical editing. As editing workflows increasingly incorporate digital platforms and new technologies, teachers must be equipped not only with foundational editorial expertise but also with the ability to critically engage with emerging developments. Staying informed about these trends enables teachers to model and teach relevant skills that reflect current industry practices. For example, while AI tools present both opportunities and challenges, they illustrate the types of innovations that require thoughtful pedagogical integration. Technical editing courses thus become dynamic spaces where teachers guide students in developing both traditional editing skills and evolving technological literacies. Although our study does not focus specifically on AI, we recognize its growing influence as one compelling reason to invest in robust pedagogical training for teachers.

What we offer in this study is insight into distinct pedagogical challenges of teaching editing courses, which may help emerging E&P programs consider how to develop shared curricula and train teachers for such courses. In what follows, we review relevant literature about pedagogical challenges in technical editing, present findings from our interviews and discuss the pedagogical challenges and opportunities. Ultimately, we advocate for greater institutional support and training for technical editing instructors, especially as the field evolves in response to technological change and industry needs. While our data set is small, we believe our findings point to broader implications for the development of editing courses in TPC and E&P programs.

Literature Review

Since our goals are to understand pedagogical challenges and how technology advancement or industry needs inform the evolution of editing courses, we focused our literature review on three areas of scholarship that tend to address these challenges: development of editing curriculum, technological changes and industry best practices, and technical editing pedagogy. These three areas of scholarship gave us insight into the complex dynamics of teaching technical editing and the skills required to do it well.

Development of Editing Curriculum

In the first category of research, there are studies focused on how technical editing courses fit, or should fit, into a broader TPC curriculum. Some scholars attempt to identify the current state of TPC and E&P programs with the goal of finding a unified path forward (Hayhoe, 2007; Flanagan & Albers, 2019); indeed, this study is a call to that investigation. Some scholars seek to identify a core curriculum across E&P programs in colleges in the United States (Baker, Rawlins, & Pierson, 2024), while others assess the overlapping topics and trends within TPC and E&P fields in search of disciplinary and national alignment (Melonçon, 2019; Carradini, 2020). While these studies offer valuable nuances about TPC and E&P programs, they make a similar argument: E&P as a field within and/or among TPC is in need of intentional development and has been for several decades. As far back as 2001, Marjorie Davis recommended that the field must develop standards for “academic programs” and for “those who practice [technical communication]” (2001, pg. 143). Together, these works center not on course instruction but on the structure, content, and alignment of TPC and E&P programs, advocating for a curriculum that treats editing not as a static skill but as a dynamic, rhetorical practice essential to preparing students for the complexities of contemporary communication work.

Technological Changes and Industry Best Practices

The second category of research examines how technical writing and editing courses align with industry best practices, including the incorporation of technology. In one study, a team of scholars from George Mason University proposed an accountability-driven model for program development that highlights the importance of reciprocal partnerships between universities and industry stakeholders. They developed an Advisory Board of Industry to establish better alignment across academia and industry, incorporating stakeholder feedback into the curriculum to better prepare students for the field (Lawrence, et al., 2023). Other studies in this area have also solicited industry professionals to determine why technical editing courses “aren’t meeting the needs of industry,” with many researchers suggesting revisions to current TPC and E&P courses that could help bridge the academic/industry divide (Lang & Palmer, 2017, pg. 297; Lanier, 2018; Gubala, Larson, & Melonçon, 2020). Lang and Palmer (2017) argue that traditional editing courses often fail to prepare students for the multimodal and technologically diverse demands of contemporary editing roles. Their course redesign, informed by job postings and practitioner input, incorporated editing for audio, video, and web content, underscoring the need for industry-relevant competencies.

Similarly, Lanier (2018) surveyed technical communication professionals to identify emerging workplace trends, revealing a growing emphasis on multimedia production, agile workflows, and mobile-friendly documentation—skills that are increasingly expected of technical editors. Carolyn Gubala, Kara Larson, and Lisa Melonçon’s study demonstrates that professionals outside of writing-centric roles still perceive writing errors as detrimental to workplace credibility, suggesting that technical editing instruction must emphasize precision and professionalism to meet broad organizational standards (2020). While these studies address the academia/industry divide in different ways, a shared takeaway emerges: Integrating real-world industry practices into technical writing and editing courses enhances student preparedness and professional credibility.

Technical Editing Pedagogy

The final category of research we reviewed focuses on the distinct pedagogy of technical editing, either via course design or general pedagogical principles. This area of research reflects a spectrum of approaches ranging from broad theoretical frameworks to grounded, individual course design. In one study, Michelle Corbin, Pat Moell, and Mike Boyd conceptualize technical editing as a form of quality assurance, emphasizing comprehensive, usability, and copyediting as distinct but interrelated practices that mirror

software testing processes (2002). Their work is expansive and systems-focused, although there is no direct engagement with classroom implementation.

In contrast, Michael Charlton offers a detailed account of a single course, ETC 408/508, shaped by institutional needs and student populations (2013). His reflection on course design—particularly the challenges of cross-listing and balancing workplace and academic writing—provides a rich, situated perspective that foregrounds editing as a rhetorical and pedagogical act. Perhaps the biggest lesson learned for Charlton was that the course “simply served too many constituencies and perceived gaps in the curriculum” (p. 109). However, there were other lessons learned that highlight the benefit and need for a technical editing course. Namely, Charlton found that the required peer review sessions “grew both more supportive and more analytical” over the semester, aiding in an effective collaborative writing environment (p. 110). In the end, he emphasizes that “editing should be approached as a complex and multi-levelled process” and that “students need practice thinking of themselves as potential editors and reviewers” (p. 104).

Carolyn Rude bridges these two perspectives by articulating general pedagogical principles derived from decades of teaching, advocating for a progressive structure that moves from copyediting to comprehensive editing (2010). She argues that “the editing course, more than writing courses, foregrounds the process of information development and use and makes explicit the way texts work” (Rude, 2010, p. 64). Her study, while grounded in her own teaching experience, extrapolates broadly applicable curricular strategies and emphasizes editing as a performance-based, problem-solving discipline.

Together, these studies suggest that while technical editing pedagogy can be theorized at the program level or practiced at the individual course level, programs that engage multiple instructors over time—such as ours—offer a valuable middle ground for informing research and curricular development in this evolving field. This middle ground is especially important given the lack of research on how instructors teach technical editing.

Interviewing teachers who have taught editing courses across different institutional contexts and over time could provide critical insights into how pedagogical principles are adapted, challenged, or reinforced in practice. These conversations could inform the development of resources and training for new teachers, helping them move beyond textbook-driven models toward more reflective, responsive, and rhetorically grounded teaching practices. These pedagogical insights can also guide how we bring industry best practices into the classroom, ensuring that instruction remains aligned with current and emerging technologies and workflows. In doing so, we can better bridge the gap between theory and practice in technical editing pedagogy and in E&P programs more broadly.

Context for Technical Editing and Style

The editing course we examined is *Technical Editing and Style*, a 3000-level course that is popular in our technical and scientific communication (TSC) major in the English department. Our program has a long history of preparing graduates to enter careers in editing, and this course is a key part of that preparation. The English department typically runs two sections of the course per semester, capped at 22 students each. The course is almost always overenrolled with a waitlist. The following is the description of the course in our academic catalogue, which was originally proposed in 2001, when our undergraduate major (then a concentration) was first being established:

Technical Editing and Style explores the art of editing from the initial writing task to the final delivery of the document. In addition to learning document management, students study and practice the roles, responsibilities, and tasks that editors perform. The course also covers the rules that govern the fundamentals of style (correctness, clarity, and propriety) and the principles needed to match the tone and formality to the aim, audience, and occasion of the work.

In addition to our TSC majors, the course is also increasingly being taken by students who major in literature and creative writing, since many of them seek careers in editing and publishing and wish to expand their skillset beyond literary and creative writing. A notable development in the last five years is that our department has created an undergraduate course and internships related to publishing creative writing, and we have recently established a graduate-level publishing certificate for MFA students. Because we have students in creative writing who are now learning about editing and publishing, we find many of them also seek out the *Technical Editing and Style* course in the TSC major to expand their skillset and demonstrate versatility when applying to jobs after graduation.

Research Methods

To better understand the evolution of the course and pedagogical challenges teachers faced when teaching *Technical Editing and Style*, we designed a qualitative study that involved interviews with instructors of record who had previously taught the course. After receiving IRB approval (HRPP Protocol # 25-550), we recruited interview participants via email. Our recruitment email stated:

We're investigating the curriculum goals of technical editing courses and how teachers navigate the pedagogical constraints and affordances in their technical editing courses. ... To understand the nuances of the various pedagogical

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approaches to this course, we invite you to participate in an interview about how you approached teaching the course (lecture topics, course text, course goals, assignments, etc.).

Since this study is based on the study of just one class, the sample size for potential participants was quite small: We identified only eight instructors who have taught the course in the department over the last twenty-five years, including ourselves. In response to our email solicitation, we received replies from four instructors who agreed to be interviewed. There were two former instructors who we did not hear from—one never replied to our email, and one we were unable to find updated contact information for (no longer in the department). In addition to the four who replied and agreed to be interviewed, we interviewed each other. We chose to include our own interviews as part of our data set because there have been relatively few instructors of the course over the last twenty-five years, so our perspectives are key to understanding the pedagogical history and evolution course.

As researchers who are also insiders to the study topic, we took methodological inspiration from some of the key principles of autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography (CAE). Autoethnography is a qualitative approach to research that “draws on and analyzes or interprets the lived experience of the author and connects researcher insights to self-identity, cultural rules and resources, communication practices, traditions, premises, symbols, rules, shared meanings, emotions, values, and larger social, cultural, and political issues” (Poulos, 2021, p. 4). Autoethnography comes from studies of ethnography as a way to include the researcher’s experiences and insights more directly into the research; it is especially useful when researchers have direct experience that can inform the study. As its name suggests, CAE is a qualitative approach to research “in which researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyze and interpret their data collectively” (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, pp. 23–24). While this method is not commonly used in our field, it is common in the social sciences and studies of education. It also has some precedent in guiding studies of TPC, specifically in contexts related to teaching and mentorship (Thamet al., 2020). We say that we “take inspiration” from these methods because unlike most traditional autoethnographies that use vignettes, diaries, or personal writings to develop a narrative, we did not write narratives of our own teaching experiences as a way to generate our data, but we interviewed one another about our individual experiences as a way to facilitate self-reflection and then and used those self-reflections as part of our data set.

Our data set for this project thus included the transcript from our co-interview with each other, as well as the transcripts from our interviews with the four other participants (both researchers attended all of the interview sessions). Throughout our analysis, we make sure to differentiate our own views and excerpts from our interviews (identified in the text as Carolyn and Kelly) from the interviews of other participants, whose identities remain anonymous.

Interview Protocol

Our method of interviewing was semi-structured, meaning that we followed an interview guide and set of questions, but we also allowed topics to flow freely according to the interviewee's interests; we also allowed follow-up questions as relevant. Since we wanted to understand how the course has been taught (and how it has evolved), as well as the challenges teachers faced, we asked a range of questions related to the following: goals for the course, textbooks and materials used, major assignments, how teachers incorporated contemporary issues (industry, new technology, etc.), and how they were trained to teach the course (for a full list of interview questions, refer to Appendix A). Our interviews were conducted on Zoom and recorded so that we could analyze the transcripts; each interview lasted 45 minutes to one hour and began with confirming participant's consent to be recorded and included in our study. Instructors interviewed included graduate students (1 current and 1 former), full-time lecturers (1), and tenure-track faculty (3). Below is a brief description of each interviewee, noting their professional background with technical editing, but no other identifying information.

- Interviewee 1 had industry experience as a technical editor.
 - Interviewee 2 did not have industry experience as a technical editor.
 - Interviewee 3 had industry experience as a technical editor.
 - Interviewee 4 did not have industry experience as a technical editor.
-
- Carolyn did not have industry experience as a technical editor.
 - Kelly had industry experience as a technical editor.

We decided to include our own interviews in the data set because we both have situated knowledge and insider perspective on the teaching of technical editing that can contribute to this study. In our interviews, we followed the semi-structured interview protocol because it preserved the conversational affordances of interview protocols, specifically the advantage of prompting one another to specify, elaborate, and explain answers in more detail than we may have otherwise done completely on our own.

Coding and Analysis

Once interviews were complete, we downloaded the transcripts from our recorded Zoom sessions and uploaded them to a Microsoft OneDrive folder shared only by the researchers. After cleaning up the individual transcripts (deleting errors, extra white space, and standardizing format), we combined them to create one long transcript (segmented into individual interviews), which totaled 345 pages. We then took turns coding using an “inductive approach” (Haas, Takayoshi, & Carr, 2012; Koerber et al., 2021). By inductive approach we mean that our codes emerged through reading the transcripts and identifying examples where participants described challenges associated with teaching the course. Our categories were “emergent” (Haas, Takayoshi, & Carr, p. 54), meaning that we did not use a pre-existing coding scheme from another study. We used “topical chains” as our primary unit of analysis (Geisler & Swarts, 2019, p. 79). This meant that we segmented and analyzed the data according to the topics or themes as stated by the interviewee. In most instances, the topic aligned with the theme of the question asked in the interview, but there were often topic shifts in the process of the interview, and interviewees introduced new topics throughout. Our list of codes along with definitions for each are shown below in Table 1.

We coded the transcripts independently and at different times but met to discuss examples and refine our categories. In the first round of coding, one researcher focused on coding any mention of issues with technology or industry. The other researcher focused on coding any other issues that interviewees represented as a problem or challenge when teaching the course. Our choice to focus on different topic areas was related to the different interests we brought to the project as separate researchers, but it was also pragmatic: There were a lot of pages to review and code, and delegating themes allowed us better individual focus. Though we chose to focus on different sections and topics, we reviewed one another’s codes and representative examples. We sought intercoder agreement by relying on “intensive group discussion” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 35) to come to a consensus. In the second round of coding, we refined our grouping of problems and challenges into types and ended up with six categories: Teaching Materials, Industry, Technology, Training/Teacher Background, Technical content, and Rhetorical sensibility.

Table 1 Codes and Definitions for Analysis.

CODE	DEFINITION
<i>Teaching Materials</i>	Teaching materials, such as textbooks, readings, assignments, and sample documents.
<i>Industry</i>	Industry, industry standards, jobs and internships, and examples from industry communication.
<i>Technology</i>	Digital technology, such as digital editing tools, word processing software, or generative AI.
<i>Training/ Teacher Background</i>	The training or professional background that teachers had prior to teaching the course (pedagogy training, professional experience, etc.).
<i>Technical Knowledge</i>	Technical content such as knowledge of grammar, mechanics, English usage, linguistics, or specialized knowledge of the editing and publishing process.
<i>Rhetorical Sensibility</i>	Editorial skills that go beyond technical content to the audience, context, and situation for editorial decisions.

In what follows, we summarize findings related to our primary research question: What pedagogical challenges have instructors encountered when teaching technical editing courses?

Findings

At the outset of this study, we hypothesized that changes to the course—in terms of curriculum—would depend on how teachers responded to technological advancements and changes in industry. However, our interviews revealed a different story. Rather than uncovering significant curricular evolution that informed how the course was taught, we found that the differences in teaching were largely shaped by the instructors’ individual training and professional backgrounds. Many of the pedagogical challenges that teachers faced were quite similar, but how they approached those challenges was somewhat different depending on their background. In what follows, we describe the challenges we identified in more detail and then discuss why they are important considerations for other TPC programs or E&P programs that must prepare teachers for technical editing courses.

Teaching Materials

One challenge we found in our interview data related to identifying or creating appropriate teaching materials for technical editing courses. The code “teaching materials” included mention of textbooks, readings, assignments, and sample documents. Everyone we interviewed emphasized that having a lot of real-world examples was crucial to helping

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students understand the stakes and nuances of technical editing. As Carolyn explained in her interview:

I think you have to have an ability to also not just find examples but be able to help students connect to the real-world consequences of a lot of those things. And so I think, without making it seem like every example has to be like, you know, earth shattering or whatever. But just that you have enough that students begin to kind of connect or see consequences.

But in some cases, real-world examples were not easily found for the specific lesson or style issue, so there was a lot of work involved in creating examples with just the right level of difficulty. As one interviewee expressed: “I’ve never created more examples in my life for a class” (Kelly). Interviewee 1, who was responsible for teaching the first iterations of the course, had to rely on various articles since “there were no textbooks ... for practitioners” to use to teach technical editing at the time. This interviewee identified the need for a technical editing textbook and oriented her scholarship to fill this gap; however, before that text became a reality, she had to piecemeal the literature used in the course from various articles and industry publications.

Another challenge noted by interviewees involved finding examples for technical editing that were up to date. For Interviewee 1, who taught the course for many years, it became harder to have examples that the students could not easily find the answers to online, stating that “now, my assignments are all over the internet.” In this way, the course keeps teachers engaged and challenges them to continually revise and generate new examples.

In terms of course textbooks, we found that early teachers of the course relied almost exclusively on *Technical Editing* by Carolyn Rude and Angela Eaton as their main course textbook. But while *Technical Editing* was a staple in the field for several decades, the content stopped being updated (the last edition was updated in 2010), leaving more recent teachers of *Technical Editing and Style* to turn to a number of other texts, such as *The Copyeditor’s Handbook* by Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz (2019). In addition, teachers noted the addition of the *Subversive Copy Editor* by Carol Fisher Saller (2016) and *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph Williams and Joseph Bizup (2021).

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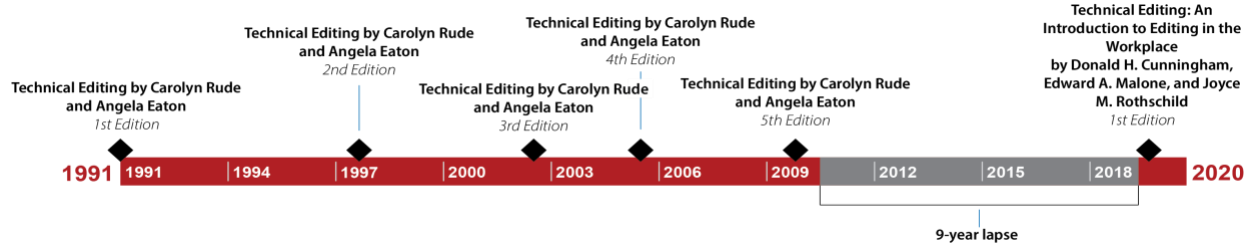


Figure 1 Publishing Timeline of Technical Editing Textbooks by Rude and Eaton and Cunningham, Malone, and Rothschild.

One interviewee (Carolyn) had started to use a newer textbook on the market, *Technical Editing: An Introduction to Editing in the Workplace* by Donald H. Cunningham, Edward A. Malone, and Joyce M. Rothschild, published in 2019. It was during the 9-year publication gap between the two editing textbooks, highlighted in Figure 1 above, that teachers of *Technical Editing and Style* began supplementing Rude and Eaton’s textbook with Einsohn’s, Fisher Saller’s, and Williams and Bizup’s texts. Piecing these three texts together afforded teachers texts that supported the progressive build structure in *Technical Editing* while also allowing them to incorporate additional content about editing as relationship-building (Fisher Saller), more lessons on mechanics and copyediting (Einsohn), and exercises on style and clarity (Williams and Bizup). Some combination of these three latter texts (in addition to Rude and Eaton’s *Technical Editing*) is still being used in the course today. Multiple interviewees noted that these texts were passed down to them from another instructor, so they were more so inherited than they were individually selected by each interviewee. Indeed, we found that most instructors started by using whichever textbooks were used by a previous instructor.

Industry

While every interviewee cited industry as an important aspect to inform course content, we found that those with past industry experience tended to draw more on their experiences in those roles to inform how they taught the course. One interviewee who previously worked as a technical editor, stated that she “tried to bring industry in as much as possible ... like technical reports” from government agencies based on her years in industry (Kelly). Similarly, Interviewee 1, who taught early iterations of the course, also relied on her experience as an editor to inform how she taught it. Based on her experience and connections in industry, she knew that her *Technical Editing and Style* students did not need an academic orientation to editing because “that’s not what the computer industry [at the time] needed.” This faculty member also wanted her scholarly publications on

technical editing to “reflect the practice of editing in the workplace” as opposed to “an academic orientation,” such as editing a journal article.

Out of the six interviewees, three had past industry experience as editors, and those three also incorporated more industry-related content into their courses than the three interviewees without industry experience. That is not to say that those without industry experience did not incorporate professional content into their curriculum; they just didn’t do it to the same degree. Industry-related content was cited as a component for all six interviewees, from major assignments to in-class exercises. For instance, all interviewed teachers incorporated some kind of job-ad analysis content into their course to give the students “a sense of things” and how they might use their time in college to build the skillset required of technical communication professionals (Carolyn). The main difference was in terms of teaching materials: those with industry experience relied a bit more on their experience to inform the course content—everything from assignments to examples—whereas those without industry experience relied slightly more on editing textbooks to inform their course content.

Several interviews expressed the importance of staying up to date on industry trends and needs when planning and teaching the course. As Interviewee 3 explained:

What I found was a lot of the stuff that people have been doing [in technical editing courses] I found very dated in comparison to what I was actually doing [in] freelance editing... there was a lot of emphasis [in the classroom] still on like hand marking. Nobody does that anymore.

Her point was that it was important for teachers of technical editing to stay connected to what was happening in the professional world and to introduce new ways of teaching and working in the classroom to provide students with the tools appropriate for the current industry trends and standards.

Industry experience also seemed to inform how teachers of *Technical Editing and Style* brought technology into the classroom. While the kind of technology evolved over time, those with more industry experience privileged technology and its features, such as Word Track Changes and Word templates, in the classroom slightly more than teachers without industry experience.

Technology

A common theme among most interviewees, though, was an assumption that students understood technology more than they did. In fact, after struggling with students’

technological literacy in several sections of the course, one teacher “finally realized [she] had to set aside whole days” where she just went around “trying to help [students] figure out” how to use features in Word (Carolyn). Interviewee 3 reported that she had to teach students how to save a document with a new file name. One interviewee came prepared to teach the students how to use Track Changes in Word based on her previous experiences:

I relied heavily on Word Track Changes, and I knew that students struggled. I had come into the class knowing that students had struggled with them [Track Changes] because I tried to use Track Changes in the other courses I had taught, and students just ... say they knew it, and then ... they don't. (Kelly)

Four of the six interviewees incorporated Word workshops into their lessons, while the other two—who had taught before Word became the standard in technical editing—used Word processing programs without editing or tracking capabilities, relying instead on manual mark-ups for all exercises and assignments. For one interviewee, Word was not just a component of her class; it was at the center of most in-class exercises and assignments (Kelly). She reserved several classes to teach students how to become proficient in various Word features, such as formatting basics and Track Changes. For this interviewee, she based these Word workshops on her past editing experience in industry, where Word was the preferred program for writing, editing, and formatting—all three of which are key skill sets for many technical communication professions. To several interviewees, the more comfortable the students were with these kinds of features in technology, the more advantage they had in the field of technical communication.

One technology that the most recent teachers of *Technical Editing and Style* agreed was important to consider in future iterations of the course is generative AI. These programs, such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Copilot, are being heavily marketed as common tools for writing and editing. Interviewee 4, who taught the course as recently as Spring 2024, did not incorporate generative AI into her course, but acknowledged that “if I would teach this class again, I would definitely want to have a section or unit on AI.”

Two interviewees, both of whom had past and current editing experience, see generative AI as a necessary component of future iterations of the course, with one acknowledging:

AI wasn't a thing when I taught [the course] ... If I taught this again right now, I would have a heavy AI component, because I think that that's where this field is headed, and I think that it would behoove students to kind of get control over ... the pitfalls, the benefits, the pros and cons of using AI. But you still have to edit, you know, AI-generated content ... Any future class in this area would have to feature AI. (Kelly)

Interviewee 3, who currently works as an editor, framed the AI-assisted editing topic a bit more dire. While, at the time of the interview, she found generative AI useful to help “streamline your tasks in general, not necessarily doing the work for you,” she also voiced concern about where editing fields are headed in light of generative AI: “I think it’s [AI] particularly important now, because frankly, AI is like ... what I’m doing now I am not going to be doing ... in three to five years. There’s no way ... like AI is going to be able to do just as well and cheaper.” Indeed, she expressed concern about the future of technical editing, stating that “to the extent that editing continues to exist as a profession, it’s going to be on the developmental side and not on the copyediting side.” This interviewee also commented on the emerging nature of generative AI, suggesting that teachers will likely need to learn about it in tandem with their students. To address this, she recommended being transparent about the simultaneous learning curve by using generative AI as an experiment in the classroom:

If I were teaching, I think it would be a lot of, at this point, experimentation, right, and asking the students to try things out, you know, and I could imagine being like, no, really do it yourself first. See what you come up with. Now, put it in AI, see what it comes up with. Let’s look at the what’s better.

All interviewees acknowledged the potential challenge of generative AI to the field of editing, but none had incorporated lessons related to generative AI in their curriculum.

Training/Teaching Background

When asked to describe the characteristics or qualities that make teachers effective at teaching technical editing courses, interviewees identified a combination of disposition, teaching philosophy, and professional experience as key qualities for effective technical editing instruction. Despite this, many interviewees noted a lack of experience and preparation for teaching an editing course.

There was a general agreement that people teaching this course need to be detail-oriented and at least strive to understand the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of the English language: “I think you have to find value in the mechanics of language. If you don’t find value in that, not just in language, but the mechanics of language. If you don’t find value in that... I just don’t think you would be effective at teaching this class” (Kelly). And while this detail-oriented focus may be more innate to the teacher, most everyone we interviewed, regardless of whether they found value in the mechanics of language, felt that they did not have the appropriate amount of prior training or preparation for teaching a course like technical editing. For example, Interviewee 1, who even went on to publish work on

technical editing, explained that her PhD training was in English literature, not technical writing or editing. In addition, no one we interviewed had experience taking an editing course as a student either. As Interviewee 4 expressed: “I never really was totally trained ... like, I had a grammar course in my undergraduate ... secondary Ed English major. But I never really felt like grammar was something that you had in upper-level, graduate-level courses, you just had a course dedicated to writing.”

Others emphasized the importance of more explicit scaffolding and teacher training: “What we could do to better prepare some teachers is to give them more of a framework to be working from” (Carolyn). By “framework,” this interviewee seemed to be referencing a general curriculum design and course map. Other interviewees—specifically Interviewee 4 and Kelly, who had been graduate students when teaching the course—felt that a practicum geared more specifically for technical communication would be useful as a primer before teaching this course (teaching practicums in our program exist only for first-year writing courses).

A lack of prior training or model for teaching an editing course was expressed as a significant challenge. However, we found that this challenge was perceived somewhat differently, depending on other aspects of a teacher’s background. For example, half of those we interviewed had prior professional experience as editors. For these instructors, they had a variety of examples to draw from when teaching technical editing based on their experience. The challenge was sometimes figuring out how to mimic aspects of being a “real” technical editor while also keeping tasks manageable or scaffolded appropriately for students. On the other hand, for those who did not have prior technical editing experience, it was more of an uphill battle trying to assemble teaching materials for the first time. Most admit to relying heavily on the syllabus and any teaching materials provided by whoever had taught the course in the department previously (at least initially).

Technical Content

Technical editing courses often require teaching students the technicalities of mechanics and grammar, in addition to the more general processes of publishing. We found differences between our interviewees in terms of how much they valued teaching grammar and mechanics for basic copyediting, though. For example, most teachers gave students some type of quiz or test on grammar. One interviewee explained that she always gave a test on grammar and students needed to score at least 85 percent to pass (they could retake it if they did not). Most interviewees admitted that while they would not hold these standards in other English classes or writing courses, a technical editing class was

different. Plus, some found that students enjoyed the mechanical nature of basic copyediting and the routinized processes that accompany it. Interviewee 3 explained: “sometimes I find that [students] like guidelines. They like check sheets, you know, to make sure so anything that sort of felt like very tangible like that was very useful for them.” Interviewee 2 pointed out that while grammar can make people uneasy, it can be fun to teach students how to edit for style: “Faculty and students, alike, might dread some of the nitty, gritty grammar stuff, [but] it is somehow, I think, fun for most people to pick apart badly done things.” That same interviewee went on to stress how teaching grammar was useful for developing a more precise analytic vocabulary for giving feedback to students on their writing. She explained:

I felt like it was a really a benefit to me [to learn to teach the course] because I then became a better teacher of writing in other contexts ... you know, like you might mark something awkward because it had faulty predication. But then, when you know it's faulty predication, you can say this subject and this verb don't make sense together.

However, Interviewee 3 strongly disagreed about the importance of spending a significant amount of time lecturing about grammar: “I’m sorry. Like nobody wants to listen to you talk about commas for 20 minutes. I just don’t ... So you have to find creative ways to make [editing work] come alive. And so, we did a lot of hands-on stuff.”

The emphasis on grammar and mechanics can serve as a foundation, but the goal of a technical editing course is to move students beyond surface-level corrections toward deeper editorial thinking. Indeed, while interviewees all expressed the importance of comprehensive editing as key to the course—and what distinguishes the course from other copyediting courses—the challenge of that is one that centers on a different aspect of technical content: introducing students to a whole new vocabulary and way of conceptualizing editing. One instructor, who used the textbook *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, explained: “students always tell me it was hard and weird for them. Part of even how [the textbook is] formatted [and] part of it is learning all the new vocabulary” (Carolyn). Interviewee 1 described how she would introduce the students to new questions to shift them away from the stereotypical view of editors as people who just correct typos. The challenge, as she explained it, was to help them to see a broader rhetorical situation. She explained:

You know, we talk about looking outside the box as opposed to just accepting the documents there, and we’ll fix it. But let’s go a step beyond that and think of this document in context. And think of the work that it has to do, and ... doesn’t do. And

what better ways might there be? What might we need to add? What might we need to take out in terms of content? What might we need to do in terms of the way it's displayed on the page. Because I think the students ... like so many editors that don't have a class or a formal instruction, they just look at what's there and try to fix it, as opposed to looking at what might be there. So that was challenging. To me, that was the purpose of the course.

Interviewee 1, like others, felt that attention to mechanics and grammar issues was very low-priority, and a greater emphasis should be placed on broader communication skills and establishing positive working relationships with writers. As Interviewee 3 explained: "We did a lot of editing of each other's work. Right. What does it feel like? To be edited, how do you deal with the interpersonal aspects of it, right? Because it's not just about the language, it's about the human interaction." Her emphasis on the key role that "human interaction" plays in editing was echoed by other interviewees and evident in the course materials, which focused more on project management and how to edit in collaboration with many others in the publishing process. She described how she presented it to students: "Here's this huge project. How do we break this down in terms of milestones in terms of roles?"

While grammar and mechanics offer a useful entry point, the deeper challenge in technical editing courses, at least according to our interview data, lies in helping students engage with complex technical content—learning to interpret, question, and reshape it within broader rhetorical and collaborative contexts. This shift requires not only new vocabulary but also a new way of thinking about what editing can accomplish.

Rhetorical Sensibility

The final pedagogical challenge that was perhaps the hardest to contend with because it gets to the heart of technical editing classes was the question of how to cultivate a rhetorical sensibility as a technical editor. By rhetorical sensibility we mean a sense of how to make editorial decisions guided by attention to audience, purpose, and context. As one interviewee stated, "Half the battle was just creating a habit of awareness" (Kelly). Technical editing courses often go beyond the mechanics of language to helping students develop rhetorical awareness. Interviewee 1 expressed this sensibility in terms of what students ultimately gain from the course: "I think that when the students came back and said, 'Editing was valuable to me,' it wasn't because they were editors, it was because that class gave them a way to look at a document." Her point was that not all students become technical editors in their future careers, but the course helps them to develop this

rhetorical awareness and an understanding of a wholistic process of creating documents that do work in the world.

Discussion

In reviewing our data, we were surprised to find that not much seems to have changed in the overall curriculum over the last 24 years since the course has been regularly offered in our institution. For the most part, the overall course design (moving from practice in basic copyediting tasks and building to comprehensive editing projects), class activities, types of topics/issues, and editing assignments seem relatively the same over time. The only noticeable change we noted was a shift in the major textbooks around 2016 as parts of Rude and Eaton's *Technical Editing* textbook were starting to become outdated, and no new editions were being printed. Even then, instructors often relied on parts of that textbook and the overall framework it offers to guide the course.

The apparent “stagnation” in the curriculum perhaps echoes what Susan Lang and Laura Palmer identified about editing courses back in 2017. We see a few possible reasons for this in our specific case study: First, despite changes in technology, there is the fact that not much has really changed about the basic work of technical editing or the foundational skills that students need to cultivate to do technical editing (attention to detail, rhetorical sensibility, awareness of grammatical rules and style guides, etc.). Another reason is perhaps that the course structure originally set by Rude's textbook (moving from basic to comprehensive editing) seems to “work well” for helping students who are new to editing feel like they are making incremental progress. (We note that “worked well” was the perception of teachers in the interviews though, and we do not necessarily have other data to make this claim).

In our own experience—and echoed in most of the other interviews—this scaffolded approach seemed to “work well” because it began with what seemed more familiar to students and then progressively built to topics and issues less familiar to them (e.g., editing for visual design, legal and ethical issues in editing, etc.). If instructors have a “if it's not broke, don't fix it” kind of mentality, then it can be difficult to initiate curricular change. For example, the Cunningham, Malone, and Rothschild textbook starts with comprehensive editing and transitions to mechanics (the opposite of how our interviewees organized their courses), so adopting this textbook could require a considerable course redesign, which interviewees seemed hesitant to do. A third possibility, also supported by our interviews, is that most people starting to teach the course have a steep learning curve. There is a tendency to rely on how the course has been taught previously with only minor

adjustments, especially when the teacher is an instructor or graduate student. Perhaps the only exception here was the instructor who had extensive background as a freelance editor and chose to depart a bit more from the standard curriculum in terms of removing and transforming the editing assignments into team projects. (Note: other instructors emphasized a lot of in-class group work, but there was only one instructor who used team projects for major graded assignments.)

When it came to industry-related content in the course, we found—perhaps unsurprisingly—that teacher background had the biggest impact: Those with professional experience in industry seemed to have a somewhat easier time because they had a wealth of prior examples to draw from. That said, all instructors emphasized the value of assignments that focused on technical material as found in industry (e.g., not creative writing or student essays, as found in other types of editing courses). Additionally, we found that while having industry experience or prior editing experience seems like a major asset for courses like this, it is not really a requirement. Many have taught the course very successfully without this background and have helped their students secure internships and jobs in technical editing. This is important because there is a perception by other faculty that to teach such a course like this means you need to have had prior professional editing experience, which often limits the pool of faculty who self-select or agree to teach the course.

In terms of technology, the emergence of AI and its implications for technical editing was acknowledged by almost all interviewees. Using generative AI in a technical editing classroom poses a few pedagogical concerns, two of which are worth mentioning here. First, generative AI is fairly new, requiring teachers to learn it alongside their students. The second pedagogical concern has to do with helping students understand why AI, at least right now, cannot replace a quality human editor and is perhaps best used as a writing/editing tool rather than the sole producer of the text itself. In her article, “Has AI replaced editors?”, Valerie Monckton highlights the pitfalls of relying too heavily on generative AI and other editing software (2025). She takes an excerpt from a grammar book and runs the passage through ChatGPT and Grammarly and receives two very different results. Monckton finds Grammarly’s recommendations “insufficient, though one could argue that it didn’t do as poorly here as it did in another test [conducted previously]” (2025, para. 6). Conversely, the ChatGPT revision “over-edited the passage, making unnecessary word substitutions that stamp out the author’s voice” (para. 7). Moreover, it is unclear if ChatGPT’s changes were actually correct, since “punctuation is a matter of style ... in other words, the correctness of these changes depends on both what the communicator

intended to say and who they were speaking to” (para. 7). Monckton then displays a text mark-up that shows all of the ways that ChatGPT’s edits changed the style of the original text, many of which fundamentally change the text’s clarity, meaning, and voice. The errors range from changing articles to complete removal of phrases to introducing punctuation errors. Had the text been edited by a skilled human editor, few, if any, of the incorrect or ineffective edits would have been made.

A technical editing course teaches students a human-centered approach to editing that is unlike AI—students don’t approach the text as a binary choice based on strict rules of English grammar. Instead, “the editing course, more than writing courses, foregrounds the process of information development and use and makes explicit the ways texts work” (Rude, 2010, p. 64). An editing course teaches students familiarity with language, writing, and clear communication. It offers them space to recognize opportunities for enhanced clarity, taking personal voice and style into account in addition to the more mechanical side of writing. It also facilitates an awareness—of voice, of opportunities in writing, of relationships between author/writer/editor, and so on—that any effective editor should possess. All students in a technical editing course today should have a holistic understanding of the role of an editor, and that includes understanding how generative AI fits into that landscape.

Finally, we found that lack of prior teaching experience was perhaps the greatest challenge. Issues related to finding suitable textbooks or examples (that were not outdated or where answers were easy to find on the internet), balancing technical aspects of editing with general process of publishing, editing beyond basic copyediting, and helping students develop a rhetorical sensibility, all seem to be shared across interviewees and will likely continue to be issues in courses like this. Of course, many of these pedagogical challenges are challenges in all writing courses; however, these challenges can feel magnified in a more specialized course like technical editing where there are fewer resources. Because there is not as much institutional infrastructure or teaching support for the course (e.g., no practicum course for graduate students or instructors), there is a need for greater awareness and resources for teaching it to welcome and train new teachers.

Our findings suggest that while effective technical editing instruction benefits from a combination of personal disposition, pedagogical approach, and professional experience, there remains a significant gap in formal preparation for teaching such courses. The lack of targeted training, standardized curricula, and practicum opportunities contributes to instructors’ reliance on inherited materials and personal experience. Addressing these gaps through structured support and clearer frameworks could enhance instructional

consistency and better prepare educators for the unique demands of teaching technical editing.

Conclusion

This study set out to understand the pedagogical evolution and challenges that teachers faced when teaching the *Technical Editing and Style* course at an R1 institution in the Southeastern United States. While some may question the need for courses in editing at a time when generative AI seems to be replacing the need for basic copyediting, we believe that the hype around generative AI (and the problems it also creates) may make courses in technical editing more important than ever. It is for this reason that we advocate greater attention to supporting and training teachers, especially graduate student instructors, and the development of resources for teaching technical editing today.

Limitations

We recognize that the conclusions we can draw from this preliminary study are quite limited due to our small sample size. Our sample was drawn from only a handful of instructors from one university. We are also missing an interview with the first teacher of the course and one of the most recent instructors for the course. Given the small sample size, their perspectives could possibly shift a lot of what we argue here.

Future Research

Based on our findings, we are left with new questions that future studies could consider.

- **Institutional Comparison:** How do these findings (regarding pedagogical challenges, teacher experience with industry, and pedagogical training) compare with technical editing courses at other institutions today? Conducting interviews with instructors at other institutions would be useful for understanding this comparison. We also believe that surveys or a comprehensive review of editing courses across institutions would be beneficial for programs seeking to revise and update their curricula.
- **Student Experience:** Given how much teachers emphasized the significance of this course for students and preparing them for careers in editing, we would be interested to know what students think: What do students feel they gain from taking technical editing courses? How have they used what they learned in their future careers? We imagine that surveys of former students, paired with follow-up interviews, would be an ideal way to study the student experience.

- **Technology:** Lastly, given that teachers found that students may not be as adept as teachers might assume with technology, specifically software like Microsoft Word and Google Docs, we would be interested to know in a follow-up study if and how teachers of the course have been using this technology and how they are incorporating practice, critique, or use of generative AI.

Recommendations for Program Administrators

Some specific ways that TPC and E&P programs can support teachers of technical editing—especially new teachers—may include the following:

- Offer a teaching practicum or community of practice (CoP) for editing courses to offer regular guidance and touch points throughout the semester. In addition, such support could include an information session for teachers interested in learning to teach editing.
- Create a mentoring program for onboarding new teachers. Our study found that teachers informally sought mentorship from previous teachers of the course as a primary resource.
- Develop more accessible teaching materials—especially examples of technical texts—for editing assignments.
- Compensate people who are willing to lead practicums, participate in mentorship, or share their expertise through teaching materials in an effort to build a shared curriculum.

Technical editing courses offer wonderful opportunities and challenges for E&P and TPC programs. These courses teach students deep familiarity with grammar and style conventions, clear communication principles, an awareness of audience, visual design, and more nuanced understanding of the relationships between writers and editor in a publishing process. In our department, we find that students gain a lot from these courses—multiple interviewees emphasized how many of their students went on to successful careers where they used what they learned in technical editing in meaningful ways. Many of our alumni stayed in touch with their technical editing teachers and updated them on all the ways that the course helped them to become better writers, editors, and collaborators, which they attributed to their training in a technical editing course. As Kelly explains: “It was the most challenging course I’ve taught. It was also the most rewarding course I taught.” We found that while it was often difficult to recruit people to teach this course, those who have taught it understand its value. While the pedagogical challenges of

teaching technical editing may be great, we believe the rewards for our students are greater.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for teachers

- When did you teach *Technical Editing and Style*?
- What was your title when you taught *Technical Editing and Style*? (grad student, TT faculty, NTT faculty, etc.)
- What textbooks did you use?
- What were the course goals?
- What did you find most challenging about teaching the course?
- How, if at all, did the course change when you were teaching it?
- What training, if any, were you given when you started teaching the course?
- What were a few of your lecture topics?
- What were your main assignments in the course?
- Did you incorporate any current industry best practices or other industry aspects into your pedagogy (e.g., using job ads to inform lectures, exercises, assignments)?
- Did you incorporate current technology/trends in your course (e.g., Word's Track Changes, AI, Grammarly, etc.)? If so, how?
- What do you think makes a teacher effective at teaching this course?
- What value do you see in requiring students to take an editing course as part of their major?
- What do you think we could do to better prepare teachers to teach this course?

Interview questions for administrators (for those who have also directed programs)

- How did you envision the course aligning with the curriculum/How did those goals align with the vision for the undergraduate major at that time?
- When you developed this course, what did you see as the exigence for the course?
- What do you look for when deciding who to assign to teach this course?

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Intradisciplinary Undergraduate Certificate in Copyediting and Publishing

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Abstract This program showcase highlights the unique positioning of an 18-credit-hour undergraduate copyediting and publishing certificate (CPC) program. Created in an effort to increase enrollment and fill a need for such instruction in our region, the CPC pulls from the English department’s three distinct tracks (creative writing, professional writing, and literary and cultural studies) to offer intradisciplinary coursework that appeals to all English majors as well as minors, non-humanities students, and non-matriculating students. The showcase details the curriculum, both required components that every student must take as well as optional classes students can choose from in two categories: digital and textual publishing. The authors then use student feedback from 31 internship exit interviews to assess the strengths of the certificate and the challenges of administering it. By discussing issues with staffing and contingent labor, the timing of coursework, and the taxing but necessary process of requiring an internship, this showcase shares insights and strategies—from both student and faculty perspectives—related to maintaining a successful undergraduate CPC.

Keywords editing, copyediting, publishing, certificate, curriculum development, internship

In this program showcase, we describe an 18-credit-hour, in-person, undergraduate copyediting and publishing certificate (CPC) created in 2017 and housed in the English Department of our large urban research university. Initially constrained by a budget-neutral requirement that translated into no new hires or administrative resources, over the past

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eight years, the CPC has strengthened intradisciplinary relationships within our department and allowed us to offer students diversified training in copyediting and publishing.

When conducting research in 2016 to develop our CPC, we found few similar certificates offered by four-year colleges. Instead, certificates were offered through extension programs at, for example, the University of California at San Diego and Berkeley; the continuing education program at the University of Washington; the continuing education program at the Graham School affiliated with the University of Chicago; and through numerous professional editing organizations (e.g., ACES, Editorial Freelancers Association). These freestanding programs offer impressive training for prospective editors and provided us with starting points for developing our own certificate. But none integrated the expertise of literary scholars or creative writing specialists—an explicit goal for us as we sought to develop a certificate that built on the strengths and interests of our faculty and students. That is, the aim for our CPC is to prepare students for careers in book, journal, and magazine editing; literary, textbook, and trade publishing; digital and social media editing and publishing; and corporate and organizational communication. Because of this inclusive framing, we wanted a broader range of faculty involvement than is typical in the editing programs we reviewed.

We also wanted to offer students an accessible entry point into copyediting and publishing, which is why we conceived the CPC as a certificate rather than a minor. Certificates are stackable with majors, minors, and other certificates, making them a flexible additive credential. Also, students often discover the certificate while taking courses in the English major or minor during their sophomore or junior year. Adding 18 credit hours is typically manageable without extending time to degree, particularly because many students have already taken courses that fulfill some CPC requirements. And finally, because certificates are free-standing, they are an approachable credential for non-matriculating students. Viewed as addressing a gap in our Midwestern region and responding to decreasing enrollment in our English Department as well as to an institutional push toward certificates as gateways to majors, our CPC is one of five certificates offered through our department and one of 59 offered across the disciplines, which, in total, enroll over 1,400 students. Of those students, the CPC enrolls on average 50 students, the majority of whom are English majors, at times including one or two non-matriculating students.

The increased number of certificates offered by our university over the past 10 years—from Heavy Highway Construction (College of Engineering and Applied Science) to Deaf Studies

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(College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services)—is consistent with certificate growth trends nationally. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) recently reported that, between 2024 and 2025, the “number of students earning an undergraduate certificate increased by 11.2%,” with “[o]ver 3.2 million students earn[ing] an undergraduate credential in the 2023–24 academic year” (Certificate, 2025). Executive Director of the NSCRC David Shapiro concluded that the increase of certificate-earners is evidence that students want “shorter-term, lower-cost credentials that lead to faster employment opportunities.”

Job prospects were certainly on our mind when we designed the CPC, though at the time we were unaware of our synchronicity with national certificate trends. Acting on a general sense that students were selecting majors more readily translatable to existing jobs, we sought to develop an applied program of study for students passionate about verbal and visual communication that would draw on the strengths of our department. We started with four required courses—Introduction to Copyediting and Publishing, Modern English Grammar, Editing Professional Documents, and an internship—and one course each in digital and textual publishing, the latter of which includes courses taught by faculty in the literary and cultural studies (LCS) and creative writing (CW) tracks of our English major (see Appendix A for course descriptions and learning objectives). This blended model has contributed to a credential that builds on and complements but does not duplicate the Rhetoric & Professional Writing track (RPW) (Rhetoric and professional writing, n.d.) or professional writing certificate (Professional writing certificate, n.d.) offered through our department. The 36-credit-hour RPW track requires students to take five English core courses, three RPW core courses, three RPW electives, and an RPW capstone, while the 15-credit-hour professional writing certificate is a condensed version of the track, requiring five RPW courses.

The CPC, in contrast, was built to address the varied interests of our majors, 48% of whom specialize in creative writing, 21% in rhetoric and professional writing, 20% in literary and cultural studies, and 9% in English education (the remaining 2% are currently undeclared). Not long before we proposed the CPC, our department had revised the major, creating an English core that, among other things, required a course outside a student’s track (so, for instance, a CW student takes at least one course in RPW or LCS). We did this to ensure that students would have at minimum a passing awareness of the capaciousness of what “English” has to offer. This change produced a departmental culture in which students and faculty value and have become accustomed to intradisciplinary connections.

This connected ethos is formalized in the CPC curriculum, which serves as a manifestation of the beliefs and values that undergird the development of the certificate. While we address the curriculum in more detail below, we note here that alongside expected courses (Introduction to Copyediting and Publishing; Desktop Publishing; Digital and Visual Editing, etc.) are those selected and/or developed by a collaborative of RPW, CW, and LCS faculty. By requiring students to take one of three courses offered in a category we call “Textual Publishing,” we wanted to communicate to students the importance of editing-adjacent skill sets, or non-technical skills that establish the groundwork for effective editing: writerly control and intentionality, close reading, knowledge of the evolving materiality of writing, and collaboration, leadership, and project management skills. To that end, one of three following courses fulfills the Textual Publishing requirement: Writing with Style, Creative Writing and Literary Publishing, or Book Arts (described in more detail in the next section).

These non-technical, non-professional communication courses shed light on our inclusive curricular orientation to copyediting and publishing. One of the hallmarks of the program, a required internship, shows that our coursework prepares students to work in diverse fields. Recent students have interned with an academic book press, a web-based non-profit organization, a small literary journal, an established community magazine, a poetry archive, a peer-reviewed legal journal, and an industrial manufacturing media company. Providing a preview of diverse internship placements, our introductory course helps students recognize the range of possibilities within the field of copyediting and publishing. The next section provides more detail about the design of the introduction course, which we view as the building block for our intradisciplinary curriculum, and then describes how remaining coursework grows from there. In the final section, we draw on student exit surveys and faculty experiences as we outline challenges and next steps for the CPC.

Introductory Course and Gateway to the Curriculum

The introductory sophomore-level course attracts students with a mix of majors and career goals. A small percentage of students who enroll in the course are testing the waters to see if the field appeals to them. Because of that, one of the first class activities asks students to read comments by working editors and watch a video by the editor at a book publisher associated with our university, and then reflect on, write, and discuss which elements of editorial life sound appealing to them.

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The skills prioritized in the course include critical reading as an editor (as opposed to reading and editing as a writer, as many English majors are accustomed to doing with their own work), editing by hand and digitally, and technical skills such as editing with an assortment of tools (Google Docs, Microsoft Word, Adobe, hand marking, etc.). Faculty require *The Copyeditor's Handbook* by Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz (2019), supplemented by materials selected by each instructor, all of whom have professional experience in copyediting and publishing, ranging from book publishing to academic, literary, and trade publications as well as online content and corporate communications.

Anchor assignments in the introduction course include the following:

- Students edit a manuscript via four methods: by hand using copyediting marks, by Track Changes and comments using Microsoft Word, by annotating using Adobe, and by collaboratively editing using Google Docs. This assignment exposes students to varying methods of editing and strengthens the transferable skill of working with different technologies. The collaborative element of the assignment prepares students to work with editorial boards and co-editors. Students edit a range of texts, including technical writing, literary works, and corporate or commercial texts.
- Students submit a piece of their own writing, trade with a peer, and anonymously edit each other's work. To contextualize their editing suggestions, students write a transmittal letter and create a style sheet (editor-generated list of editorial guidelines employed throughout the work) for the peer's manuscript. Once each student receives their edited work, they then reflect on the similarities and differences between authoring and editing. This assignment is intended to strengthen students' editorial respect for authorial agency. Many students submit their own creative work, including poems and short stories, plus genres such as grant proposals and essays, further exposing peers to the intradisciplinary nature of writing and editing.
- Students research a specific segment of publishing and present their findings to the class. In the past, students have investigated publishing in literary journals, corporate settings, medical and technical fields, trade publications, non-profits, and more. Students have also examined niche publishing such as freelance, young adult literature, romance, and comics and graphic novels. While students sometimes examine fields of publishing unfamiliar to them, they more often choose a field they are interested in pursuing. This assignment, then, allows students to situate themselves in a specific niche of publishing.

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Other assignments in the intro course focus on sharpening skills in grammatical issues of concern to copyeditors (active and passive voice, punctuation usage, consistent tense, subject-verb agreement, and sentence clarity, for example); engaging with communities of editors online and through professional organizations; completing exercises on specific editing tasks (such as editing front and back matter, marking up a PDF, writing author queries, and distinguishing between light, medium, and heavy levels of copyediting); engaging in the full editorial process (including editing in multiple passes); comparing and contrasting editorial styles; learning how to use existing (Chicago, APA, and so on) and create new style guides and style sheets; finding and using resources and tools for editors; editing for inclusive language; exploring the internship and job markets; and more based on topics broached by in-class speakers and the students' own suggestions. We supplement class time and assignments with instructor-organized sessions featuring guest speakers from the publishing industry who share advice with students and answer questions. And while students in this course are novice editors, we provide them opportunities to edit authentic manuscripts in addition to those provided by the textbook.

The remainder of the curriculum centers on inter- and intradisciplinarity and transferable skills. In addition to the intro course, required courses include Modern English Grammar, Editing Professional Documents (advanced), and an internship. The two editing-centric courses—one introductory and one advanced—build students' skill sets by introducing and then reinforcing concepts such as using style guides, editing with copyediting marks, editing electronically, and corresponding with authors. The advanced course builds on the intro with assignments that emphasize substantive/developmental editing, creating a style guide for publications, and other accumulatively complex tasks.

Both courses provide grounding for subsequent digital and textual publishing courses. Digital publishing options focus on composing and editing digital content, working with images, sounds, and video, and editing specialized material such as ebooks, newsletters, websites, mobile extensions, and other digital formats. One of the courses in this category, *Methods of Media & Technical Translation*, is offered by the College of Arts & Sciences' Humanities program and covers technical skills such as video subtitling and captioning, audio transcription, and editing users' guides from a humanistic approach. Some courses in the textual publishing category, detailed below, are taught by faculty in creative writing and literary and cultural studies, making this category truly intradisciplinary.

- 1) *Writing with Style* is based on our belief that effective editors must be skilled writers who make intentional choices to achieve a desired effect and strong readers who understand that language is entangled with culture and identity.

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- 2) Creative Writing & Literary Publishing guides students as they collaboratively produce an issue of our university's undergraduate literary magazine, *Short Vine*. Students create a call for submissions and review processes, design the journal and the website where contributions are published, select artwork, copyedit the entire issue, and produce promotional materials (e.g., buttons, tote bags, flyers).
- 3) Book Arts, which examines the history and craft of the book, is co-taught by an LCS faculty member and a librarian in the university's preservation lab. The course has a materials budget and a production element: students produce paper, one-page wonders, book boxes, a range of bindings, and other physical objects.

Coursework in the certificate is structured so that the introduction course serves as a gateway to the rest of the curriculum. While we prefer that students take this course before advanced editing, we are unable to attach a prerequisite to the latter. As a result, students sometimes take the two courses simultaneously or otherwise out of intended order; this is discussed further in the "Challenges" section below. In contrast, students are granted permission to take the internship course only once they have completed the intro plus three additional courses in the curriculum; in other words, we have designed the curriculum around our belief that students must have plenty of practice, feedback, and exposure to editing technologies before they can effectively intern in a professional setting. The required courses collectively provide a breadth of knowledge and exposure to various settings for editing and publishing.

We feel that it is important to supplement classroom instruction with enrichment experiences and to create a community of novice editors. To do so, we have a community site on our learning management system, Canvas, through which co-directors and faculty post job and internship announcements and students have access to a discussion board. The site also houses certificate requirements, forms and internship guidelines as well as links to relevant reading material, professional organizations, and other resources (e.g., finding an internship; developing a LinkedIn profile; designing an editor-focused resume). Other community building includes an annual Open House with a guest speaker.

Because this certificate is based in an English Department, students have access to the vast offerings of our large and diverse department: readings, lectures, panels, and workshops by invited authors and agents; a bi-weekly newsletter for students in all English programs that announces events, internship openings, and publishing opportunities; networking with faculty; and opportunities to submit writing for publications and contests. Additionally, the English Department hosts a Visiting Writers Series, and at least once per year invites both a writer and an agent to speak to students. We also embed enrichment

into the CPC by inviting guest speakers into our classes, visits that are organized and managed by faculty members rather than by a certificate coordinator. Visitors regularly include the managing editor of our university's literary journal; freelance copyeditors; editors from business and non-profit sectors; editors from specific segments such as environmental publishing or literary publishing; and guests who can speak to other areas of publishing such as acquisitions and marketing.

Challenges and Next Steps

Approaching the ten-year anniversary of our CPC, we were excited to receive the Call for Proposals for this special issue. It prompted us to review more closely the features that are working well and also address the pain points that have developed. Drawing on 31 exit surveys completed by students post-internship (from 2018–2024), we summarize student feedback and show how it supports and adds to our own perceived and acknowledged challenges. Finally, we reflect on lessons we have learned and goals for the continued growth and success of our CPC.

Student-Identified Challenges

Since the internship is completed after the student has completed four classes in the CPC, we believe the exit survey is a valid instrument for gathering student feelings on both the internship experience as well as the certificate in general (see Appendix B). In addition to general demographic questions (major, contact info, etc.), the survey gathers information related to how well-prepared students felt for their internship, what they learned during their internship, what their plans are post-graduation, and what recommendations they have for improving the CPC internship process. Through this feedback, we can summarize the main challenges students identified: timing of coursework and the requirement and process of both finding and completing an internship.

Timing

As mentioned previously, some students simultaneously take the intro course and the advanced Editing Professional Documents course, which disrupts the intended flow of our curriculum. However, because each course can be used to satisfy other requirements in English, we are unable to set prerequisites to ensure this doesn't happen. This occasionally presents concerns about duplication for both faculty and students. The faculty, when made aware of this situation, work together to ensure that necessary redundancy (like the use of style guides) are approached differently. For instance, in the intro course, students learn to define and analyze style guides and have a reverse-

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engineering assignment where they create a style guide for an already finished publication to understand the structure and use of the genre. In the advanced course, we ask students to both create and adapt to house style guides. This “breadth then depth” approach serves the students well, particularly when taken in the intended sequence. When students take the courses simultaneously, however, the two faculty members work closely with each other and the student(s) to ensure the timing of the assignments works (that the intro course introduces style guides weeks before the advanced class is asked to create one). While no students comment on this particular issue in the exit interview, two instructors of the intro and advanced editing courses have shared that students who take them simultaneously always need guidance on assignments, especially in the advanced editing course when the content has not yet been covered in the intro course.

Another issue with timing that students have mentioned is the gap between the intro course and the required internship. One student shared:

I would have found it helpful if there had been more of a follow-up between taking Intro to Copyediting and taking my actual internship...I wasn't able to find an internship that worked with my schedule until my last semester of college and it made me feel rusty going into my position.

We are not sure what this “follow-up” would look like, but perhaps each CPC course could discuss the required internship (so it doesn't feel so “distant” from intro where it is introduced), highlight how the skills learned in that particular course build upon skills learned in intro, and ask the students to reflect on how the course and skills learned would serve them in a professional position.

Requiring an Internship

One of our biggest challenges involves the required internship. We have created guidelines (see Appendix C) and posted them, as well as the required pre-registration form (see Appendix D), on our CPC Canvas page. We send out regular announcements about the internship process and share position announcements via email, yet students' independent ability to secure an internship continues to be our most significant pain point. One student noted:

It was extremely hard for me to find an internship on my own with no connections to the publishing world outside of school. I would say to make help more available for students to find an internship before the last minute. If I hadn't asked for help, I wouldn't have been able to do it.

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While students are encouraged to meet with CPC faculty and their academic advisor if they need help finding an internship, it's clear that students feel burdensome when forced to ask for that help.

Though we keep a running list of where students have completed internships in the past, and we have done our best to work closely with those clients to maintain relationships, we have established ongoing relationships with only a few. On the one hand, an internship coordinator would be ideal to foster these relationships; on the other, we believe students need to learn how to search for, tailor their resumes and apply for, and land their own internships. They get guidance on this in the intro course and through optional workshops offered by the English Department, but it is clear more guidance is needed. As a result of this feedback, we are considering other courses where we can focus specifically on finding and applying for internships beyond the intro course.

In the exit survey completed after their internship experience, students were asked to make recommendations to improve the internship process or to better prepare them beyond coursework. While 10/31 (32%) respondents offered no recommendations, citing the process as smooth and beneficial, the top recommendations, at another 32%, were that the certificate might work on guiding students more in finding their internships. Recommendations included creating a list of past internships (which we have, but don't publish), clarifying the internship process (re: when they take it, how they find it, and how they get a faculty advisor), providing access to a sample internship report, and other support like helping them update their resumes and setting up an editing portfolio.

Other notable suggestions that the CPC faculty have considered include creating an FAQ for internship employers (since one student noted that educating their internship supervisor about the internship requirements was sometimes confusing) and providing info on freelance editing. We are constantly trying to foster relationships with past and potential internship employers, but as we'll discuss later in the section titled "Staffing," this is difficult at times due to the lack of a dedicated coordinator.

Despite these challenges, it's clear from our exit surveys that the value of a required internship makes it worth the pain. According to one student: "I had an excellent experience with this course. I was supported by my instructor throughout the semester in situations that were extremely hard to navigate. I have no changes to recommend." When asked if their internship built on and expanded skills they learned in coursework, 94% said yes. And when asked what new skills they gained during the internship, in 31 responses, 29 unique skills were identified. Most significantly, 19% of students noted collaboration, time management, writing, communication, and the use of technology and social media as

either new skills they developed during their internship or skills that were sharpened during the experience. The required internship demonstrates to students how to apply what they learned but also challenges them to work in the field before graduation, giving them both insight into their interests and strengths as well as experience to help pursue future work.

Faculty-Identified Challenges

In addition to challenges identified by students, we have identified four issues that inhibit our growth: staffing, tracking, course modality, and emerging technologies.

Staffing

Many of the challenges we face in running the CPC are not unique to our program. The reliance on contingent faculty to grow and sustain higher education in general is ongoing and field wide. As Katie Rieger, Christina Lane, Sarah Lonelodge, and Lydia Welker (2023) note: “Contingent laborers are the new faculty majority,” which is true both in our larger department and in the CPC program. While one of our most significant strengths is the intradisciplinary nature of our program, this also means our faculty is often spread thin with no designated CPC faculty; instead, our full-time faculty teach CPC courses when they can be spared from teaching courses in their respective tracks (RPW, LCS, and CW).

However, we anticipated this challenge when developing the CPC. In addition to drawing from the strengths of our existing faculty, we utilize advanced graduate students who have some editorial experience, thus maintaining staffing without hires, remaining “budget neutral,” while also allowing our graduate students to expand their teaching experiences. We have a dedicated Canvas page to support their training in teaching our Intro to Copyediting and Publishing course, which helps with consistency and labor issues, but we have yet to acquire a specific hire for the CPC, an absence that is becoming more acute as enrollment in the certificate increases (our numbers have more than quadrupled since the certificate debuted in 2017).

To wit, advising students during the required internship can be especially taxing. Currently, advising internships counts as service rather than part of a teaching load. Though the process is not intense (a few meetings over the course of the semester to check in, review work log and progress, introduce and review the report draft, and finally grade the report), it can become overwhelming when instructors have three or more advisees per term on top of their other teaching assignments. Our department is adding a new co-op subplan in the next academic year, which has dedicated co-op coordinators. Since the required internship experience would count as one of the co-op experiences in the new sub-plan, we are hopeful that this will lead to more support for student internships.

Tracking

We have struggled with keeping track of where our students end up after they've completed the certificate. We would like more data tracking where they go and what they do. We have developed a more systematic way of tracking where they end up, but implementation always seems to fall off the radar. Since the certificate is co-directed by two tenure-line faculty who both also direct graduate programs, and the instructors who teach the courses are largely non-tenure-track contingent faculty or advanced graduate students, the important post-certificate administrative work is often the most difficult to complete.

While the exit survey has certainly helped evaluate the certificate as a whole, the single question about future plans ("Do you have employment or continued education lined up after graduation?") does not do enough (or perhaps is asked too early) to give sufficient insight into student success post certificate. Of the 31 respondents, only six (19%) selected yes and were able to share post-graduation plans with us, the majority of whom were pursuing graduate school. We'd like to know, even post graduate work, where CPC students end up and how the skills they learned through the program support their professional work, but our staffing limitations have stymied our aspirations.

In-Person Offering

Many successful copyediting and publishing programs are offered fully online, like those mentioned previously (UC San Diego, University of Chicago, and Emerson College). By requiring in-person participation, we miss out on an entire population. Because we built the CPC from existing courses, we aimed for expediency by leading with our strengths and requiring minimal curricular revision, at least for the first ten years of the program. We make that trade off knowingly as our faculty and students both crave and appreciate in-person instruction, though we realize that expanding our reach and growing the program—conditions necessary to be awarded a hire—likely will include increasing our access beyond on-campus students.

Emerging Technologies

A challenge facing every program is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Currently our department allows individual faculty members to create their own AI policies for their classrooms, but as a certificate program, we need to continue thinking about the ethical uses of AI in editing and publishing. We plan to develop a certificate-wide statement that addresses our policy on ethical AI use; editing practices don't stand still because

technology changes and we must adapt and pivot to ensure our students are prepared to employ these skills.

Lessons Learned and Future Proposals

As with the administration of any successful program, there is always room for growth and lessons to be learned. In hopes of helping the TPC community and anyone currently running or considering developing a copyediting and publishing certificate, we share what we have learned and what we hope to implement moving forward.

Establishing a Community

At the start of each fall semester, we organize a welcome meeting, where current and prospective CPC students can come to learn about the program and meet faculty and peers. We clarify expectations, explain how we hope they move through the program, and introduce the required internship and possible connections for them to consider.

Accessing Information

We have a student-facing community Canvas page where all required information, forms, and resources are available to students who declare the CPC. We also use an internal faculty-facing Canvas page to help with norming and onboarding contingent faculty and graduate assistants who teach our CPC courses.

Double Dipping

The success of our program really is in showcasing how editing skills overlap multiple English tracks. In addition to many of the classes counting for both the CPC as well as for required coursework in one of our English Tracks (RPW, CW, or LCS), coming soon is the creation of a new track for co-ops in English, in which the required CPC internship could count as one of the required co-op experiences to earn this designation. We believe this will help the CPC grow.

Student Mentoring

In the end, we realize that students are most successful when their peers speak about what has worked for them. We are proposing a yearly symposium (perhaps in the spring, to offset the fall annual kick-off meeting) where past interns speak about their experiences and share what they learned. They would focus on how the coursework helped them but also on what they had to learn while on the job. They would share how they found their

internship and offer advice to future interns. This peer mentoring would help clarify the process, which is the main recommendation that comes out of the program exit interviews.

Embracing Intradisciplinary

Make your program work for you and your students. Our unique English major, with four distinct tracks, allowed us to tailor a CPC program for all of our students, not just those in TPC. Based on the results of our exit surveys, 100% of our students cited that their internship required them to apply skills they learned in their cross-track coursework. Students identified copyediting (74%), the creation and use of style guides (42%), communicating with authors (32%), and document design (23%) as skills they applied from the intradisciplinary coursework.

Conclusion

The success of our program is due in large part to intradisciplinary partnerships that support editing and publishing as an inclusive field, one that is not exclusive to TPC. In a climate where the worth of Humanities is constantly challenged, it has been important to us to formally recognize that we are better together. When faculty from multiple disciplines work together to educate students on the editing and publishing fields of myriad industries, the outcome is beneficial to all involved. The students often discover interests and skills that are new to them, thus broadening their marketability, and faculty form close-knit ties that bind them together across disciplines.

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Appendix A

Copyediting and Publishing Certificate Course Descriptions and Learning Outcomes

Required Courses

Course	Description	Learning Outcomes
ENGL 2004 Introduction to Copyediting and Publishing	<p>Copyeditors are not the stars of the show when it comes to writing and publishing, but the glow of writing would be much dimmer without them. Copyeditors improve writing by deleting redundancies, resolving impediments to clarity, enhancing grammatical and syntactical flow, fact-checking, ensuring stylistic consistency across a manuscript, and much more. To accomplish these tasks, a copyeditor consults dictionaries and style guides and uses a variety of tools--including software programs, electronic editing tools, and old-fashioned handwritten editing marks--to develop an awareness of the differences that manual and mediated processes make in text production. Writers count on copyeditors to catch overlooked mistakes and inaccuracies; they count on copyeditors for that extra polish that elevates writing from serviceable to</p>	<p>Understand the editorial process, including the use of style manuals and reference books, creation of style sheets, and methods of querying authors and clients.</p> <p>Assess copyediting needs and apply the appropriate level of copyediting to documents including correcting issues in organization, style, and language choice.</p> <p>Learn basic principles of legal issues (copyright and permissions) that copyeditors may encounter in their work.</p> <p>Practice marking up a hard copy using conventional marks and symbols as well as using Microsoft Word's track changes and Adobe commenting tools to copyedit documents.</p>

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	<p>outstanding. To develop these skills, students will study copyediting methods and apply what they're learning to scholarly, popular, technical, and creative texts. This course is suitable for those interested in editorial work in the publishing industry, for creative writers who want to refine their manuscripts, and for professionals in any field who wish to become clear, effective communicators.</p>	<p>Recognize and correct common errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, and numbers using editing symbols.</p> <p>Assess the affordances of manual and mediated processes in relation to copyedited material.</p> <p>Learn copyediting methods and methodologies suitable to a range of texts.</p>
<p>ENGL 3046 Modern English Grammar</p>	<p>This course is designed to make learning grammar interesting and even enjoyable. The main purpose of this class is to help students improve their command of English grammar to become more knowledgeable language users, more accomplished speakers, and more effective writers. We will begin by examining the basic sentence elements of subject, verb, object, adjective, and adverb. We will then study larger issues of sentence structure, phrases, clauses, and the many subtleties of sentence embedding. We will work as language learners, deriving</p>	<p>Develop an understanding of the grammatical structures of English and how they function in conveying meaning.</p> <p>Apply knowledge of grammar and punctuation to improve one's oral and written communication.</p> <p>Analyze the grammatical and stylistic elements in published writing.</p> <p>Identify and implement how notions of appropriate usage vary according to such features as audience, context, and</p>

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	<p>the rules of English inductively from data—rather than deductively from time-honored concepts that in many cases don’t hold up to close scrutiny. Our data will include sentences from a variety of contexts: literary works, academic journals, bureaucrats’ memos and reports, students’ own writing, as well as everyday speech. Each week, we will work on issues of grammar, punctuation, and style in writing. Students preparing to be English/Language Arts teachers will have an opportunity to examine the role of grammar instruction in the classroom.</p>	<p>genre.</p> <p>Examine the changing nature of grammatical conventions over time.</p>
<p>ENGL 4107 Copyediting and Publishing Internship</p>	<p>In this course, students explore potential career paths, gain practical skills, and/or make professional contacts through an internship to get real-world work experience in a professional, editorial environment. Site supervisors are required for an internship and provide interns with a mentor who can help them improve their writing and editing skills while developing professional relationships. Interns will also compile writing and editing samples from the internship as a way to showcase their experience</p>	<p>Gain on-the-job experience in an editorial workplace.</p> <p>Apply classroom knowledge and skills in an editorial workplace environment.</p> <p>Reflect critically on the internship experience.</p> <p>Produce a portfolio of professional documents and a report about the experience.</p>

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	<p>and skills to future employers. The course is intended to complement an on-site internship experience.</p> <p>ENGL 4107 and Internship prerequisites: ENGL 2004 Intro to Copyediting & Publishing plus 9 additional hours in the certificate. This course is by permission only; contact faculty in the program to discuss interning.</p>	
<p>ENGL 5124/PWRT 5124 Editing Professional Documents</p>	<p>Students will be introduced to the practices and principles of editing print and online professional documents such as proposals, trade articles, and journals.</p>	<p>Demonstrate the ability to edit within deadlines and space constraints by successfully meeting these constraints in the context of class assignments.</p> <p>Apply developmental editing, copy editing, and proofreading skills to a variety of assignments.</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to edit for style using a variety of style manuals.</p> <p>Formulate successful strategies for working with team members from diverse areas (both inside and outside) by working on group projects.</p>

		<p>Investigate and employ online sources for fact checking class assignments.</p> <p>Integrate writing and design (i.e., visual elements) into a cohesive and balanced layout in print and online environments.</p> <p>Assess the viability of a story/book/article to determine whether it is a good piece to publish.</p> <p>Evaluate legal concerns involving libel, permissions, and copyright in professional and technical writing situations.</p>
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Digital Publishing (Choose One)

Course	Description	Learning Outcomes
ENGL 2000 Digital Composing	Students will compose with audio, video, and other web 2.0 technologies and develop an understanding of how digital literacies expand concepts of composing and writing in the context of 21st	Explain the role of digital literacy tools and the ways in which such tools shape text delivery within 21st century modes of communication.

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	<p>century modes of communication.</p>	<p>Use those tools for multimodal composing purposes.</p> <p>Create finished compositions aimed at varying audiences and using a range of digital and traditional print techniques.</p>
<p>ENGL 2070 Desktop Publishing</p>	<p>In this course, students will learn to use the digital tools of the 21st century to publish professional documents for multiple purposes and audiences. Projects include the design and production of flyers, brochures, presentations, and marketing materials. This course is print focused, and projects may also be client focused.</p>	<p>Define basic design principles used in developing documents for professional publication.</p> <p>Recognize and describe the relationship between design principles and written communication, both print and screen.</p> <p>Demonstrate basic competence in using DTP software, such as Photoshop, InDesign, Word, Acrobat.</p> <p>Discuss your work in critically informed ways drawing on the vocabulary of document design.</p> <p>Assess and critique existing documents based on</p>

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		<p>accepted design principles and propose alternative strategies for improvement.</p> <p>Conceive and carry out design projects to include the production of professional quality documents.</p> <p>Practice working collaboratively to achieve a common goal.</p>
ENGL 3072 Multimedia Writing	<p>Multimedia Writing will provide students with a practical and theoretical foundation in multimedia theory and production. Projects include research-driven work into a range of media, including digital, audio, and video. Students will present their findings using the latest in visual and other media presentation technologies.</p>	<p>Define terms related to multimedia writing.</p> <p>Engage the culture and problems associated with multimedia writing.</p> <p>Compare and contrast different styles and formats of multimedia writing and composing.</p> <p>Research and produce a multimodal argument.</p>
ENGL 5128 Publishing and New Media	<p>The course provides students with the fundamentals of book and magazine publishing, while preparing them to succeed in an era in which</p>	<p>Define the fundamentals of book and magazine publishing.</p>

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	<p>publication environments are fluid spaces where interactions among people, machines and media (words, images, sounds, video, animations, simulations) must be structured. Students will learn to explore multiple approaches to creating, managing, distributing, and marketing content across multiple platforms-including books, e-books, periodicals, websites, blogs, podcasts, mobile extensions, and other formats. Projects will be client focused and include service learning projects for area non-profits or government agencies.</p>	<p>Practice and advance writing and editing skills.</p> <p>Demonstrate basic competence in new media technologies.</p> <p>Demonstrate critical and applied understanding of the techniques and theories of contemporary publishing.</p> <p>Conceive and carry out a publishing project.</p>
<p>HUM 4003 Methods of Media and Technical Translation</p>	<p>This advanced-undergraduate and graduate-level course introduces techniques and research methods used to create professional-quality media and technical translations and gives students opportunities to try out different forms of translation. "Media translation" means, among other topics: video subtitling, localization for video games and software, podcast transcription, and audio transcripts. "Technical translation," on the other hand, means translation of instruction manuals, user's guides, and other forms of</p>	<p>Research and show evidence of intensive study of topics related to media and/or technical translation projects.</p> <p>Show how translation theory informs day-to-day translation practices.</p> <p>Create high-quality technical translations easily readable by both professionals and consumers alike.</p> <p>Practice core skills of video</p>

	<p>technical writing. Beyond introducing students to the practical skills and discipline required by these fields, the course emphasizes critical forms of inquiry that situates the translated products within societal discourses, such that humanistic research methods yield more nuanced, insightful translations. Competence at an Intermediate level in any non-English language required.</p>	<p>game localization and translate databases of nested text, including but not limited to character dialogue.</p> <p>Subtitle films and demonstrate best practices in film & video subtitling.</p>
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Textual Publishing (Choose One)

Course	Description	Learning Outcomes
<p>ENGL 3076 Writing with Style</p>	<p>Clothes, hair, music choices—all are familiar elements of your distinctive style. Your writing, too, has style, whether zippy and humorous, reflective and thoughtful, or something else altogether. In this course you will learn to recognize stylistic moves and patterns in your own and others’ writing and apply elements to fit your audience and purpose. By diving into the effects of word choice, punctuation, sentence-length, rhythmic clauses, figurative language, and much more, you will develop a repertoire of stylistic choices that will sharpen your writing</p>	<p>View style as an art of selection influenced by audience, purpose, genre, and context.</p> <p>Apply stylistic moves with intention to create specific effects and to communicate effectively.</p> <p>Experiment with different writing styles through regular informal writing activities.</p> <p>Participate in group</p>

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	<p>and refine your message for a variety of situations. This course is perfect for creative writers who want to work on craft, aspiring professionals in any field who wish to become clear, effective communicators, teachers-in-training who plan to teach writing and reading at any level, and anyone interested in writing with more intention.</p>	<p>workshops to practice analyzing and improving your writing style.</p> <p>Complete analytical and creative writing projects designed to apply what you've learned about style to texts of your choice.</p>
<p>ENGL 3096 Creative Writing and Literary Publishing</p>	<p>Students will develop practical, hands-on skills related to editing, producing, and promoting the online literary magazine Short Vine, the undergraduate literary journal of The University of Cincinnati. We will focus on the art and craft of evaluating and editing fiction, poetry, literary nonfiction, art, and photography as well as layout, production, and all the business aspects of publishing a literary journal including subscriptions, marketing, and distribution, as well as creating a stronger online presence. This course also provides an introduction to the larger literary market, and we will discuss the process of building a career as a writer, including topics such as literary contests, colonies and conferences, agents and editors, book production, readings, marketing, and the</p>	<p>Students will select, edit, and proofread creative work for publication in Short Vine.</p> <p>Students will work closely with emerging writers and artists.</p> <p>Students will design and lay out an online literary magazine, including art and photography.</p> <p>Students will research and analyze established literary magazines for content, genre, style, and approach.</p> <p>Students will prepare their own creative work for submission to a literary journal.</p>

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	<p>publishing environment overall. In addition to producing Short Vine, students will gain substantial experience in editing and preparing manuscripts of their own creative work and learn how to submit work for publication.</p>	
<p>ENGL 3097 Book Arts</p>	<p>This course is an introduction to book arts—including printing, bookbinding, papermaking, artist bookwork—through the dual lens of book history and preservation practices. In addition to weekly readings, students will conduct observational analyses, hands-on exercises, and archival research in the Preservation Lab located in Langsam Library.</p>	<p>Synthesize an understanding of book arts and general history of book-making practices.</p> <p>Develop awareness of book technologies, from print to digital, and the materials, tools, and practices central to their creation.</p> <p>View book arts through cultural perspectives that consider the book an evolving material cultural object and expressive medium.</p> <p>Develop and employ coherent writing and communication skills through research papers, discussions and oral presentations.</p> <p>Observe and annotate book arts practices in the Preservation Lab and</p>

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		participate in hands-on book-making activities led by a preservationist.
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Appendix B

Copyediting & Publishing Internship Exit Survey 80

* Required

1. Your Name *

2. Please input the date. *

3. What is your major? *

4. Your non-UC email address so that we can keep up with you after graduation: *

5. Did your internship require you to apply skills you learned in coursework? *

Yes

No

6. What skills did you apply from coursework? *

7. What skills did you learn on the job for which coursework didn't prepare you? *

8. Did your internship build on and expand skills you learned in coursework? *

Yes

No

9. What new skills did you gain on the job? *

10. Do you have employment or continued education lined up after graduation? *

Yes

No

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11. If you have employment, for whom will you be working and what will your responsibilities be? If you are continuing your education, what program are you entering and what degree are you seeking? *

12. If you were to recommend changes to the internship process or to the preparation you received in coursework, what one or two recommendations would you make? *

Author Information

Laura Wilson teaches in the Rhetoric and Professional Writing track of the English department at the University of Cincinnati. Her pedagogy incorporates experiential learning in courses such as technical writing, multimedia writing, web authoring, and social media. Her research projects and publications focus on student engagement, contingent labor, advisory boards, and service learning in the digital humanities. Additionally, she serves the English department as the director of undergraduate studies, where she combines knowledge of the program's many track and certificate options to best advise students interested in writing and editing professions.

Lisa Beckelhimer is an Educator (Teaching) Professor at the University of Cincinnati, where she has taught for more than 25 years. She teaches English composition, copyediting and publishing, and interdisciplinary studies. Her interests include affirming pedagogies and wellness in the writing curriculum, online teaching and learning, and popular culture. Prior to teaching, Lisa held editorial positions in corporate and academic settings. Her recent publications range from a critique of Hallmark Channel programming to a step-by-step guide to developing online writing courses.

Laura R. Micciche teaches writing, editing, and composition theory at the University of Cincinnati, where she developed and co-directs the Copyediting & Publishing Certificate. Her research focuses on collaborative and material realities that encompass writing, teaching, administrative, and editorial practices. She has published two monographs, three edited collections—most recently, the co-edited *Revising Moves: Writing Stories of (Re)Making*—and over 30 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, many with collaborators. She currently chairs the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric & Composition, co-edits the WPA Book Series for Parlor Press, and is past editor of *Composition Studies*.

Editing Pedagogy and Digital Production

Tim Lockridge

Miami University

Abstract This Program Showcase article describes two digitally focused editing courses developed for Miami University’s Professional Writing major. These courses foreground digital textual production, helping students see how digital tools, standards, and production processes sit within contemporary editorial work. In doing so, they emphasize how editing exists within interpersonal dynamics that are mediated by technology, asking students to consider the implications of those mediated relationships.

Keywords editing, publishing, EPUB, workflows, client-based projects, project-based learning

This Program Showcase article introduces two courses I developed for the Editing in Professional Contexts track in the Professional Writing major at Miami University. The two courses—*Print and Digital Editing* and *Developing and Publishing Digital Books*—place digital production at the center of the editing curriculum. And in this article, I want to argue that digital textual production is a useful foundation for traditional editing courses. Before I get into the hows and whys, let me clarify what I mean. When I discuss a pedagogy based on *digital textual production*, I am describing the following:

- **Digital:** Classes that yield a tangible and, ideally, market-ready digital artifact. These artifacts may also support print output, but the production process is focused on producing texts for digital reading devices.
- **Textual:** A focus on artifacts that are standards-based (EPUBs and PDFs, especially) and that work on a variety of reading devices. Although these standards may support a variety of modes and media, they are built for digital reading devices.
- **Production:** Each student in the class experiences how a project moves through the whole of the production process: from a folder of files to a single, market-ready object. This work requires collaboration, project management, editorial skills, digital literacies, and version control strategies.

Although this approach is not incompatible with traditional copyediting and technical editing curriculum, the end point is different. In both classes, the students experience how a digital object comes into being and how it moves through interpersonal relationships and technological affordances. It is, in some ways, inspired by the growing ranks of self-

publishing authors who begin their work in a traditional Microsoft Word or Google Document; collaborate with early readers, developmental editors, and copyeditors; and move their text into an application or platform (like Vellum or Kindle Direct) that outputs market-ready EPUB and PDF files. This publishing method provides a model for the classroom; specifically, it presents a way for students to see the breadth of an editorial process without the need for deep experience in graphic design or an expensive suite of specialized tools. It also, I hope, acknowledges the ways that editorial labor is changing: the increasingly outsourced work of copyediting, the role of tools like Grammarly and large language models for the self-publishing author, and a focus on delegation, collaboration, and project management that spans across many types of work—editorial and more.

This approach also offers a model for building connections—as Joanna Schreiber (2024) urges us to do—between editing and other knowledge domains, such as project management, accessibility, and user experience research (p. 452). The course design emphasizes how editing exists within interpersonal dynamics mediated by technology, asking students to consider the implications of those mediated relationships.

In this article I narrate my experience building these courses for the editing track of the professional writing major, demonstrating what a focus on digital textual production might look like in the editing classroom. I will first provide an overview of the editing track in the professional writing major at Miami University. I will then describe the two courses and their assignments. Following that description, I will reflect on the outcomes, resources, and technologies that underpin a digital textual production pedagogy.

Editing at Miami

Miami University’s professional writing (PW) major grew from a previous BA in scientific and technical communication (STC). As student enrollment in the STC program declined in the late 2000s, faculty developed a new PW major to reflect the curricular breadth of rhetoric and writing. (For a full discussion of this process, see Heidi McKee’s [2016] “Researching a new professional writing major: Miami University.”) The PW major today has four tracks: Digital and Technical Communication, Intercultural Rhetoric and Writing, Public Writing and Rhetoric, and Editing in Professional Contexts. The editing track consists of one required course (*Print and Digital Editing*) and a broad pick list of related courses offered by PW faculty (such as *Style: Strategies for Editing* and *Information and Data Visualization*), creative writing faculty (*The Literary Marketplace* and *Creative Nonfiction*), and other programs (*Editing and Design*, taught by journalism faculty, and *Structure of Modern English*, taught by linguistics and literature faculty). The editing

courses are also cross-listed with other programs, which means that a typical classroom population includes a breadth of majors: PW, creative writing, emerging technology, strategic communication, and more.

When I joined the Miami faculty in 2014, I took over as the primary instructor of *Print and Digital Editing*—the core editing course. The previous instructor had recently retired, and I did not have access to the existing syllabus. I reviewed the literature, talked with colleagues, sent emails to folks in industry, and drew on those materials to develop a new course.

The eventual course design was also informed by my own editing experience: working as a freelance writer and copyeditor after finishing my undergraduate degree, volunteering as an academic editor during graduate school, and later serving as Senior Editor of Computers and Composition Digital Press, a position I continue to hold. Across all of these roles, I have found that communication and collaboration are the keys to editorial labor: “working with the writer, for the reader,” in the words of Carol Fisher Saller (p. vii, 2016), and I have centered that concept in the course design. But I also wanted to foreground digital production and extend beyond the typical publishing focus on Microsoft Word. In doing so, I have tried to develop assignments that create a sense of “editing velocity” (O’Keefe, p. 27, 2024), using digital writing tools and collaborative practices to push against a simple author/editor structure.

This ultimately means that the courses described below extend across a breadth of knowledge domains. Although the classes I describe in this article do not fit neatly under the technical editing umbrella (as the classes also contribute to a creative writing major and draw students who are interested in a breadth of editorial work), I am aware of the pedagogical challenges in many technical editing courses: a narrow focus on grammar or proofreading (Lang & Palmer, 2017), minimal coverage of visual design or comprehensive editing (Melonçon, 2019), or a focus on separate “writer” and “editor” roles that are increasingly blurred in the contemporary workplace (Albers & Flanagan, 2019). This is perhaps complicated by the lack of a common definition or understanding of “editing” as a curricular area (Baker, Rawlins, & Pierson, 2024), or what Jocelyn Hargrave sees as a question of *being*: “the need for more distinct nomenclature to define editors and editorial practice” (2022, p. 3).

With these challenges in mind, the two courses described in the following sections foreground digital textual production. Although they contain elements of the procedural subject matter traditionally found in professional and technical editing textbooks (including style, syntax, and developmental editing), they use a publication- and project-

based approach that grounds editing in relationships, user experience, and writing technologies.

Print and Digital Editing

Print and Digital Editing (ENG 412) is the core required course for the editing track of the PW major. The course is grounded in the idea that students should experience the process of *editing* (as an editor) and the process of being *edited* (as a writer)—two experiences that are increasingly blurred in contemporary digital textual production. To do so, the course centers on several skills and principles:

Collaboration: The work of editing is the work of relationships. The class foregrounds that labor, teaching students how to work alongside the text, the author, and the other people in the production process. I have found that this experience is most impactful when students are faced with authentic editorial situations in which they have a stake (rather than simulations or case studies, which are fine, but do not carry the same affective weight).

Resources: The course introduces students to dictionaries, style guides, usage manuals, accessibility standards, and project management guidelines, helping them see how their work is situated within broader and longer histories of language and communication. In doing so, I try to show how those resources are living documents, demonstrating how they change over time, and why.

Project Management: As Carolyn Rude and Angela Eaton (2011) have noted, “Editors must be good managers because most projects require work over extended periods of time, because many people think document development and production take far less time than they do, and because editors are often expected to make up for delays by others” (p. 257). All publication outcomes are projects, and collaborative classroom projects need a foundation in the procedures for work: delegating tasks, assigning roles, managing progress, and ensuring accountability.

Tools: Writing is a tool-mediated activity, and editorial work moves through tools depending on genre and industry: commonly Microsoft Word, Adobe InDesign, or LaTeX. Students should gain familiarity with relevant tools, but learning new tools requires access, support, and agency. Rather than prescribing specific tools, the course outlines the typical use cases and pros and cons of several tools and then asks students to select their preferred tool for a given task—outlining why they have made that choice and how it meets their work preferences and goals.

Mechanics: An editing curriculum needs to address both the procedural basics of editorial work (from style sheets to queries to style guides to terminology) and the functional technological literacies of doing the work. The projects discussed below are grounded in those mechanics, but they work to situate the mechanics in the larger array of course principles.

To put these skills and principles into action, the course begins with a minor copyediting project (The Scholarly Edit) that leads into a major editing project (The eBook), which foregrounds digital textual production. I discuss these projects in the sections below.

The Scholarly Edit

The Scholarly Edit begins after the course's introductory weeks, in which students are introduced to procedural basics: editorial roles and workflows, copyediting basics, and reference guides. I divide the students into groups of three or four, and I give each student a manuscript of an academic text that has not yet been copyedited. (I draw these manuscripts from friends, colleagues, and graduate students.) I want the students to see an in-progress manuscript draft for a complex text, and I want them to work with a text for which they are not a subject matter expert. The students are given a time constraint via deadline, introduced to project management procedures and tools, and asked (as a group) to complete a light edit of the text. Although the manuscripts mostly consist of alphabetic text, they can contain additional media types, and I ask students to work with that media as well.

The project's collaborative, mediated structure is the core of the endeavor, and it is also the entry point for digital textual production. The students must keep a single shared stylesheet, and they must use a project management tool and process to plan and track their work. In class meetings, they must resolve questions or disputes, ensuring that the style sheet and project management tool reflect some kind of consensus on the project's status, the work done, and the decisions made. At the project's conclusion, the group must submit a single stylesheet, a digital document with changes tracked, and a cover letter with queries. Aside from the format of those documents, I do not prescribe the software the students must use to do the work. Some students will choose a technology that allows them to conduct real-time collaborative edits; others will choose to break the manuscript into smaller pieces and circulate them asynchronously. All groups must conduct multiple passes as part of their edits, and all group members must see and agree upon the edits as they happen. But they have agency in the tools and specifics of how they

do that work, and the lessons learned from those choices becomes a meaningful outcome of the assignment.

At its core, The Scholarly Edit is a fairly typical copyediting project. But it serves several goals: It helps students learn the movements of collaborative editing, it teaches them how to manage an edit that spans several steps and cross-checks, it introduces them to the work of editing difficult texts for which they are not a subject matter expert, and it gives them a chance to develop tool preferences. Most importantly, it provides a limited practice run for the much longer eBook project that follows.

The eBook Project

During our first class meeting, I tell the students that we will collectively write and produce an edited collection. To do this, each student will write a chapter based on a theme that I have selected for the semester. The subject matter, form, and genre are up to the student. My requirements are simply a minimum word count and the inclusion of at least one image. Because of the number of Professional Writing majors in the course, most students will write nonfiction pieces: journalism or memoir or creative nonfiction. But the project is most interesting when the student work is varied in its form and content. Final chapter drafts are due when the class is past The Scholarly Edit, giving us the remainder of the semester devoted entirely to the book project. I divide the class into groups (of four, ideally), and I give each group the full set of chapters written by the class. There are typically 23 students, and the chapters have a minimum word count of 1,000 words, so each group receives the same set of 23 chapters (approximately 23,000 words total). The group must turn this set of files into a cohesive project by doing the following:

- selecting a title and theme;
- editing, grouping, and arranging the chapters based on that theme;
- ensuring that the edited texts are consistent in tone and mechanics; and
- writing additional text—an introduction, section dividers, a conclusion—to weave together the chapters and connect them to the theme.

Each group must also manage a number of other editorial concerns: verifying image permissions, collecting author byline information, typesetting and arranging the pages, and so on. To facilitate this, I require the group to adopt a project management system (building on their experience in the Scholarly Edit assignment) that allows each group member and me to see the progress of all assigned tasks and that shows each chapter moving through an editing sequence. Each class meeting then begins with a kind of stand-up meeting, in which the group shares what has been done, what needs to be done, and what issues need further discussion.

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For example, a typical timeline for the early stages of this project might look like this:

- **Week 1: Initial reading of chapters and discussion of genres and patterns** Students begin the initial selection of an overarching concept for the book, including possible sections and titles.
- **Week 2: Copyediting first passes** Each group member does an initial copyediting pass on six chapters.
- **Week 3: Copyediting pass two** Group members review the edits made by another group member.
- **Week 4: Copyediting pass three** Edits with tracked changes are returned to the chapter author for review and to accept or reject.

It is here that I want to note the beautiful complexity at work in this project. During the first few weeks, the tasks might feel to each writer quite similar to the copyediting work in *The Scholarly Edit*. By Week 4, however, each student occupies two different roles: 1) a writer, and 2) a member of an editing group corresponding with other writers. If there are five groups in the class, then each student is editing the work of other students but also receiving copyedits from four other groups. It is a flurry of activity and a lot to manage, and the process inevitably involves writers who blow their deadlines or are not responding or are not amenable to the edits. (All very real editorial concerns.) When I designed this project, I was worried that students would dismiss the edits as “schoolwork,” or a task to complete as quickly and efficiently as possible, and that they would thus accept all edits without question or challenge. That has not been the case. I am not sure if it is because they know this project will have an audience beyond the classroom, or because they know there will be a byline on the work, but each semester I have had students challenging edits (or asking me how best to appeal or reject possible edits to their work). These are the moments where the class comes alive: where the students are seeing the textual and interpersonal relationships at work in a complex editing process.

While the students wait for changes to be accepted or rejected, they begin writing introductions or other framing text, and they start to work on the visual layout of the book. The course does not have visual design instruction, but many of the students have taken at least one design-focused course. In the mid-to-late 2010s, many students compiled the whole project in Google Documents and encountered the design constraints of that platform. Today, most students produce the final artifact in Figma or Canva, and while neither platform is built for documents with thousands of words, the students find ways to make them work.

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As the tracked documents come back with approved changes, the students begin adding them to the group's shared document and framing them with their editorial text. When combined with a cover image, an introduction, section dividers and text, and so on, the project moves from a folder of text to a coherent whole. This is also the moment when the endeavor moves from an "assignment" to a "book" in the eyes of the students—a point when the individual, delegated tasks of a digital textual production activity become a shared goal.

As the instructor, I see my role as teaching an editorial process, helping with tricky decisions, and adjudicating conflicts. Using the group's chosen project management tool as a guide, I participate in check-ins and make sure that each group has a plan, has delegated labor, and understands where they are in the process. I also help to mediate the occasional conflict or offer advice about style or usage, but I try to give the students as much ownership of the project as possible. The assignment asks them to look at a folder of documents and imagine them as some kind of cohesive whole, and my role is to help them through that movement—understanding what is possible and helping them find a path through which to achieve it.

I tell the students they are the editors of their project, and all editorial decisions are theirs. I work as the publisher, and although I reserve a publisher's veto, I generally stay out of editorial decisions. Their work is theirs, and this project cannot function without that kind of agency. I do not want to shape the pieces, and I prefer that groups get messier drafts, which will offer more meaningful comprehensive editing lessons. To that end, I do not provide feedback on the chapter drafts, and I do not weigh in on stylistic decisions. This is a stance that has evolved over time. During the first semester I taught the course, the students were producing a book of reviews about writing software. One group decided to title their book *The Beast: A Handy Field Guide for the Adventurous Writer*. I discouraged this, telling them that people find texts through titles, keywords, and metadata, and a reader looking for a book about writing software would not be able to find "The Beast." The students resisted and pushed further from my advice: They asked a friend, an art student, to make watercolor animal illustrations for their book, depicting each application as a kind of beast and furthering their vision of a field guide. Their book became the envy of the class, and I learned that the best student work happens when I get out of the way. In the time since, I have seen things go in the other direction. For example, one year a group contemplated turning the project into a collection of blackout poetry. I listened to their debates—some group members loving the creative vision, other group members cautioning that most writers would not appreciate how their essays would be transformed into blackout poems—but stayed out of the conversation. The group abandoned the plan

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(but ultimately made a different creative project), and I think their editorial labor was better because of the shared understanding they found, an understanding that was free of my preferences or meddling.

Many of our class meetings in the last half of the semester are work sessions: students updating each other, or suggesting revisions, or discussing creative commons licenses, or talking to a writer about how their piece is sequenced in a larger whole, or running out to get the one photo that will pull the project together.

The project has a contest mechanism that is completely detached from my grade-based evaluation. After the semester ends, I ask an alum (ideally someone who is working in a publishing-related role) to read the student projects and select the best one. This does two things. First, it ensures the students have a public audience of at least one person. This moves the project from a classroom assignment modeling the real world to an editorial process with at least one non-classroom reader. Second, the contest provides the students with an evaluation that is not attached to my perception of group work. As the instructor, I have seen the process pieces, the group struggles, and the path that each book took on its way from early concept to finished product. I am biased by all of these things. But when a reader encounters a text, they do not have that context. They generally encounter the final artifact without process knowledge. The contest ensures that each project will have at least one such reader, someone who will encounter and evaluate the text in its final form. Writers need readers, and editors work within that relationship. I want the students to take on a large and challenging project, and I want them to have the space to fail safely. (If needed, they can opt out of the contest, but few rarely do.) But I also want the students to see how their work will be received by a reader who does not know them. Because it helps to have an empathetic or interested reader, I select an alum of the class—someone who years ago completed the same project. I also like how the alum connection creates a link across years of the class. The digital textual production frame should allow students to see the breadth of an editorial workflow, and a non-classroom or non-university reader becomes a useful endpoint for the project.

When I first designed the course, I planned to publish the winning book on the Apple Books Store, and I did that for a few years. (I would prefer to publish the books on Amazon, but, to date, Amazon will not let me publish a book without a price, and I am not going to generate revenue on student work.) Over time, however, the store policies and fine print grew more worrisome, so I built a website, 412books.net, and have shared the books there since. The judge-selected winner gets a highlighted place on the website, and the other texts are

presented below it. The site holds many student-produced projects, documenting the work of hundreds of students.

Developing and Publishing Digital Books

Where *Print and Digital Editing* centers on copyediting as part of a breadth of editorial work, *Developing and Publishing Digital Books* (ENG 426) pushes deeper into production. I developed the course in 2015, when I felt that shifts in the web design industry made the traditional Writing for the Web course a difficult proposition for English majors. As we gained more student interest in the editing track of our PW major, I began to imagine what a digital production-forward editing course might include. I also had a number of students who were reading digital books (ranging from digital library books to Kindle to WattPad) and who were interested in both digital publishing and the larger book industry. I then built the new course, which focuses on the EPUB standard: a reflowable book filetype that undergirds the digital books on the Kindle store, Apple's Books app, and most digital library systems. EPUBs are basically a bundle of HTML files, and they lack the layout and dependency complexity that makes modern web development a difficult thing to bring into a writing or editing course. By focusing on the EPUB standard and filetype, I could introduce students to many of the core principles of digital production and text workflows.

The course builds on the project-centric nature of *Print and Digital Editing*, asking students to complete two major projects: 1) a conversion of a Project Gutenberg text file to a market-ready EPUB, and 2) a similar second print-to-EPUB conversion for a client.

Course Structure and Assignments

The course begins with a simple overview of HTML, enough to teach the students the basics and help them understand that digital text is stored and rendered. Most of this instruction happens outside of our class meeting time: students complete online tutorials and submit check-in assignments in which they build a simple document (a table of contents; a restaurant menu) with the skills they have learned. Our class meetings are used for discussion and activities that are supported by simple project-based in-class tasks. I also introduce them to version control technologies and practices, and we move through the first month of the course developing these skills. HTML instruction isn't necessary for this pedagogical approach; one could accomplish the same course outcomes with InDesign or other similar WYSIWYG tools. But the HTML approach aligns with my standards-based goals for digital textual production. This also differs from the HTML instruction that happens in other web-focused courses. EPUBs are small websites, but they lack most of the web's presentational and interactive features. That simplicity

gives me the flexibility to present HTML as one of several technological standards that underpin digital distribution. Through this approach, I am able to foreground digital textual production without dwelling too long on specific skills or prerequisites.

After an opening survey of HTML, metadata, version control practices, and the digital publishing landscape, the students move into the Gutenberg production project.

The Gutenberg Production Project

Project Gutenberg is a digital repository of public domain books. I give each group a text file from Project Gutenberg (ideally one that has been recently scanned and is still in the process of being copyedited) and a PDF of the original print book. I try to find books with challenging components—such as recipes or screenplays or a clever use of footnotes—and I ask the students to look at the print scans and imagine how this book should work in a digital format. Do the print document and its layout accomplish something specific that needs to be recreated digitally? Or could the same goals and affordances be met—and be more accessible—in a modified digital format?

To answer these questions, the students have to look at the text through several lenses: accessibility, affordances, genre, reading technologies, and more. The example of a cookbook is useful. In the past, some students have wanted to dutifully recreate the original print page and its layout. But I first ask them if that is even possible. The EPUB will scale and zoom based on the user's font and text size choices, so how can we best present the information with knowledge of the scaled affordance? Can we mark up the text in a way that will allow the user to print the recipe or export it to their notes or recipe app? These are the spaces where the project pushes into questions of editing and audiences, asking the students to think through the text, its uses, and the technological possibilities and constraints of a user's chosen reading device. Ultimately, the work is not that of "digitizing" a print page; instead, it is an assessment of the affordances, media, and possibilities of reading technologies.

As they begin production work, the students agree on a project management system, individual roles, and a timeline for the project. The students typically work in groups of four or five, and I encourage them to take on roles and delegate work based on their perceived strengths. The digital conversion requires significant proofreading labor: The students have to compare their final artifact to the original source material, ensuring that any changes between the two are intentional, in service of the reader, and not the product of oversight or errors. Some students will choose to specialize in this proofreading work; some will dip in and out of the proofreading tasks, favoring other parts of the production process.

The students will also take on other digitizing tasks, like cleaning up images (and in many cases, making backgrounds transparent so that they render well in the EPUB format) and choosing default typefaces and visual formatting. We devote class time to accessibility and user testing, and the students use their book-in-progress with a screen reader, ensuring the text is usable. At the project's completion, the group submits the final book, a cover letter documenting their process, and the results of user and accessibility testing—noting any compatibility problems with reading devices.

The Client Project

After completing the Gutenberg Project, the students repeat the process for a client. In the first years of the course, the students worked for Miami University Press, digitizing print novellas into market-ready EPUBs. More recently, the students have worked with a campus literary magazine, converting print-focused PDFs into reflowable EPUBS. In both cases, the students are given a print artifact and, if available, its source files. The work has been slightly different in both of these client collaborations. When working for Miami University Press, the students converted novellas: long-form publications comprised mostly of alphabetic text. When working with the student publication, they had to work with a variety of genres and artifacts—fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, art and illustrations—while serving the creative vision of the writers and the editorial board. Because the format shift necessitated creative changes, the students worked with the client throughout the adaptations.

In both cases, the project requires the students to move through several stages of work: assessing the original print artifact, choosing a conversion strategy, moving the text into the EPUB format, marking up and proofreading the converted text, and conducting usability and accessibility tests on the new artifact. As the project moves forward, the students iterate on their newly created digital object, creating numbered versions (e.g., 0.1, 0.2), sharing and testing them, collecting and acting on testing data, and ultimately delivering a final artifact to the client.

The projects get at the collaborative complexity that I want a digital textual production course to demonstrate. The students are working with long and complex texts, new technologies, and the challenges of reading technologies. There are facets of proofreading and traditional editing here, but the work also veers more into usability and user experience, imagining how a breadth of users take up the text, and studying what those readers need to read and use the final book.

Outcomes and Connections to the Major

These two courses sit within an editing track in a Professional Writing major. But they also work without those larger structures. They draw students from other programs, and many students add them as electives. *Print and Digital Editing* (412) has consistent demand, and we offer it at least once a year. *Developing and Publishing Digital Books* (426) is currently on a two-year cycle. The courses do not have pre- or co-requisite status, although most students take them in sequence (412 first, then 426). I suspect that the large publishing project in 412 generates interest in the production- and client-project focus of 426.

The Professional Writing major has nine learning outcomes that we assess in groups of three on a three-year cycle, and these two courses directly connect to five of those outcomes:

Digital and Multimodal Design: Students will apply principles of visual rhetoric and design to analyze, evaluate, and create multimodal texts (e.g., data visualizations, conceptual maps, charts and graphs, infographics, social media content, websites, videos, brochures), applying coding, accessibility, and usability standards for digital and multimodal production.

Writing Networks: Students will recognize and analyze the social relationships among human and non-human actors in communication networks and produce writing and content strategy for network circulation.

Project Management and Collaboration: Students will identify and apply collaborative and project management strategies for researching, evaluating, and addressing a client's communicative needs and user needs.

Usability/User-Experience: Students will analyze, evaluate, and apply approaches for researching users' behaviors, expectations, and experiences to design usable, useful, and accessible communications.

Professionalization: Students will investigate career opportunities for professional writers and develop the ability to articulate the unique knowledges and skills they can bring to organizations.

Some of the outcome connections are clear, as my conception of a digital textual production pedagogy has direct links to multimodal design and project management. Other outcomes require more foregrounding in class conversations and activities. For example, many self-publishing authors have a strong understanding of how content,

metadata, digital storefronts, and intellectual property are intertwined (Laquintano, 2016). I try to foreground these connections to the Writing Networks outcome, helping students see how human and non-human actors alike shape the production and circulation of texts. Likewise, when students are producing digital books, we draw on usability and user-experience practices throughout the whole of the process, asking questions about the structure, usability, and delivery of digital documents.

I also use these courses to help students imagine the possibilities of editing and digital production in professional contexts. Many students enter my editing courses with a goal of working in Big Five publishing. Some will. Most will not. I try to usefully reframe the professional potential of digital editing and publishing skills, helping students imagine how their knowledge of version control, project management, metadata structures, document design, and collaboration can extend across many careers and disciplines.

Resources and Technologies

Miami University is a research university with a large English department, but these courses can work within many institution types. *Print and Digital Editing* works as a standalone course, and it can fit alongside technical writing, communication, or general English studies coursework. Likewise, my recent sections of *Developing and Publishing Digital Books* have worked with campus partners and publications for the client project, but the course could easily extend into community collaborations—producing accessible digital documents for local partners, governments, or other organizations.

The two courses described here require relatively little in terms of hardware and software resources. Students produce the *Print and Digital Editing* projects in Google Docs or Microsoft Word, and many have used simple files (a spreadsheet or shared document) or free tools (Basecamp, Notion, or Trello) to manage their projects. I use free Github repositories and Markdown files for the eBook conversion projects, but instructors could accomplish the same thing with free, open-source applications like Calibre and Sigil or the more expensive Adobe InDesign. My students test their projects on reading hardware that I have acquired over time (Kindles, Kobos, and tablets) or that they checkout from the campus library. But they could do the same with the free software emulators built into Amazon's Kindle Previewer or the open source epubcheck tool.

There are multiple pathways for instructors to experiment with and learn more about this work. At the simplest level, an interested instructor could convert a Microsoft Word-based manuscript into an epub file using a WYSIWYG tool like InDesign or Calibre. For technical writing instructors familiar with formats like LaTeX or DITA, tools like Oxygen, Overleaf, and

Pandoc can export to EPUB. And for those who want to see a model EPUB conversion workflow, the Standard EBooks Project (Standard EBooks, n.d.) offers a comprehensive step-by-step guide, style manual, and open-source toolset.

Although specific software choices are not core to the course, the digital standards it takes up certainly are. The course includes much discussion of the EPUB standard, and our conversations focus deeply on questions of how technologies work and how they are shaped by market forces. The EPUB standard—managed by the World Wide Web Consortium (2025)—defines the technical specifics of the format, from supported media types to required metadata to declaring the writing mode (right to left or left to right). In many ways, our classroom conversations about the EPUB standard mirror our conversations about style guides. Just as style guides are living documents that evolve over time and reflect shifting norms and best practices, so do technical standards. This focus on standards also supports Karl Stolley’s (2016) insistence that “expression should not be trapped by production technologies,” meaning that “digital works should long outlast the software that played a role in their creation” (Manifesto tenet #2). By focusing on standards rather than software, I hope to help the students see how texts move through technologies across time. Just as the content of a print book is not constrained by its first printing or edition, so too will digital text move through various containers and technologies across a writer’s and reader’s lifetime.

Ultimately, a focus on digital textual production should not favor any one technology, or one file format or standard over another. Instead, it should help students see an array of tools, processes, and artifacts, and it should help them understand which tools serve which outcomes and why.

Reflections

When Carol Fisher Saller (2016) asks us to work for the reader through the writer, she is doing so in the context of copyediting. But her guidance holds true for the whole of editing, from acquisition through preservation. The two courses described here work to trace the trajectories of texts through the technologies, publications, and ecologies that mediate them, echoing Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe’s (2004) insistence that editing extends into “the changing landscape of our culture, the cultures of other peoples, and the students and technologies who cohabit those changing places” (p. 23).

Curriculum always reflects local resources and opportunities. These courses are part of a PW major with a significant digital focus and a cohort of faculty with digital expertise. They also reflect my own background in born-digital composing and publication. But they do not

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require it. An editing class that foregrounds digital textual production can be built with any arrangement of tools and technologies. And by foregrounding digital textual production, we can better help students see and imagine the changing ways in which writers meet readers today: through digital libraries and subscription services like Kindle Unlimited, through reader-funded platforms like Patreon and Kickstarter and Substack, and through self-publishing sites like Wattpad and Gumroad. Although pathways to more traditional editing careers continue to exist, a digitally centered editing curriculum can help students imagine a more capacious ecosystem of readers, writers, and texts.

Of course, “make this course like I made it” is not a viable outcome, especially when we are talking about digital pedagogy. I do not share this program showcase with the expectation that others will simply recreate these courses or assignments. Instead, I hope this overview offers a useful way of reimagining the changing shape of editorial labor—and how those changes might usefully reconfigure pedagogy.

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Then and Now . . . and Down the Road: Editing and Publishing at UA Little Rock

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Abstract The MA concentration in editing and publishing (E&P) in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at University of Arkansas Little Rock was conceived in 2008 by two professors in the department with expertise in editing, one nonfiction and the other technical. Subsequent course creations included “continuation” courses of two existing courses with four three-hour classes becoming the core of the concentration. Elective courses were then identified, practicum in editing/internship hours were put into place, and finally, a theory course best suited to the concentration, *Language Theory*, was instituted. The most recent addition has been a new *Topics in Editing and Publishing* class. Changes include reducing the portfolio option from 42 to 36 hours, thus making thesis and portfolio options consistent—with subsequent ramifications for E&P portfolio students. They gain assistance in planning, completing, and “defending” their portfolios. The planned reduction in internship hours from six to three means that students have a bit more room for electives. Looking to the future, the authors consider the role of GenAI in the E&P classroom, a future that shall include consideration of the synergistic connection between theory and practice: praxis.

Keywords editing, publishing, curriculum, professional and technical writing

This Program Showcase narrates the evolution of the MA concentration in editing and publishing (E&P) in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at University of Arkansas Little Rock (UA)—from the concentration’s inception in 2008 to what it is in 2025. Our experiences will, we hope, contribute to conversations about E&P programs and curriculum (Baker; Rawlins; & Pierson, 2024). In what follows, we outline our program, discussing required and elective classes, as well as internship opportunities. We then look

to the future of our concentration—and how technologies such as AI will affect not only *what* we talk about with our students but also *how* to discuss their editorial roles.

Then: First Draft of our Concentration

In November of 2008, two members of the Department of Rhetoric and Writing interested in (and already teaching) editing sketched out a draft of an editing concentration (refer to Appendix A), which was approved by department faculty and formalized via a program change form (refer to Appendix B—copy included here does not contain signatures, but is our working copy). But the conversation about editing and how to teach it had been going on for several years, sparked by students' comments. One in particular comes to mind, something along the lines of, "Oh, I'm so glad you're teaching us *editing*; up to now [*Technical Editing*]'s been just another writing class." It was that student-driven commentary that got those two rhetoric and writing professors to look at what they already had in terms of editing and to build upon it.

At that time, we had two undergraduate/graduate editing courses: one technical (RHET 4304/5304 *Technical Style and Editing*) and one nonfiction (RHET 4321/5321 *Editing for Publication*). Having taught these courses for a number of years, we both realized that one class for technical and one class for nonfiction was not enough. We needed "continuation classes"—*Technical Editing Part II*, *Editing for Publication Part II*, if you will—which were ultimately numbered and titled RHET 4322/5322 *Advanced Editing* (focused on comprehensive technical editing) and RHET 4322/5323 *Production Editing* (focused on taking edited nonfiction pieces submitted for publication to *Literature and Medicine* or *Quills and Pixels*). These four courses comprised the core of our evolving editing concentration.

But four courses/12 hours were not enough to help students develop into editors who could take on a variety of document types and a range of document topics. So we created a new class: RHET 4324/5324 *Topics in Editing*. We also targeted RHET classes that we saw as being relevant for editors-in-the-making, such as *Document Design*, *Writing for Business and Government*, *Technology of the Book*, and *Software Documentation*. Courses such as these represented the elective portion of the concentration. (The *Electives* section later in this article lists all the electives currently available.) Finally, we knew that we needed to give students the opportunity to take those skills learned in their classes and put them into practice in the real world, initially called *Practicum in Editing* and later renamed *Internship*.

Using our editing concentration draft as a guide, we created the proposed *Advanced Editing* class (2010), turned a *Topics in Nonfiction* class (not on our initial plan) into *Production for Editors* (2011), renumbered/renamed an undergraduate/graduate practicum into a graduate-level internship (2011), and changed the name of the concentration to *Editing and Publishing* (2019).

Now: Programmatic Requirements and Choices for Editing and Publishing Students

Requirements

No matter what concentration students select—Editing and Publishing, Nonfiction, or Technical Writing—they all take nine hours of required courses. Six of these nine hours are two classes: *Introduction to Research Methods* and *Rhetorical Theory*:

- **RHET 7300 *Introduction to Research Methods***: “An introductory course in research methods used to study writing in the classroom and workplace; quantitative and qualitative design; ethics of human subject research.” [(University of Arkansas Little Rock, 2025)]
- **RHET 7311 *Rhetorical Theory***: “Nature, extent, practice of rhetoric; emphasis on necessity of integrating a solid understanding of rhetorical theory with extensive writing in a variety of modes for a variety of audiences and reasons.” (University of Arkansas Little Rock, 2025)

These courses are required because they provide students with a set of common skills and language vital for both academic and professional work.

In *Introduction to Research Methods*, students learn how researchers pose questions, gather and generate data, analyze it, and present it to various audiences—not only giving students the opportunities to become better researchers, but also enabling them to interrogate problems within workplace settings, troubleshoot these problems, and help solve them, a valuable skill for both academic and professional settings. Because our program emphasizes both theory and practice, it is important for students, regardless of their concentration, to understand rhetorical concepts and persuasive tactics. *Rhetorical Theory*, then, provides students with the theoretical support that underpins effective communication for various audiences.

The third required class, no matter the concentration, is one that students select, a theory course that is best suited to their concentration. In the case of E&P, that course is RHET

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7312 *Language Theory*. Having completed an MA in linguistics (from a program including several rhetoric courses) at Arizona State University while at the same time working as a technical editor at Sperry Corporation, one of the concentration co-authors saw the synergistic relationship between editing practices and language theories, and so successfully made the case for *Language Theory* being that third required course.

The following advising blurb describes both the course content and specific assignments. Our including the advising blurb for *Language Theory* here is deliberate; we want our readers here to be as informed as our students.

RHET 7312 *Language Theory*

What Language Theory is and Why it Matters

Rhetoric 7312 will introduce you to the principles operating in language. We'll begin by asking the **Big Question**: What is "language"? How does it differ from "communication"? We'll then examine (not literally) the "hardware" of language: the brain. "Grammar" comes next—and we'll spend some time clarifying what is and what is *not* grammar. Because we're writers and editors, we'll not spend much time on the sounds (phonetics) or sound patterns (phonology) of language. Instead, we'll focus on morphology (word formation), syntax (word order), and semantics (word meaning). As wordsmiths, we can't ignore psychological aspects of language, so we'll be studying language acquisition. Finally, we'll be considering the social aspects of language: how language is being used now, how languages have changed over the centuries.

What better course than this one for students focusing on writing and editing?

What We'll Be Doing

In the following list, I describe the specific assignments we'll be completing:

- Everyone will be a **bringer of data**. When scheduled, the Bringer will be expected to come to class with grammatical, psychological, or social "data"; with a transcript of a conversation or speech event; or with a written text. The Bringer is expected to make enough copies of the data for all class members as we examine and discuss what's been brought. Bringers aren't expected to go on *ad nauseum*; 10 minutes at the most will suffice.
- Everyone will keep a **learning journal**. The journal will contain short "summary/response" entries for each week regarding a "tough concept." (Keep your answers to assigned exercises in your journal: One or more of these exercises may supply

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you with that “tough concept.”) If we have quizzes, I expect you to keep your copies here. Your journal will also contain data gathered when preparing to be the “bringer of data,” a reflective entry about that data, and any data collected for team presentations. (Stay tuned for an explanation of “team presentations.”)

- A final journal entry should take what’s been learned about language *theory* and *apply* that theory to personal interests and/or practices. (I suggest that you keep your journal in a three-ring binder so that you can easily insert material you find, move that material around, trash that material and replace it with something else—you get the idea.)
- Everyone will participate in a **team presentation** responsible for helping the class as a whole come to terms with a prominent/important topic and its application. The team is responsible for assigning readings to the class.
- Everyone will complete one take-home **exam**, which will happen after we finish the chapter on semantics and thus may cover any topic we’ve discussed since the first day of class. This exam is to be completed individually. Of course, you may refer to your texts, class notes, journal entries—just be sure that you don’t merely repeat what’s been written in other places. (In class, I’ll elaborate, make clearer, what I’ve written here. Rest assured that this exam will be doable within the time you have.)
- By the beginning of April, we’ll have discussed a number of chapters from *An Introduction to Language* and from *The Story of English*. Looking at these books’ tables of contents, you can see what chapters we won’t be discussing. You can also think back to what previously discussed topics you want to talk more about, find out more about. You can flip through the glossary and stop when your eye catches an intriguing idea/concept. Or you might know from the proverbial “Day One” what you want to present. You have many options. What’s important is that you choose a topic that truly does intrigue you. Once you have that topic selected and approved by me, everything else will fall into place.
- Stay tuned for what specific days these **audio/visual presentations on chosen linguistic topics** will be happening, their time length, etc. (These are different from your team presentations given earlier in the semester.) You’ll need to use one of various presentation software programs (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi). In putting together these presentations, you’ll be able to hone your skills in conciseness, clarity, and *parallelism*. In addition to the actual “real-time” presentation, you’ll be supplying me with hard copies of your presentation after the fact.

Editing and Publishing Core Courses

Four editing classes make up the required core of UA Little Rock's E&P concentration. From the UA Little Rock catalog (2025):

- **RHET 5304 *Technical Style and Editing***: Studies the nature of technical communication and its editing needs. Practice in editing for correctness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness—accomplished by establishing levels of edit, making multiple passes, and setting up/keeping style sheets. Major project for “real-world” client gives students opportunities to put into practice what they’ve learned. Students also give oral presentations of their projects. Three credit hours. Will be crosslisted as RHET 4304. (Also refer to “advising blurb” in Appendix C, which alludes to the downplay if not the deletion of “style” considerations in technical editing.)
- **RHET 5321 *Editing for Publication***: Prerequisite: graduate standing. Offers a practical, hands-on experience in pre-production editing of a live publication. Focuses on acquisition, review, manuscript editing, editorial correspondence, and manuscript preparation. Three credit hours. Will be crosslisted as RHET 4321.
- **RHET 5322 *Advanced Editing***: Prerequisite: RHET 5304 or RHET 5321. Focuses on issues such as editing graphics, illustrations, and other visual material; editing quantitative and technical material; editing in digital environments, working with authors across digital spaces, and editing manuscripts intended for digital publication. As part of the production process, shows how setting up styles and templates in Word makes the editing process much easier. Also includes instruction in Track Changes and Comments functions in Word. Three credit hours. Will be crosslisted as RHET 4322. (Also refer to advising blurb in Appendix D.)
- **RHET 5323 *Production Editing***: Designed to help future editors learn about and participate in the production of a book-length collection of nonfiction essays. Class focuses on creation of table of contents, arrangement of essays into thematic sequences, book layout and design using high-end desktop publishing software, final proofreading, page proofing, and work with printers. Three credit hours. Will be crosslisted as RHET 4323.

A Peek Behind the Curtain: Editing Pedagogy and Required Courses in Action

Our E&P concentration is informed by theory, specifically by language theory. The more students know about the workings of the English language, how it came to be, and the

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difference between the prescriptive grammar they have gotten in school and the descriptive grammar linguists use to talk about language, the better equipped students are to be able to competently edit and to confidently (and correctly) back up their edits with facts, “chapter and verse” if necessary.

In fact, the first few meetings of *Technical Editing* (especially) and *Advanced Editing* (less so, but still to some extent) are spent “debunking myths.” Instructors ask such questions as:

- How many of you were taught/told/assumed never to start a sentence with *because*? (This question has been asked for 40 years, and the number of students whose hands shoot up is still so distressing.)
- How many of you have been told never to start a sentence with *and*?
- How many of you were told never to end a sentence with a preposition? (Here’s an apt place to tell the story of Winston Churchill, who supposedly was told, during a WWII meeting, not to end a sentence with a preposition, and who purportedly replied, “That is something up with which I will not put.” Giggles abound at how horrible the sentence sounds, but by God, it doesn’t end with a preposition!)
- How many of you were told not to split an infinitive? Well, okay, but what about “To boldly go where no one has gone before”? I kinda like the sound of that. Compare it to “To go boldly. . . .” Ehh—the latter just doesn’t have the same cadence.
- How many of you put a comma in front of every *and* you see? More laughter as I say, “Yes, I love commas and put them in whenever I can—*correctly*. Stay tuned.”
- How many of you *never* put a comma in front of *and*?

Questions such as these generate lively discussions (much more so than one would think) and get us talking about the history of the English language, particularly about Latin being seen as *the* prestige language, and so when the Royal Academy came into being in 18th-century England, its members (e.g., Jonathan Swift, who *loathed* “clipped words” such as *gym* for *gymnasium* and let everyone know what he thought) were determined to “purify” the run-rampant English used by the working class. Thus began the attempt to shove English, a West Germanic language, into a Latin, Romance language, mold.

“All grammars leak” said Edward Sapir in *Language* (1921, p. 39). Indeed.

In our editing classes, students gain knowledge not only about the *what* of editing (both sentence-level and comprehensive) but also the *how/why* of editing: adhering to the level of edit specified (Appendix E), making multiple passes for those editing issues spelled out in that level of edit (Appendix F), and keeping document-specific style sheets (Appendix G).

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These documents “freeze-frame” the skills one of us learned as a technical editor at Sperry Flight Systems in the 1980s—a sort of internship taken during a leave of absence from MA coursework. Linguistics—especially neurolinguistics—back up these skills, whether laid out in layperson’s terms in Sperry’s *Publications Style Guide Volume 2: Editing Standards* (1981) or in more academic terms in John Medina’s *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School* (2014).

These two publications, as well as what’s known as “trace theory” (Kulhavy, 1982), provide pedagogical support for the way our students are taught editing:

- repeat to remember (Medina, 2014, p. 125), for every repetition literally burns a “trace” (Kulhavy, 1982) into the surface of the brain (which works electrochemically);
- repeat something enough (e.g., the ability to do one editing pass at a time), and that memory “conduit” is there and can get only deeper and stronger;
- acknowledge that “the brain cannot multitask” (Medina, 2014, p. 115);
- come to understand that “audiences (i.e., our students) check out after 10 minutes but you can keep grabbing them back by telling narratives or creating events rich in emotion” (Medina, 2014, p. 124).

The above bulleted list truncates a much more detailed and referenced version of editing pedagogy. But it is one that is based on the importance of having students work in real time, whether face to face and/or in a Zoom classroom. It’s based on the importance of students being able to get answers *immediately* to their questions. (In a YouTube video of his “Brain Rules” concepts, Medina critiques the “generic” version of education—in which students attend class during the day and then attempt to do homework in the evening. Based on his work as a developmental molecular biologist/affiliate professor of bioengineering at the University of Washington School of Medicine, Medina argues that students need to work on course material not that night but within 30 minutes of having learned a concept in class. So students *must* get instruction and then immediate (or, at the very least, within 30 minutes) instruction feedback.

We place this material here because in March 2020, everyone pivoted to teaching online in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of us had started teaching *Advanced Editing* synchronously online via Zoom in January 2020, so by the time that COVID-19 “sent us home,” she had become a synchronous online “cheerleader”; students joined the cheering section, for they loved the immediate feedback they got—especially online students who up to that time worked exclusively and asynchronously on Blackboard,

where they posted their weekly responses. These online students were not Blackboard fans. It was therefore not used in our editing classes; rather, Google Drive and its various applications were used instead.

Electives

In addition to the three required courses and the four core courses for the concentration, students may choose from the following three-hour electives, quoted here from the UA Little Rock Graduate Course Catalog (n.d.):

- **RHET 5305 Document Design:** Study and practice of the use of visual elements in technical communication. Emphasis on typography, page layout, data displays, pictorial communication, and usability testing for both print and online documents.
- **RHET 5306 Writing for Business and Government:** Theory of and practice in writing for business and government organizations; includes writing strategies, appropriate diction, report formats.
- **RHET 5307 Writing Software Documentation:** Study and practice of writing documentation for computer software, including printed manuals, tutorials, reference guides, and online help systems. Emphasis on analyzing prospective users and their tasks, interviewing subject matter experts, developing help for different levels of users, writing user-friendly text, editing documentation for style and clarity, and working on a documentation team. Intensive practice with RoboHELP HTML software for composing online help.
- **RHET 5324 Publishing Inside Out:** This course introduces students to the publishing process and provides insight into the roles and career paths available in publishing today. The course offers guided practice in conceiving and developing a proposal for a nonfiction book and teaches core skills in content editing, marketing research, and project development.
- **RHET 5326 Technology of the Book:** This course presents an overview of the history of book printing and publishing technologies from 1450 to the present. Students will explore the implications of different publishing technologies for literacy, learning, and civic participation, focusing particularly on current debates about the shift from print to digital publishing. Students will evaluate changes in the responsibilities of authors, editors, and publishers as they explore the future of the book, including print and digital books, and who will control the publishing process and profit from it.
- **RHET 5370 Writing for Social Media:** This course presents an overview of the need for social media writers and managers in the workplace. Students will analyze

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online audiences and write content that will attract more readers, build trust with the readers, and keep them coming back. Students will create an editorial calendar based on a social media strategy, plan a social media campaign, and execute this plan by writing the content or managing a social media team.

- **RHET 5371 *Writing on the Web***: An introduction to the rhetorical aspects of web design and construction that emphasizes audience(s), purpose(s), and accessibility issues such as website navigation, readability, visual design, and ADA compliance.
- **RHET 5372 *Usability Testing and Design***: An introduction to principles of user experience (UX) design, usability, and usability testing in the context of new media. Topics covered include interaction design, audience and requirements analysis, prototyping, document aesthetics, and usability testing procedures.
- **RHET 5375 *Grant Writing***: Survey, theory, and practice of grant writing (solicited and unsolicited) and the philanthropic sector. Topics include, but are not limited to, finding and researching a foundation, finding and using resources for each stage of the grant writing process, developing a problem statement, creating objectives and goals, creating a budget, and working with foundations.
- **RHET 7320 *Working with Writers***: Study of a variety of writing processes, strategies, skills for writers. Emphasis on practical applications for writers and writing teachers in academic, work, and other settings.

The most recent addition to our list of electives is

- **RHET 7333 *Topics in Editing and Publishing*** (2014): Allows for flexibility in offering courses useful to students and of interest to faculty. May include topics such as Editing for Global Audiences, Intellectual Property and Copyright, History of Printing and the Book, Freelance Editing, and Research and Fact Checking. May be repeated for credit when topics vary. (Curriculum Change Form copy, refer to Appendix A.)

Since its creation, RHET 7333 has been taught twice with two different topics.

Spring 2021: *Editing Practices and Language Theories* “is based upon my OCDA (off-campus duty assignment)—aka sabbatical—in Spring 2018. ... Since [then], I’ve been teaching and researching and working toward offering editing classes to online students. But my project is at the stage where I can share my insights, the connections I see between the practice of editing [the what] and the theory/theories of language [the why, the how] that support certain editing practices and discredit others. I’m at the stage where I can run my ideas up the pedagogical flagpole and see if anyone salutes.

“This offering of RHET 7333 will therefore give us the opportunity to make what I see as the necessary connection between theory and practice: necessary because ‘practice uninformed by theory is just that—uninformed’ [one of several “Nahrwold’s laws”]. The synergistic relationship between theory and practice can help us do a better, clearer job at explaining our editing choices not only to writers and their material but also to ourselves. And once we begin to bring to consciousness what has up to that time been unconscious and therefore unavailable—whoa! I hope you’re as excited, as enthusiastic as I am, in spending Wednesday evenings together” (Nahrwold, 2021).

Spring 2023: *Editing in Global Contexts/for International Audiences.* “This offering of RHET 7333 grows out of my increasing awareness that we don’t live in a linguistic vacuum ... and that our cultural practices are among many. I hope you’re as excited, as enthusiastic as I am, in spending Thursday evenings together! What better course than this one for students focusing on writing and editing?” (Nahrwold, 2023)

Now: Internships and the Importance of Experiential Learning

Strong theoretical backgrounds and extensive coursework is two-thirds of the pedagogical equation: Students in the E&P concentration are also required to do internships. Such a requirement acknowledges that learning the *what* and *how* of editing must be honed both inside and outside the academy. We therefore pursue options for students’ experiential learning.

In 2014, the creators/co-coordinators of the graduate concentration put together the following Curriculum Course Description for internships: RHET 7161, 7261, 7361. (Both the course numbering and the description had been altered from the initial 2008 E&P program draft.)

- “Prerequisite: recommendation of departmental editing concentration coordinators. Provides hands-on editing experience in a professional workplace. Work hours, activities, and responsibilities must be specified in a written agreement between the employer [client] and student in consultation with the coordinators. Credit hours may vary. ...

For example, this course could be taken three times for a total of six hours. In the first two-hour course (fall), the student would serve as an editorial assistant to the supervising professor. In the second two-hour course (spring), the student would move up to be an editorial associate, thus having more (individual) responsibility for

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working with manuscript(s). In the third two-hour course (summer), the student would serve as managing editor.” [(Two three-hour internships would also be an option.)]

The initial internship client was River Market Press, an imprint of the Department of Rhetoric and Writing. Starting in Spring 2011, students were awarded 10-hour graduate assistantships for working with editorial board members, attending meetings and keeping meeting minutes, assisting in movement from manuscript to typescript, and working on book design/production. In that respect, assistantship work followed the above course description for internships. Unfortunately, the press lost inertia after the printing of *Tommy Adkins: At Home and Abroad* (edited by Nahrwold, 2013).

Department faculty have discussed resurrecting River Market Press so that we can again add GA and internship work to student options for learning outside of the classroom. Presently, however, such a move has been put on the proverbial “back burner” as we deal with more pressing issues, such as revitalizing our composition program and filling both tenure-track and instructor positions in our Professional and Technical Writing program in general and in our E&P concentration in particular.

In the meantime, internship opportunities come to us in several ways: via our faculty and graduate student listservs, alumni, and word of mouth. The latter medium has been surprisingly successful—perhaps given our increasing number of online graduate students, who have told us and others that taking synchronous online classes via Zoom gives them the sense of community they never had before. And we faculty are given the opportunity to mentor internships that graduate students have come to us with. (Just this past year—Fall 2024 and Spring 2025—one of us worked with an online student and her client, both based in Springfield, Illinois.)

Down the Road: Changes for the Future

A significant change to the concentration is that the portfolio option for the MA has been reduced from 42 to 36 hours to coincide with the number of hours required for the thesis option. This change shows up on our “MA in Editing and Publishing Concentration (36 hr.)” (Appendix H). Instead of the six internship hours originally envisioned in our 2008 draft, we are in the process of reducing the number of internship hours from six to three. Our altered course of study also gives thesis as well as portfolio students the six-hour, two-class support to put together their committees and their proposals, as well as the opportunity to “defend” (we prefer “present”) their proposals to faculty and other graduate students. During the second class, students work with their committee chair and members to

complete and defend their theses or portfolios. Such changes to our graduate concentration benefit our students by their getting a bit more coursework, as well as designated assistance in putting together their project proposals and then their projects, whether thesis or portfolio.

Changes continue. The coordinator of the MA concentration in E&P has retired as of August 1, 2025, and synchronous online classes via Zoom are no longer permitted as of Fall 2025 for the Online Campus at UA Little Rock. In Spring 2025, we interviewed and successfully hired a new tenure-track assistant professor with expertise in digital editing, as well as knowledge of/experience with artificial intelligence, UX, and/or usability. Such a hire marks a turn, if you will, in our department offerings.

Incorporating GenAI into the Editing Classroom

As generative AI (GenAI) technologies—even multimodal GenAI—advance, editors will continue to be vital members of organizations “developing and deploying AI in ways that are fair, accurate, transparent, accountable, and explainable” (Pratt, para. 13, 2025). Our program thus strives to encourage students to examine GenAI technologies through a critical lens rather than uncritical adoption. While GenAI companies make claims about efficiency, critical thinking, data analysis, and research (OpenAI, n.d.), GenAI technologies raise real concerns over intellectual property (Metz, 2024), cognitive function (Kos’myna, 2025), linguistic justice (Owusu-Ansah, 2023), labor (Perrigo, 2023), environmental harm (Calvert, 2024), and hallucinations and misinformation (Lucas et al., 2024). GenAI cannot understand rhetorical or cultural contexts, and quite startlingly, has been found to perpetuate biases and harmful stereotypes (O’Donnell, 2024; Kotek, Dockum, & Sun, 2023).

Indeed, Microsoft Edge claims its Editor function “provides AI-powered writing assistance including spelling, grammar, and synonym suggestions across the web so you can write more confidently” (Microsoft, n.d., para. 1). We argue that such an understanding of editorial work does not demonstrate a correct understanding of what grammar *is* (the descriptive grammar linguists work with), the robustness of what human editors offer, or what students in our E&P program are required to demonstrate in order to successfully progress through the program. While editors do attend to sentence-level issues, they also provide important contextual and rhetorical guidance (comprehensive editing) that GenAI models cannot match.

This technological mismatch stems from the fact that GenAIs are not *thinking* in the same way editors might (or do at all, for that matter). As Amanda Guinzburg (2025) discovered,

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GenAI technologies most often offer what a user “wants to hear” in response to any prompt. Guinzburg asks ChatGPT to suggest which pieces of her work to include in a query letter to an agent and is met with strong and confident encouragement. However, the GenAI misinterprets Guinzburg’s purpose and work, making up complete fabrications about what has been included, even as Guinzburg questions it. The GenAI is confident, enthusiastic, positive, and even apologetic to Guinzburg as ChatGPT continually apologizes for misleading her—yet does so incorrectly. GenAI lacks the capacity for uncertainty, for rhetorical questioning; it lacks the ability to acknowledge the limits of its own knowledge. Editors can—and do—work with authors rhetorically in ways that GenAI cannot. Editors can push and pull ideas in new directions. We thus encourage this spirit in our E&P program and argue it as a strength of editorial work.

As we prepare editors for future work, we ask students to interrogate how this technology functions. In order to do so, we must educate ourselves and then share with our students what we have learned and what they *must* learn. Case in point is our summer 2025 offering of a “Writing with AI” *Special Topics* course that focused on human cognition, ethics and AI, and various AI platforms. Students learned not only what AI platforms are and how to use them, but also *how* and *why* they work. This fundamental knowledge prepares students to be leaders in how this technology may or may not be adapted in future contexts. Rather than viewing GenAI tools as a threat or boon to editorial work—what Martin Heidegger (1977) calls “the extreme danger” and “the saving power” (p. 313)—we want students to understand these tools as potentially influential yet limited instruments that require human intervention regardless of use. In the rush to stay current, we cannot forget what editors coming out of our graduate E&P concentration must be able to do: work with *language writ large* to ensure it is “correct, consistent, accurate, and complete” (Rude & Eaton, 2010, p. 203).

Conclusion

From a two-hour brainstorming session in 2008 to where we are now in 2025, our MA concentration in Editing and Publishing has, as pointed out earlier, continued to change. From minor ones, such as submitting a program change form to change the name of our concentration from “Editing” to “Editing and Publishing (2019),” to major ones, such as hiring faculty with backgrounds/ knowledge of linguistics and how that knowledge connects to editing, to hiring faculty with nonacademic writing and editing experience, to hiring faculty with knowledge of/experience with AI. The evolution of our program from its inception until now demonstrates our commitment to best practices in editing, the adaptability of our curriculum and faculty members, and our commitment to preparing

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editors for an increasingly complex professional landscape through theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Our emphasis on theoretical grounding through courses such as *Language Theory* and *Rhetorical Theory* produces graduates with what Carolyn Miller calls “knowing-that” (1989, p.21). Core and elective editing classes serve as a bridge. The real-world editorial internship experience we require of our students provides them with the so-important “knowing-how” (Miller, 1989, p. 21). In this way, we emphasize the synergistic connection of theory and practice: *praxis*.

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Appendix A

Appendix A: Draft of Editing Concentration for MA in Professional and Technical Writing

The editing option for our MA degree would comprise 12 hours of concentration work: Technical Style and Editing, Editing for Publication, Advanced Editing, and an elective [Topics in Editing course, Editing for Global Audiences, or a graduate course related to editing], plus 6 practicum hours that would fulfill the cognate area of the program.

Should we decide to offer a certificate in editing, we'd want those students to have 12 to 15 hours of editing coursework as well as a significant supervised practicum experience.

Here's a draft of course descriptions:

Existing Courses:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RHET 5304 | Technical Style and Editing
Prerequisite: graduate standing. Studies the nature of technical communication and its editing needs. Practice in editing for correctness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness – accomplished by establishing levels of edit, making multiple passes, and setting up/keeping style sheets. Major project for “real-world” client gives students opportunity to put into practice what they've learned. Students also give an oral presentation of their projects. Three credit hours. Will be crosslisted as RHET 4304. |
| RHET 5321 | Editing for Publication
Prerequisite: graduate standing. Offers a practical, hands-on experience in pre-production editing of a live publication. Focuses on acquisition, review, manuscript editing, editorial correspondence, and manuscript preparation. Three credit hours. Will be crosslisted as RHET 4321 |

Proposed New Courses

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RHET 5322 | Advanced Editing
Prerequisite: RHET 5304 or RHET 5321. Focuses on issues such as editing graphics, illustrations, and other visual material; editing quantitative and technical material; editing |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Draft of Editing Concentration
Rev. Date: 12/02/08

in digital environments, working with authors across digital spaces, and editing manuscripts intended for digital publication. As part of the production process, would show how setting up styles and templates in Word makes the editing process much easier. Would also include instruction in Track Changes and Comments functions in Word. Three credit hours. Will be crosslisted as RHET 4322.

RHET 5323

Editing for Global Audiences

Focuses on editing cross international boundaries and the needs of readers whose first language is not English. Would include intensive study of different languages' linguistic rules (including, of course, English). Would also discuss cultural factors. Three credit hours. [NB: in January 2020 became one of various Topics in Editing and Publishing at the graduate level: RHET 7333]

RHET 5324

Topics in Editing

Allows for flexibility in offering courses that may be of use to students and of interest to faculty. Could include such titles as Indexing, History of Printing and the Book, Intellectual Property and Copyright, Freelance Editing, Research and Fact Checking, etc.

RHET 5226, -7, -8

Practicum in Editing

Provides an "on-site" editing experience for editing concentration students. Could include work with *Literature and Medicine* or another academic journal, book editing, or freelance work for local entities, including units within the university. Could also include working with authors digitally via Word's Track Changes and Comments (during the second and third iteration). Would require editing faculty [Chuck and Cindy] approval and supervision.

This course would be taken three times for a total of 6 hours. In the first 2-hour course (fall), the student would serve as an editorial assistant to the supervising professor. In the second 2-hour course (spring), the student would move up to be an editorial associate, thus having more (individual) responsibilities for working with manuscript(s). In the third 2-hour course (summer), the student would serve as managing editor.

Draft of Editing Concentration
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N.B.: The editing courses previously listed would be available to all advanced undergraduate students at the 4000 level. Working with their advisors, undergraduates could choose either a heavy or a light editing component. We don't think a formal editing track at the undergraduate level is a wise idea because undergraduates need much broader exposure to a wide variety of writing experiences. They need ample time to strengthen their own writing before they take on significant editorial responsibilities for the writing of others. All undergraduate editing courses would carry prerequisites, at least RHET 1312 Comp II and RHET 3301 Editing for Usage, Style, and Clarity [a.k.a. Introduction to Editing]. (RHET 4304 Technical [Style and] Editing now requires RHET 3301 as a prerequisite.

Draft of Editing Concentration
Rev. Date: 12/02/08

Appendix B

Appendix B: Program Change Form



University of Arkansas at Little Rock
New Program or Program Changes
 (See Online Instructions - http://ualr.edu/academics/?page_id=12)

Log # (Provost Office use only)

1. General Information (Must be completed by all)

a. Originating Person	b. Contact Person's E-mail	c. Contact Phone	d. Date
Chuck Anderson & Cindy Nahrwold	cmanderson@ualr.edu; canahrwold@ualr.edu	569-3160 (dept.)	11/17/08
e. Department/Program		f. College/School (Select from dropdown list)	
Rhetoric and Writing		CAHSS	
e. Type of Program Change (Select from dropdown list) Program Change			
f. Explanation (i.e., brief description, role and scope, etc.)			
<p>This program change entails our adding a new concentration--editing--to our two existing M.A. program concentrations: nonfiction and technical. As with the other two concentrations, the editing concentration will require that students take the four core theory courses. The editing concentration differs from the other two concentrations in that the latter require six hours of cognate courses (courses outside of their concentration). The editing concentration will require that students take six hours of editing practicum, in which students apply what they've learned in their coursework to "real-life" editing experiences: work on academic journals or books, local freelance work either off or on campus.</p> <p>Such a concentration will allow students to focus on honing their editing skills--both nonfiction and technical. Attached is a description of our proposed concentration.</p>			

2. Program Information

a. Title
Editing Concentration
b. Justification (i.e., demand/availability of students, need, etc.)
<p>From our own experiences and from what we've heard from employers, both local and beyond, editing is a skill that too few prospective employees have. It is also a skill that is called for in job ads. A quick Google search on October 17, 2008, produced 2,707 postings for editors from July to October 2008 (on the ACESjobs board), 1,308 listings for tech writer-editor jobs on indeed.com., and 916 magazine editor jobs on indeed.com.</p> <p>We currently offer only two graduate editing courses: Editing for Publication (nonfiction) and Technical Style and Editing (technical). These courses make every fall semester and are, in fact, increasing in size. But a semester is too short a time for us to teach our students what they need to know to be competent, confident editors. Our offering more courses--a concentration, in fact, would give students the learning that they want, that they've asked for. (Students have heard about our working on this concentration and regularly ask, "When will the editing concentration begin to be offered?")</p>

Approval Process

1. Department Chair Signature	Date	5. Graduate Council Chair Signature	Date
2. College/School Curriculum Committee Chair Signature	Date	6. Graduate School Dean Signature	Date
3. College/School Dean Signature	Date	7. Provost Signature	Date
4. Undergraduate Council Chair Signature	Date	8. Chancellor Signature	Date

For Provost Office use only

Note: Program proposal and advanced notice information should be attached.

Current as of 8/2008 (All others are obsolete)

Appendix C

Appendix C: Advising Blurb for Technical [Style and] Editing

Technical [Style and] Editing RHET 4/5304.9S1, .9U1 Fall 2024
[and yes, I'll be explaining the rationale motivating my use of brackets in class name]

Prerequisites

4304: Rhetoric 3301 Editing for Usage, Style, and Clarity with a grade of "C" or better—or consent of instructor

5304: graduate standing

Class "Location"?

.9S1 and .9U1 students will log into the class via Zoom and attend remotely at the scheduled time:
12:15–1:30 TR Central.

Course Learning Objectives

This course is designed to help you

- develop an understanding of editing and its role in document development and publication.
- learn how to edit effectively on a range of editing tasks and documents (which includes both technical mastery of the English language and the ability to justify editing decisions).
- develop skill at analyzing your own writing and that of others for organization and presentation (which includes graphics and document design).
- develop productive editing attitudes and habits: respect for writers, realization of your own strengths and limitations, respect for collaboration (attitudes); level of edit, multipass editing, style sheets (habits).
- prepare for your role as a professional and for ongoing learning and sharpening of your editing skills once the course is completed.
- develop portfolio materials.

And you'll be working with/for real-life clients with real-life document needs: specifically, an in-house style manual with an appended style sheet (to show that you can "practice what you preach").

I look forward to working with you,

Dr. Cynthia A. Nahrwold [cn](#)

Professor | Coordinator of M.A. Editing and Publishing Concentration
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Appendix D

Appendix D: Advanced Editing Blurb for Spring 2024

Advanced Editing RHET 4/5322

.9S1 [synchronous online] .9U1 [synchronous online as much as possible]

12:15–1:30 [Central Time] T R

What's more, I'm highlighting "consent of instructor" as the prerequisite for this class. (You can take Technical Editing in the fall—same texts in both classes.) E-mail me [canahrwold@ualr.edu] or text me [501.352.0842] so we can talk.

In Advanced Editing, you'll build upon the editing expertise you bring to the class.

You'll also learn to

- edit effectively on a range of editing tasks and documents (which includes technical mastery of the English language [**what**], the ability to justify editing decisions [**why**], and the use of effective/efficient editing "tricks of the trade": multi-pass editing, levels of edit, and style sheets [**how**])
- edit documents electronically (and effectively!) through functions in Word and Google Docs
- apply styles to text and combine styles to create templates/themes for documents
[We may limit discussion to pros and cons.]
- analyze your own writing and that of others for comprehension and organization
- edit visual aspects: layout and document design, graphics, illustrations, tables
- understand the legal and ethical issues involved in editing
- manage projects—both individually and collaboratively

And you'll be working with/for real-life clients with real-life document needs.

Cynthia A. Nahrwold, Ph.D. | Professor
Coordinator of M.A. Editing and Publishing Concentration
Department of Rhetoric and Writing | canahrwold@ualr.edu | 501.352.0842



undergraduates within 15 hours of graduating may take this class for an u/g elective or save it for graduate work. Graduate students: graduate standing.

Rev. Oct. 2024

Appendix E

Appendix E: Editing Levels

	Pass #
1. Coordination Only (“do not edit”)—artwork coordination	1
2. Format Edit (“minimal edit”)	1–6
3. Word Edit	1–7
4. Normal Edit	1–8
5. Quality Edit (“full edit”)—for technical papers	9

Appendix F

Appendix F: Multi-Pass Editing at Sperry

Note: #s 2 and 3 can sometimes be combined.

1. Orientation
2. Headings
3. Subheadings
4. Tables and Figures
5. Text Format
6. Page Numbers
7. Words (spelling)
8. Sentences
9. Quality

Appendix G

Appendix G: Style Sheet Template

What style book are you following?	Abbreviations	Bibliography	Capitalization
What dictionary are you following?			
Dates	Design	Lists	Punctuation
Numbers	Typography	URLs	Misc.

Appendix G: Style Sheet Template (cont).

A/B	C/D	E/F	G/H
I/J/K	L/M	N/O	P/Q
R/S	T/U	V/W	X/Y/Z

Appendix H

Appendix H: Editing & Publishing Concentration Requirements

Required Courses (9 hr.)

___ Intro. To Research Methods ___ Rhetorical Theory ___ Language Theory

Core Courses for E & P Concentration (12 hr.)

___ Tech Editing ___ Advanced Editing ___ Editing for Publication ___ Production Editing

Editing Internship [will be 3 hours, not 6]

___ Editing Internship (7161 & 7261 or 7361)

Electives (6 hr.) [with fewer internship hours, add elective]

___ [3-hour course] ___ [3-hour course] ___ [3-hour course]

Note: Given that internship hours are required, don't do an Independent Study (7350).

Final Project Courses (6 hr.)

Note: Final project may be thesis, applied project w/cover piece, or professional portfolio.

___ Project Proposal (7315) ___ Project Hours (7316)

[taken in sequence, not at the same time]

Note

- As opposed to what's stated online, RHET 5324 Publishing Inside Out, is not a required course for the Editing & Publishing concentration: It's an elective—like Document Design, for example.

Updated by E&P Coordinator [Dr. Cynthia Nahrwold] 13 January 2025

Author Information

Martha Karnes is Assistant Professor in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She researches rhetorics of health and science, technical writing, and feminist rhetorics. Her work has appeared in *Computers and Composition* and *Peitho*.

Cynthia Nahrwold is Emerita Professor/Coordinator MA Editing and Publishing Concentration in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at University of Arkansas at Little Rock. For more than a few years, her research and teaching have focused on editing. She co-created the Editing Concentration for the MA program and coordinated that concentration until August 2025. She has published in *Technical Communication*, *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, and numerous Council for Programs on Technical and Scientific Communication proceedings. “Research as social practice” (co-authored with Carl Herndl), published in *Written Communication*, was awarded the NCTE Technical and Scientific Writing Award: Best Article on Philosophy or Theory of Technical or Scientific Communication (2001).

Building a Social Justice-Focused User Experience Approach to Technical Editing

Krista Speicher Sarraf, Morgan White, Danielle Daugherty, Madelyn Cruz

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Abstract This program showcase highlights the redesign of a technical editing course within a technical and professional communication (TPC) certificate to center user experience (UX) and social justice. Through a sustained partnership with the academic library, students engage in experiential projects that emphasize accessibility, stakeholder advocacy, and ethical editing. The revised course, ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical Editing*, integrates UX methods with sociolinguistic and rhetorical theory to prepare students for audience-centered, justice-oriented communication work. Guided by a polyvocal collaboration among faculty, librarians, and students, the curriculum aligns program outcomes with inclusive editing practices. The showcase offers a model for other programs aiming to embed equity and usability into editing instruction through sustainable, real-world partnerships and reflective pedagogy.

Keywords technical editing, user experience, social justice, access and engagement, academic libraries, program design, inclusive TPC pedagogy

Amid growing calls to align technical and professional communication (TPC) pedagogy with principles of equity, accessibility, and social justice, technical editing courses offer a critical yet often overlooked site for curricular transformation (Benjamin & Schreiber, 2021). This article highlights how principles of user experience (UX), such as accessibility, usability, and equity, can inform technical editing course design, and how academic library partnerships can enable sustainable, mutually beneficial UX experiential learning models. Written from the perspectives of the course instructor, the TPC program director, a student research assistant, and an academic librarian, we trace a user experience-focused, partnership-based approach to the technical editing course.

We first situate our technical editing course within the broader institutional context of our university and our TPC certificate's evolving pedagogical commitments. We then narrow our focus to the course level, detailing the design of ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical Editing*, including its learning outcomes, assignment designs, and integration of UX and experiential learning. Finally, we highlight the strategic role of our academic library partnership and explore how these curricular shifts open sustainable pathways for students interested in editing, publishing, and social justice-oriented communication work.

Our primary purpose in this article is to showcase one outcome of this reimagining: our revised technical editing course that hinges on a UX project in partnership with academic libraries. However, before we zoom in on the technical editing course, we provide an overview of the TPC program and our institution.

Institutional Context and Program Overview

To contextualize our TPC program's approach to technical editing, we briefly review the program's history as well as several institutional pressures driving the technical editing course reimagining offered in this manuscript. We work at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), a public polytechnic university on California's Central Coast. Cal Poly's TPC program, which consists primarily of a 28-unit Certificate open to all undergraduate students, regardless of major, aligns with the institution's focus on applied learning, or Learn by Doing, and prioritization of the teacher-scholar model (Boyer, 1990, 1996). Cal Poly's Learn by Doing philosophy emphasizes experiential learning and is rooted in the educational philosophies of John Dewey (1937) and Paulo Freire (1968). The Learn by Doing philosophy encourages active participation to develop critical thinking and reflective skills (Bradberry, & De Maio, 2018), involving students in real-world problem-solving within community settings. Our TPC program approach, then, is designed to promote analysis, problem-solving, and reflection, helping students build competencies that go beyond specific tasks and skills, such as technical editing.

Students in the program gain firsthand experience in research and industry skills, and faculty regularly engage students in their scholarship of teaching and learning. For example, Madelyn Cruz, one of this article's co-authors, joined the TPC certificate program as an undergraduate student and participated as a student in the academic library partnership described in this article. Then, she joined our team as a graduate student researcher. Madelyn's experience reflects what we strive for as instructor (Morgan White), faculty librarian (Danielle Daugherty), and TPC program administrator (Krista Speicher

Sarraf) as we engage with TPC students—to prepare TPC students for “careers that combine text, media, and design, such as writing, editing, user experience and design,” etc. through “high-quality, experiential education that emphasizes “hands-on” class projects, community service, client projects, internships, and teamwork” (Cal Poly, 2025, para. 1).

Krista arrived at Cal Poly in Fall 2022, at which time the TPC certificate was dormant due to the sudden passing of the former director, Dr. Chelsea Milbourne. With the immediate goals to revive the program and prepare it for impending “semester conversion,”¹ Krista set out to recruit students into the program under its existing structure, which was designed for the quarter system and included four required courses, two elective courses, and a practicum—a 28-unit program. Between 2022–2025, more than 85 students enrolled in the TPC certificate. Beyond the certificate program, more students took TPC courses—such as the technical editing course—without formally declaring the certificate. This pattern of students taking TPC classes but not declaring the certificate occurred in part because the 28-unit certificate is equivalent in units to a minor at Cal Poly, making it difficult for students in high-unit majors, or those with limited elective flexibility, to complete the certificate while remaining on track for timely graduation. Given the relatively small number of students pursuing the certificate on our comparatively large campus (22,279 students in 2023), Krista (the program director), Morgan (a TPC instructor), and other TPC faculty were motivated to reimagine its offerings to increase enrollment (*Facts and figures*, 2025). Using semester conversion as our catalyst, we revised the TPC certificate in two significant ways to expand its reach: (1) We reduced the total required units from 28 to 16, and (2) we modified two existing 3000-level courses² so they now meet general education (GE) requirements, allowing students to count a required TPC course toward their GE coursework. Beyond these technical changes to the program, semester conversion prompted us to rethink our program learning outcomes (PLOs) and several courses, including the technical editing course. From this point forward, we describe the TPC program as it exists under the semester system. The TPC program weaves the principles of UX and social justice across its program learning outcomes, preparing students to become socially responsible editors. This emphasis responds to Sedona Benjamin and Joanna

¹ As part of the 22-campus California State University system, Cal Poly was the last campus to transition from a quarter to a semester calendar. This system-wide “semester conversion” required departments to review and revise curricula, creating an opportunity for our program to embed user experience and social justice as core values in technical editing. Cal Poly’s first term on semesters is fall 2026.

² One of these courses is ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical and Professional Editing*, the focus of this manuscript.

Schreiber's (2021) call for models of technical editing that center accessibility and social justice as primary editorial goals. Our TPC certificate's PLOs are as follows:

1. Apply the principles of rhetoric, design, and usability to communication challenges.
2. Communicate in technical and professional settings in an inclusive, equitable, and ethical manner.
3. Design user-centered communiques that meet the needs of a wide range of audiences.
4. Integrate communication, creativity, and critical thinking to address community challenges.
5. Work cross-functionally with diverse stakeholders to plan, implement, and monitor collaborative projects.
6. Acquire and verify subject knowledge through interviews, observations, and other research techniques.

Notably, these PLOs emphasize user experience and social justice principles throughout, as shown with bold text in the table above. Concepts such as usability and user-centered design are woven into the outcomes, positioning the program as one that foregrounds UX approaches within TPC activities, including technical editing. Moreover, the PLOs align UX with social justice priorities, such as promoting inclusive, equitable, and ethical design for diverse stakeholders. This program-wide focus on UX principles and social justice is most clearly realized in the technical editing course. In the following section, we situate this course within its broader theoretical and pedagogical contexts and describe the major assignment that operationalizes the academic library UX partnership. Our goal is to offer our reimagined technical editing course as an example for other programs interested in integrating UX, community-engagement, and social justice into technical editing instruction.

The Technical Editing Course: ENGL 3317

In this section, we contextualize the technical editing course, ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical and Professional Editing*, describing its learning objectives and theoretical frameworks, and then providing a description of the major assignment that enacts these frameworks and incorporates the academic library UX partnership.

ENGL 3317 enacts humanistic values by framing technical editing as a practice grounded in UX methods and equity-focused inquiry. The course learning objectives (CLOs) of ENGL 3317 work to complement the PLOs of the TPC program listed above, especially the emphasis on humanistic inquiry, language ideology, and UX. Table 1 below outlines the six

learning outcomes for the technical and professional editing course and their alignment with the program’s broader PLOs.

Table 1: ENGL 3317 Course Learning Objectives

#	Course learning objective	Corresponding Program Learning Outcome(s)
1	Analyze technical and professional editing practices by examining rhetorical choices made by writers, readers, and editors in diverse linguistic contexts.	PLO Alignment: 1
2	Evaluate theoretical perspectives to enhance comprehension of technical and professional editing as a humanistic and rhetorical practice.	PLO Alignment: 2
3	Assess linguistic diversity and inclusion in technical and professional editing through ongoing reflective practices.	PLO Alignment: 2
4	Articulate perspectives on the role of technical and professional editors in relation to stakeholders including readers, writers, and texts.	PLO Alignment: 3
5	Evaluate how diverse histories and ideologies shape technical and professional editing practices.	PLO Alignment: 4
6	Apply a process-oriented approach to writing, revising, and editing across various writing tasks to meet academic and professional standards.	PLO Alignment: 1, 2

Collectively, these objectives emphasize rhetorical awareness, theoretical engagement, linguistic inclusivity, and process-based approaches to editing. They position technical and professional editing as a humanistic practice grounded in reflection, collaboration, and attention to diverse audiences, languages, and contexts. Though UX is not explicitly mentioned in the CLOs, CLO 6’s emphasis of a “process-oriented approach” to editing aligns with our integration of UX into the course. Further, our library partnership helps us enact PLO 4, as students learn to work with various stakeholders. In the next section, we detail how UX pedagogy and experiential learning support students’ learning as technical editors in this course.

Technical Editing Course Description and Outline

ENGL 3317 broadens the scope beyond editing skills to include critical analysis of editing practices through sociolinguistic and social justice lenses. ENGL 3317 makes the relationship between technical editing and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) a central, explicit component of the course. The course invites students to define editing through a sociolinguistic perspective, supported by readings such as Melinda Kreth and Elizabeth Bowen's (2017) survey of technical editors, Ronald Wardhaugh and Janet M. Fuller's *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2021), and Natasha Jones's (2016) article on integrating social justice into technical communication. Assignments and activities in ENGL 3317 guide students to critically analyze editorial choices, especially those informed by ideologies surrounding American Standard English and prescriptive editing norms. For example, students not only assess the inclusivity of style guides but also analyze editorial comments through the lens of language ideology and translingual theory. A stakeholder analysis further emphasizes the user experience dimension of editing by encouraging students to reflect on the human consequences of editorial decisions and the diverse identities of authors and audiences. These class readings and activities reflect a broader pedagogical goal of preparing students to become not only skilled editors, but also reflective, empathetic practitioners attuned to the social and rhetorical complexities of language.

As outlined in Table 2, ENGL 3317 is a 16-week course that frames technical and professional editing (TPE) as a humanistic and justice-oriented practice. Each week introduces a key theme—ranging from sociolinguistics and translingual theory to feminist and social justice approaches—paired with corresponding activities, discussions, and assignments meant to deepen students' understanding of that theme. The course moves from foundational definitions and theoretical grounding (Weeks 1–7) to applied practice and client work (Weeks 8–16), culminating in a LibGuide UX project where students collaboratively design and present inclusive, accessible editorial prototypes to the academic library. Given our focus in this manuscript on a UX approach to technical editing, we will discuss the LibGuide UX assignment—and its connecting to TPC scholarship—in more detail in the next section.

Table 2: ENGL 3317 Weekly Overview

Week	Topic	Activities and Assignments
1	Unit 1: Situating Technical & Professional Editing (TPE) as a Humanistic Practice Defining TPE, Defining Sociolinguistics	ACTIVITY: Define editing and sociolinguistics ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due
2	Tools & Technologies In TPE	ASSIGNMENT: Defining Technical & Professional Editing DISCUSSION: Writing for global audiences LECTURE: Review writing “in the wild” and analyze how the writing meets the needs of diverse audiences
3	Unit 2: Theory & Ethics in TPE American Standard English (ASE) and the Standardization of Language	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion to critically analyze editorial comments through the lens of ASE
4	Translingual Theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion about translingual theory ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due ACTIVITY: Translingualism and meaning negotiation in action
5	Rhetorical theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Rhetorical analysis of editing scenarios
6	Feminist theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Analytical paper #1 due: site study drafting and peer review

Sarraf et al.: Social Justice-Focused Approach to Technical Editing

Week	Topic	Activities and Assignments
7	Social justice theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due ACTIVITY: Analyze and critique examples of editing queries
8	Unit 3: Analyzing Professional Editing Practices Editing Models, inclusivity, and sustainability in editing practices	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due
9	Antiracism and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due; analytical paper #2 due: stakeholder analysis drafting and peer review
10	Prescriptive Editing	DISCUSSION: Human elements of editing; critically analyze examples of prescriptive editing.
11	Inclusive Editing and Style Guides	ACTIVITY: Analyze examples of style guides for their attention to inclusivity ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due LibGuide UX Assignment ACTIVITY: Affinity mapping LECTURE: Conducting user interviews
12	Plain language movement & accessibility	ASSIGNMENT: Analytical paper #3 due: editorial process analysis drafting and peer review LibGuide UX Assignment ACTIVITY: Client panel of librarians and library specialists

Week	Topic	Activities and Assignments
13	Identity, Voice, and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reflect on how identities and experiences shape writing and language use LibGuide UX Assignment ACTIVITY: Introduction to Figma Workshop LECTURE: Usability testing
14	Unit 4: Implications of Editing Natural language processing (AI), standardization, and editing	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion; in class activity about AI and LLMs ASSIGNMENT: Assignment 1 Part 2 Due: Defining TPE
15	Editing across contexts	ACTIVITY: creative adaptation in editing contexts LibGuide UX Assignment ASSIGNMENT: Redesigned LibGuide prototype due
16	Finals week	LibGuide UX Assignment ASSIGNMENT: Research and prototype presented to library clients

Table 2 provides a weekly overview of *ENGL 3317*'s activities and assignments. Social justice is woven throughout the course; for example, through the LibGuide redesign and DEI style guide revision, students translate UX methods into justice-in-action editorial practices.

We developed the ENGL 3317 LibGuide UX Assignment to center UX pedagogy and inclusive editing. UX pedagogy offers a structured way to teach students how to participate in design processes that result in effective outcomes, or as defined by Guiseppe Getto et al., “an approach to teaching students how to engage in a design process that produces an effective product” (2024, p. 178). This type of pedagogy has been widely used to help TPC students develop communication strategies that are empathetic, inclusive, and accessible (Turner & Rose, 2022) and is therefore well-suited to a technical editing course context. We

begin by introducing students to the concept of UX, which refers to “the overall experience a person has when interacting with a product, program, system, or service” (Sarraf, 2024), particularly within digital contexts. Then, throughout the course, we ask students to apply UX concepts as a vehicle for editing content within digital contexts, such as library interfaces—as is the case in the LibGuide editing assignment.

The LibGuide UX Assignment (refer to Appendix A) exemplifies this pedagogical approach by positioning editing as an applied, research-based, and collaborative practice. Over five weeks, students conduct user interviews, empathy mapping, and usability testing to inform their editorial decisions. Working in groups aligned by disciplinary background, they collaborate with library staff (Danielle) and the graduate student researcher (Madelyn) to revise and prototype redesigned LibGuides in Figma. Through these activities, students learn to apply DEI-informed and plain language style guides, conduct IRB-approved usability tests using Loop11, and justify revisions to clients through evidence-based recommendations. The assignment emphasizes editing as both a rhetorical and ethical practice that requires attention to accessibility, inclusion, and user engagement while fostering professional collaboration and reflective teamwork through deliverables like group charters, iterative drafts, and stakeholder presentations.

Building on existing resources on UX pedagogy in technical editing courses (Carey, 2014; Sarraf et al., 2025), we integrate UX pedagogy into ENGL 3317 as both a method and a result. This approach encourages students to view UX not only as a final product that is user-friendly, but also as an ongoing process that includes “researching users’ needs and designing users’ interactions with a product or service” (Buley & Natoli, 2024).

Understanding UX as both process and outcome helps students grasp how editing decisions—such as those about clarity, tone, and structure—affect user engagement. ENGL 3317 students learn to view editing not just as surface-level corrections to text but as a rhetorical act that shapes how users experience information. Students also learn to distinguish between “usability”—the simplicity with which a user accomplishes tasks—and “user experience,” which is defined as “both the design process and the outcome of the design process” (Turner & Rose, 2022, p. 64). Seeing UX as an ongoing process encourages reflection and revision; students can prototype, test, and refine documents or interfaces based on real user data (Turner & Rose, 2022).

Moreover, we enact UX pedagogy in ENGL 3317 through a collaboration that is designed to benefit both the library and the students, enhancing the partner’s communication strategies while giving students hands-on learning experiences (Lee, Turner, & Rose, 2023; Sarraf, 2024). A review of 76 publications spanning two decades illustrates the wide range

of UX teaching methods, noting that “experiential learning particularly align[s] with our project’s curricular design” (Getto et al., 2024). In this model, instructors introduce real or hypothetical client personas and lead students through UX design processes to develop user-centered solutions. The integration of these types of partnerships in technical editing courses, such as our ENGL 3317 class, can enrich the field of editing to showcase the dynamic, experiential relationship among author, editor, and audience.

Building on our team’s earlier work on UX and editing in academic-library contexts (Sarraf, et al., 2025), our approach that integrates UX into technical editing sets itself apart from conventional editing practices by recognizing students as actual users of academic library materials. In this context, our project represents a “collaborative process” that goes beyond standard UX research techniques like interviews and usability testing (Dease, Villaespesa, & MacDonald, 2020). By integrating university coursework with a UX-focused curriculum and including “client-facing projects” where students act as library “clients” and librarians serve as the students’ “clients,” our pedagogical strategy forms a reciprocal partnership that ties course objectives to the library’s website redesign efforts—ultimately benefiting the student population (Dease et al., 2020). In doing so, our work contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions reflected in recent case studies on the implementation of UX strategies within academic libraries (Young, Chao, & Chandler, 2020). These studies highlight the importance of involving end users in the design process, showing how such engagement improves library services and digital platforms (Comeaux, 2017; Dease et al., 2020; German, Grassian, & LeMire, 2017). Our project extends traditional combinations of UX and technical editing by actively positioning students as both users and editors of library content. We ask students to reflect on the technical editor’s dual role as both a reader and advocate for the author, helping them understand the significance of user-focused content—especially since they are the intended users. This approach advances a UX technical editing model where accessibility is prioritized throughout every phase of the design and editing process, from the first consultation with library clients to usability testing and final analysis.

Additionally, we prepare students for the LibGuide assignment by asking them to consider social justice as a key aspect of the experiential learning partnership with the library. Before engaging with library content, students read Sam Clem and Ryan Cheek’s (2022) “Unjust revisions” and use their heuristic as a model to reflect on their own power, positionality, and privilege. This scholarship orients students to advocate for the end user, as the students themselves *are* library content end users. Further, this approach emphasizes the importance of editing choices as acts of inclusion or exclusion. Prior work

centers technical editing around social justice (Benjamin & Schreiber, 2021), and we combine this focus with experiential learning through the partnership with the library. In the next section, we detail in earnest the ways in which academic library partnerships, like the one we have integrated into our technical editing course, can support both library and TPC social justice goals through a UX approach.

Academic Library: Redesigning for UX and Technical Editing

Given the parallels between academic library priorities and the social justice turn in TPC, a partnership between academic libraries and technical editing students helps both groups realize their goals. This partnership is realized in the LibGuide UX Assignment Prompt (refer to Appendix A). As Rebecca Walton, Kristen Moore, and Natasha Jones (2019) argue, “changes to technologies and procedures are not neutral, and considering those who are already marginalized helps us recognize the effects of technology in meaningful ways” (p. 180). Building on Walton, Moore, and Jones’s call for reflexivity in technological and procedural change, the academic library partnership enables TPC technical editing students to engage in iterative, user-centered inquiry and deeply consider the effects of technology on them as student users.

The collaboration between technical editing students and the academic library centered on improving the clarity, accessibility, and usability of the library’s digital content. Academic libraries support their mission and related programming through the creation and maintenance of digital content for a specific set of users, primarily students, faculty, and community members, to meet a specific set of objectives, primarily to inform, provide resources and tools, and share knowledge. Digital content is usually packaged into online research guides also known as LibGuides, an application part of the SpringShare portfolio. These research guides “[enable] libraries to create small websites” “for a subject area, a type of user, a tool, or a class” and are widely used throughout the library community (German, Grassian, & LeMire, 2017, p. 162). Our institution’s library’s approach to the development of research guides has long been characterized by a “more is more” mentality. Library specialists and faculty librarians created digital content for students and faculty users, consulting colleagues at peer institutions and using their expertise in specific subject areas to curate and author their research guides. In most cases, this resulted in a lack of user-centered design with complicated user journeys and low scoring heuristic evaluations. This was due, in part, to an absence of UX culture within the library.

However, the library is not unique in this circumstance. In fact, Scott W. H. Young, Zoe Chao, and Adam Chandler (2020) note that while the field of library and information science is well-versed in theoretical user-centered design principles over the past two decades, the adoption of user experience (UX) methodologies within academic libraries has progressed slowly. Craig M. MacDonald (2017) attributes this slow pace to a myriad of institutional and systemic challenges. Nevertheless, recent literature highlights an emerging trend of case studies that explore the broader implementation of UX practices in academic libraries. These studies consistently emphasize the value in end-user participation in the design process, demonstrating how such involvement enhances the overall effectiveness of library services and programming, including digital environments (Comeaux, 2017; Dease et al., 2020; German et al., 2017). The field of library and information science's interest in participatory design processes make academic libraries an ideal partner for technical editing courses seeking to implement social justice-oriented UX pedagogy.

Thus, the library began a collaborative partnership with the TPC program to develop a scalable pedagogy that was symbiotic in nature while also tackling broader systemic access issues in academia. It simultaneously incorporated UX principles, Learn by Doing initiatives, and teacher-scholar model theories to accomplish two major outcomes:

1. Provide students within the TPC program hands-on experiential learning opportunities in both technical editing and user experience research, focusing on repairing social justice barriers; and
2. Ameliorate the library's digital content through a user-centered approach grounded in empathy, which engaged directly with end-users through the design process.

The pedagogy was designed to introduce UX processes into known research protocols.

Following the internationally recognized Double Diamond model shown in Figure 1, we ensured that the structure of the project followed the four activity phases: discover, define, develop, and deliver (Design Council, 2005).

THE UX RESEARCH & DESIGN PROCESS

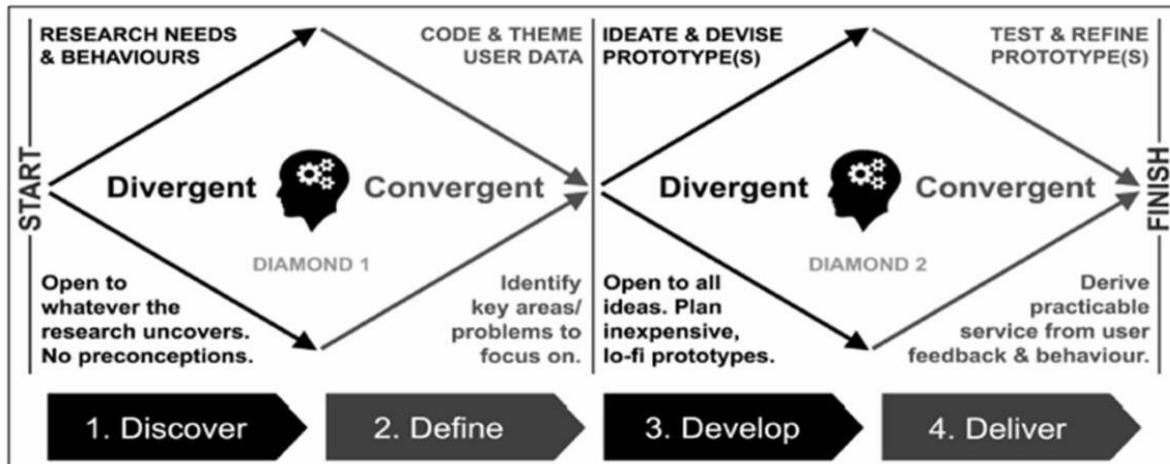


Figure 1. The Double Diamond Framework UX Research and Design. This framework easily breaks down the phases and provides context for each important and interdependent stage. (Design Council, 2005).

Students were introduced to complementing attitudinal and behavioral research methods, the application of affinity mapping to analyze collected data, the process of developing solutions and ideas for improvement, and the iterative approach to designing and testing prototypes. All activities had hands-on components, emphasizing real-world dilemmas and client-based scenarios, as well as introducing industry applications like Figma and Loop11.

Additionally, the collaboration actively supports the library’s strategic goals and DEI initiatives. In the most recent five-year strategic plan, the library seeks to “elevate the user experience through assessment, UX strategies, and seamless access,” which is reinforced through three major goals:

1. Cultivate a user-centered culture;
2. Enhance UX maturity; and
3. Optimize digital resource access (Robert E. Kennedy Library, 2025).

Overall, the project reinforces Benjamin and Schreiber’s (2021) vision of aligning UX pedagogy with accessibility and advocacy within an iterative design process. Through active participation and engagement with student users, the project reinforces the compatibility between UX methodologies and advocacy work, exemplifying user-centered design that focuses on empowering users. This partnership benefits not just the user or the student learning experience, but, additionally, advances the strategic initiatives of the

library through thoughtful and sustainable pedagogy. In turn, the library's digital content evolves to showcase and reflect a continued commitment to serving the diverse needs of its users despite systemic barriers. Our academic library partnership serves as a proof-of-concept, demonstrating how applied collaborations can anchor technical editing education in real-world UX and social justice concerns.

Conclusion

In this piece, we traced how our TPC certificate program integrates user experience (UX) and social justice into our technical editing course through sustained institutional partnerships and experiential learning. By weaving together faculty, librarian, student, and administrative perspectives, we demonstrate how such a partnership can enrich the technical editing course by teaching students to view editing as a user-centered and socially responsive practice. Our evolving model of UX technical editing—grounded in stakeholder advocacy, accessibility, and participatory design—prepares students to work with and for diverse communities.

Based on our experience, we offer the following recommendations for programs seeking to develop similar approaches to teaching technical editing:

1. **Embed social justice explicitly in learning outcomes and assignments**, connecting editing to issues of equity, access, and representation.
2. **Integrate UX research methods into editing pedagogy** to help students center user needs, test their assumptions, and iterate with empathy.
3. **Build sustained institutional partnerships**—such as with academic libraries or community organizations—to scaffold real-world, justice-oriented editing experiences.
4. **Create curricular pathways** (e.g., multiple editing/publishing courses) that allow students to build expertise and pursue editing as a civic, rhetorical practice.

Together, these practices help reframe technical editing not just as skills, but as humanistic work grounded in care, accessibility, and advocacy.

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Appendix A

LibGuide UX Assignment Prompt

Assignment 2: Collaborative Library Editing Project

For this multi-step assignment, you will collaborate with your classmates to edit the library's LibGuides. The goal of this assignment is to create a more accessible, informative, and user-friendly online experience for researchers, scholars, and students accessing the LibGuides.

You will do the following in groups:

- Content revision and improvement of LibGuides
- Rigorous UX research, including interviews and focus group sessions
- Adherence to DEI-focused style guides to create an inclusive end product
- A culminating final presentation showcasing your revised LibGuides
- Use of client profile and supplementary materials provided by the library to orient students to the project and for conducting rigorous UX research.

Here's an outline of the project, which spans 5 weeks:

Week 1: Project Introduction

Our Digital Initiatives and Engagement Librarian (Danielle) and the Graduate Student Fellow (Madelyn) will introduce the project during class time and lecture on effective UX interviewing strategies. You will use the interview skills in your “preliminary interview” assignment, where you interview an ideal user of the research guide to get feedback on the original copy. Also, Madelyn will provide you with a list that categorizes research guides on a 1-5 level of editing difficulty, with 1 being the easiest and 5 being the most difficult to edit. If you want extra credit, you can choose one of the level 5 guides to edit. You will be placed in groups with similar majors.

DELIVERABLES

None

Week 2: Group Charter Memo and Interview Strategies

You will complete an internal deliverable called the “Group Charter Memo,” in which you outline your expectations for your group. During class time, you will learn more about effective interview strategies and peer review interview questions.

DELIVERABLES

- Group Charter Memo
- Peer review of interview questions

Week 3: Client Panel and Interviews

The original authors of the research guides (other librarians and library specialists) will visit our class to field questions from you during this session. In the second session of that week, you will complete your user personas, where you imagine a fictional user of the research guides. You then will complete empathy mapping with this user in mind. Danielle and Madelyn will visit again during this session to cover usability testing more thoroughly. By the end of this week, you will complete your preliminary interviews, where you gather information on the original version of the research guide, which you were assigned to edit.

DELIVERABLES

- User persona
- Preliminary interviews

Weeks 4 and 5: Editing, Usability Testing, and Presentation to Client

Weeks 4 and 5 are dedicated to technical editing instruction, specifically. You will read the Federal Plain Language Guidelines website and the ACS Inclusivity Style Guide and generate an informal style guide to use in your library editing projects. Using this knowledge, you will create a prototype of your research guides using the software Figma, which enables both you and the client to visualize your proposed changes on the library page. You will be given a prototype in Figma that adheres to our institution’s branding guidelines. You will add your content to the template but will also have the freedom to make design changes like adding text boxes, changing photos, and

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rearranging the document design elements. You will submit a draft of your edits in Figma for feedback from Morgan.

To evaluate the initial edits incorporated in your prototypes, student groups will conduct at least one usability test with a key user outside of class time, with extra credit offered for securing additional participants. The usability testing protocol was reviewed and approved by IRB at Cal Poly. You will use Loop11, a qualitative research tool that records usability testing sessions and provides detailed analytics and data visualizations based on the recording. To encourage high engagement, you will offer usability test participants \$25 gift cards, funded by the grant for this project (Danielle will send you the gift cards to distribute to your participant). The test will include five initial demographic questions, one to three tasks determined by your group, three follow-up questions related to each task, and four concluding questions about the overall usability experience. Based on the data gathered from these usability tests, you will make a second round of edits to your prototypes before presenting your findings and recommendations to stakeholders.

In the second half of Week 5, you will present your Figma prototypes to the clients. Morgan will lecture on professional presentations beforehand and will emphasize the importance of you justifying any changes you suggest using information from your preliminary interviews and UX testing.

DELIVERABLES

- Draft 1
- Usability test
- Draft 2
- Presentation

Helpful Resources

- [Informed Consent for Usability Testing](#)
- [Recruitment Materials](#)
- [Usability Testing Guidelines Loop11](#)
- [Usability Testing Guidelines Analog](#)
- [Loop11 login schedule](#) -- sign up here!
- [LibGuide Resources from Madelyn](#)
- [English 317 Initial Slide Deck](#)

When you're done with the project, please post your final LibGuide here.

Learning Objectives

You will do the following in this assignment:

- Gain practical experience in digital content management, information organization, and user experience design
- Develop essential skills in content revision, UX research, including interviews with end users and focus group sessions
- Apply principles of technical editing to improve website content, navigation, and user experience
- Learn to use findings from UX research to inform website design enhancements and user-centric improvements

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West Chester University's Graduate Certificate in Publishing

Eleanor Shevlin, Kristin Kondrlik, Kyle Vealey

West Chester University

Abstract West Chester University (WCU)'s Graduate Certificate in Publishing derives its strength from its interdisciplinary design. Besides being informed by professional and technical writing scholarship and pedagogy, the program draws foundationally from book, media, and publishing studies and features MBA and design courses as well. Its book/media component takes its cue from the many well-developed United Kingdom (UK) and European university publishing and editing programs, while its inclusion of highly ranked MBA courses reflects key skills and knowledge the industry typically desires for those working in editorial and production divisions. Similarly, the art electives aim to equip graduates with a deeper understanding of the elements and importance of the graphic arts and design in marketing as well as editorial management.

WCU's 18-credit program provides high-quality preparation for diverse publishing and related new media careers. By examining the shifts in writing, reading, and publishing over the centuries, students gain multifaceted knowledge of publishing history and media transformations and, consequently, are better able to navigate today's ever-changing publishing and media worlds through a more-informed perspective. It is the only program in the area to do so. The publishing program equips students with a well-rounded, hands-on understanding of contemporary publishing and digital media. This article details the program's underlying rationale, showcases its components, and offers advice.

Keywords publishing studies, book history and media studies, editing, academic rigor with professional training, interdisciplinary design.

Launched in 2017, West Chester University (WCU)'s Graduate Certificate in Publishing derives its strength from its interdisciplinary design. In addition to being informed by professional and technical writing scholarship and pedagogy, the program draws foundationally from book, media, and publishing studies and features MBA and design courses. Its book/media component takes its cue from the many well-developed United Kingdom (UK) and European university publishing and editing programs, while its inclusion

of courses from a highly ranked MBA program reflects key skills and knowledge the industry typically desires for those working in editorial and production divisions. Similarly, the art electives aim to equip graduates with a deeper understanding of the elements and importance of the graphic arts and design in marketing as well as editorial management.

Influences on the Program's Design

The certificate's roots extend further back than 2017. A key influence was the University of Pennsylvania's 1979 Institute of Editing and Publishing, designed and taught by Professor Paul Korshin. Korshin modeled his institute, in part, after the storied Radcliffe Publishing Course, but he also drew from his work with editing and the long eighteenth-century's media and publishing transformations. His program interwove various history-of-the-book topics and hands-on activities, from the making of handmade paper to printing practices and more. Years later, the 1992 establishment of the scholarly organization Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP) brought together publishing professionals and scholars from diverse disciplines, all of whose work collectively covered oral, manuscript, print, and digital cultures. The exchanges the founder-director (Eleanor Shevlin) of WCU's certificate program had with this group over the years, coupled with the extensive exposure it afforded her to UK and European publishing studies programs, their interdisciplinary content, and modes of operation, convinced her that such programs offered students many more advantages than non-credit-bearing workshops could. The current director, Kristin Kondrlik, shares this interdisciplinary expertise in book history as well as extensive experience in professional writing and editing. These influences and shared backgrounds have resulted in the certificate program's distinctiveness and intellectual richness.

Curriculum Development: Programmatic Research Perspectives

Situating the program's curriculum development within programmatic research lends additional insights about its design and rationale. Literature on publishing programs is still relatively scant, but important studies do exist. Most recently, Holly Baker and others (2024) studied 94 editing and publishing programs to assess what is being taught and whether editing and publishing programs share a curriculum. Their findings indicate not only the absence of a core curriculum across programs but also an imbalance between more ubiquitous content courses such as publishing, literature, and writing and less commonly taught content, such as editing skills and design, that address industry needs (p. 74). That only ten percent of all 1,602 courses that were surveyed teach editing skills (p.

75) underscores this imbalance. The study's concluding recommendations for program administrators and instructors identify four actions that will strengthen editing and publishing programs while simultaneously advancing efforts to create "a recognizable curriculum" common to such degree and certificate programs (p. 77).

When examined alongside these recommendations, WCU's publishing certificate program bears witness to their value. As noted, ideas for WCU's program were influenced by SHARP. This academic society resulted in the founder's establishing close ties with international publishing programs as well as with pedagogical and research work in the field, mirroring both Baker, et al.'s first recommendation—to develop professional relationships with other programs through conferences, research groups, and invited talks—and their second recommendation—to familiarize oneself with course offerings and goals (p. 77). In terms of the second suggestion, reviewing various program curricula extended beyond SHARP. In preparing the program proposal for her university and the state system, the program's founder reviewed course offerings and objectives featured in select US master's and certificate publishing programs but did so with an eye to distinguishing WCU's program rather than a desire to find an established, shared curriculum—a departure from the impetus for Baker, et al.'s study.

Of the remaining two recommendations, the WCU program did not strategize about course titles in the ways urged by Baker et al.'s third recommendation. For one, the program has no control over titles of existing courses offered by the art department or MBA program. Secondly, while the English course titles were intentionally crafted, only one has "editing" in the title even though 25% of our program's courses address copyediting and related editing skills. Yet, syllabi course descriptions, efforts to meet one-on-one with all prospective students, and extensive individualized advising all serve to convey the depth and breadth of WCU's program. Of course, this approach may fall short of conveying the program's content for those scanning only titles in a catalog or website. Moreover, length limits placed on catalog course descriptions hinder fully communicating the content and topics covered, a point Lisa Melonçon acknowledged in her overview of editing courses taught nationally (2019, p. 176–77).

Out of all their recommendations, Baker et al.'s fourth one arguably reveals the most about WCU's program's distinctiveness. Their final point recommends striking a balance among the five content sets they establish by identifying "shared learning objectives" within larger program content categories (p. 60–62): 1) Editing Skills, 2) Publishing, 3) Writing and Literature, 4) Design and Technology, and 5) Industry (p. 77; p. 62). WCU's certificate program incorporates four of the five sets, omitting courses devoted to literature and

writing but generally balancing the other sets. Besides attracting students who already have backgrounds in writing (including creative and technical), literature, or both, and not wanting to duplicate our MA in English's tracks (creative writing; literature; and writing, theory, and criticism), the prime reason for omitting this content set stems from our program's rootedness in book and media history and the influences of similar programs on its design. Christoph Bläsi's (2015) "Publishing studies: Being part of a cultural practice plus X?" further highlights the effects of these influences while enabling a fruitful dialogue with Baker et al.'s research.

Although appearing almost a decade prior, Bläsi's essay shares Baker et al.'s interest in whether publishing studies has the makings of an academic discipline and whether a core set of theories and methods are common to the field (Bläsi, 2015, p. 147–48); both studies discussed what constitutes a discipline. Both studies also concluded that publishing studies is not yet a discipline and that no core curriculum exists. Here the similarities wane. Rather than review courses, Bläsi conducted extensive interviews with UK publishing studies experts and assessed various programs' landscapes (p. 150). The differences in these two studies' research methods, though, is minor when compared to the contrasts (sometimes stark) in conceptions of the field and the disciplines with which the field engages. For one, Bläsi sees the purpose of publishing studies as an academic program in the following way:

To generate and disseminate knowledge (and solutions...) about the current book, its economical and cultural context, in the light of their digital transformations, can probably be seen as the primary objective of Publishing Studies. (p. 149)

While the WCU certificate program does not view this purpose as its prime one, it is a guiding principle that shaped its design. The program is grounded in the belief that by examining the shifts in writing, reading, and publishing over the centuries, students gain multifaceted knowledge of publishing history and media transformations. Consequently, they are better able to navigate today's ever-changing global publishing and media. It is the only program in the area (and possibly the nation) to do so. It is also one reason that our program does not include "editing" in its name and helps explain its departure from some of Baker et al.'s findings about publishing studies programs overall.

Another difference emerges in the disciplines that these two studies associate foremost with publishing studies. Baker et al. identify departments (and, by extension, disciplines) in which publishing studies programs are housed and draw from; specifically, they list "English, creative writing, business writing, linguistics, professional communication,

technical communication, mass communication, and so on” (p. 56), though later, they expand the list to include others after noting that editing and publishing programs “are often, though not exclusively, hosted in English departments (to include such departments as English and Philosophy, English and Creative Writing, English and Writing, and Writing and Literature). E&P programs are also hosted by business, communications, journalism, media and creative arts, publishing, typographic and graphic communications, and linguistics departments” (p. 65). Despite overlaps with their roster of departments and disciplines, Bläsi’s list does not emphasize communication and writing. Instead, he identifies the departments in which such programs are housed as “English, business studies, and information science” (p. 148) and the disciplines from which they draw as “book history, English (and other literary, cultural and also linguistic) studies, media studies, communication studies, business studies and information/library/archival studies” (p. 151).

This difference becomes more prominent when we consider the texts and theorists the two studies each associate with the field. Observing that the field has no core curriculum and that pedagogical approaches to editing instruction are typically situated within writing studies (p. 56), Baker et al. record primarily technical writing and editing textbooks and handbooks. Bläsi, in contrast, presents the main figures that his publishing studies experts called the “core theorists” of the field (p. 151). Rather than those involved primarily in writing studies or technical communication, this roster favors historians, sociologists, philosophers and media theorists as well as scholars of the history, culture, and politics of technology, and a French literary critic.

In short, similarities notwithstanding, Baker et al.’s study and that of Bläsi present two fundamentally different conceptions—ones of kind, not of value—of publishing studies programs. Although the WCU certificate program was in many ways born of book and media history, it also embraces significant elements that adhere to Baker et al.’s view of such programs and the ways they could be strengthened. At the same time, our certificate program’s origins in book and media history have grounded it in an interdisciplinary orbit well accustomed to working across disciplines while maintaining its own identity, combining theory with practice, and collaborating with professionals outside of the academy, including those in publishing, rare books, non-academic libraries, and technology. As Bläsi asserts, “Publishing Studies allow to combine [sic] demanding scholarly questions with the sense of involvement in something relevant” (p. 153), a view that technical and professional communication scholars also share about the field.

A year before Bläsi's article appeared touting publishing studies as marrying academic inquiry with relevant application and problem-solving, John Maxwell (2014) elevated such a view of the field to an intriguing but almost utopian level. Maxwell sees the role of university publishing studies programs as having shifted from being industry-driven as they had been since their emergence in the twentieth century to being a driving force for the industry's revitalization in the twenty-first century:

[H]ere is the value to publishing that a university program can provide: it is not just the individuals trained and released into the workforce, nor the passing down of skills and competencies although these are important; it is rather the active renewal of publishing culture. To do this requires attention to both the past and the future; it requires both continuity over time and ongoing reinvention. This is something that can only be done with an ever-greening supply of new people and a productive, practical, risk-tolerant environment in which to let them grow. It can be difficult to do in a corporate setting, but this is precisely what universities do best. ("A craft tradition," para. 5)

While viewing university publishing studies programs as the mechanism for revitalizing the publishing industry seems grandiose, Maxwell's perspective has merit. WCU's publishing certificate, in fact, was designed to meet the needs of an industry being radically transformed and disrupted by technological change and global consolidation. As Maxwell observes, "The very idea of a stable industry with stable labour requirements is in some question. More to the point, the idea of a stable curriculum, or at least a stable set of core competencies for publishing graduates and would-be employees, is also in question" (Maxwell, 2014, "Publishing education: Perspectives," para. 3). Such uncertainties did not dissuade us from making the teaching of core competencies an integral part of our program from its inception, but they did prompt us to design a curriculum that would equip graduates with substantive understanding of "both the past and the future" (Maxwell, 2014, "A craft tradition," para. 5) through coursework in the history of authorship, reading, and publishing and related media transformations and in all aspects of the contemporary publishing industry. Similarly, the curriculum's research components, class projects, guest lectures, and emphasis on flexibility, nimbleness, and adaptability all aim to create "a productive, practical, risk-tolerant environment" (Maxwell, 2014, "A craft tradition," para. 5) that enables students to enter the industry or related media positions with confidence and well-developed insights about its ever-shifting landscape. Finally, the recruitment of professional and technical writing faculty has further enriched the program,

as they have brought their expertise, incorporating cutting-edge approaches to document design, accessibility, and digital tools.

Curriculum and Enrollment Overview

WCU's resulting 18-credit program provides high-quality preparation for diverse publishing and related new media careers. With courses offered in partnership between WCU's College of Arts and Humanities and College of Business and Public Management, the publishing certificate harnesses the strengths of both colleges to equip students with a well-rounded, hands-on understanding of contemporary publishing and digital media. Enrollment has ranged from five to ten students each academic year, with the program's online modality attracting both in- and out-of-state students. While some enrollees have recently completed undergraduate degrees and are seeking career starts, others are working professionals. Additionally, our master's students are often attracted to the program. Some enroll in the certificate upon acceptance into the degree program; others do so a semester or two into their master's coursework. Creative writing MA students are especially attracted to some of the certificate courses if not the program in its entirety. Because these creative writers are seriously interested in learning about the industry, we have not had the problems that Veronica Thompson (2014) experienced with fellow students pursuing these courses as an employment insurance policy rather than possessing a true interest in their content.

The certificate program consists of six three-credit, online courses: the required English course, *Introduction to Manuscript, Print, and Digital Cultures*; a choice of another English course; one of the four approved MBA courses; a design course; either another English or MBA elective; and the required English internship. A hallmark of the certificate program is its attention to individualized advising. The director works closely with each student to select the English, MBA, and design courses and internship that best suit that student's interests and goals.

Overall, courses are delivered asynchronously, except for three synchronous meetings typically held in the required *Introduction to Manuscript, Print, and Digital Cultures* course. We intentionally opted for a distance-education delivery format to appeal to working professionals interested in a career change or additional credentials. This format has also proven popular with recent graduates, especially humanities students, seeking to enhance their marketability. Simply put, students can arrange to complete the certificate's coursework to fit their professional and personal schedules. Of course, the online format also allows students from around the country and abroad to pursue the certificate.

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Along with the flexibility provided by online modalities, the program also can be completed in less than a year. This relatively quick path is assisted by the timing of the MBA offerings. The English courses—*Introduction to Manuscript, Print, and Digital Cultures*; *Methods and Materials of Publishing*; *Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing*; and *Publishing and Media Internship*—run 15 weeks during the academic year and seven weeks during the summer. Yet, the MBA courses—*Components of Effective Leadership, Innovation and Marketing Strategy, Law and Ethics in the Business Environment, and Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation*—always run seven weeks, both in the summer and the academic year, and typically several sections of each are offered in Sessions 1 and 2 of the Fall and Spring semesters. Thus, it is possible to take two or even three courses in a semester.

Students must take one of the English courses before taking any of the MBA courses or the art and design offerings. This requirement ensures that students have a publishing foundation on which to build when taking the non-English courses. In terms of the design course, recent retirements will require future curricular changes. Currently, however, students can complete an additional elective from the MBA or English offerings, or they can transfer in an approved art or design course. The culminating internship can take place entirely remotely or in-person depending on the student's needs and interests. Maintaining and consistently expanding its collaborative relationships with area industries, the certificate program features not only meaningful internship experiences but also a network of connections that foster employment opportunities for its graduates. The program, however, assists any student who wishes to find internship and job placements in other geographic locations.

In addition to flexibility and timely completion, the certificate has also been designed with an eye to the Philadelphia metropolitan area's marketplace needs. Philadelphia remains home to numerous publishing and media firms. Not only are book publishing and related digital media activities among the area's leading economic sectors, but Philadelphia is also still known as the medical publishing capital of the world. This reputation and the region's numerous opportunities in the medical, technical, and professional sectors have prompted the development of our *Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing* course. Similarly, components in many of the other courses reference these opportunities when appropriate and relevant. For example, instructors highlight when any textbook discusses an international publishing firm that has regional headquarters in the area—and several do, including Elsevier, Wolters Kluwer, and Taylor & Francis. Moreover, since COVID-19, these firms frequently offer fully remote positions, thus providing opportunities for those

students who do not live in the area and do not wish to relocate. Publishing and media-related jobs also exist within other key economic sectors such as financial services, pharmaceutical industries, and legal operations in the city and its neighboring regions. These employers desire hires who not only have a working familiarity with publishing in its many forms but who are also savvy about the transformations wrought by digital developments. Such industries maintain internal, external, or both types of house organs for their employees, members, or clients. In short, the program's metropolitan area has the industry presence to supply internships and the industry need for employees with the training and skillset the WCU certificate program provides.

Coursework

All publishing certificate students must complete a foundation course in English: *Introduction to Manuscript, Print, and Digital Cultures*. Additionally, the certificate requires four electives. Students select at least one elective from each of the following areas: English, business, and production and design. Students also choose an additional elective from either the business or English areas based on their interests and career goals. The internship is the culminating course for those in the program.

Foundation Course

The required *Introduction to Manuscript, Print, and Digital Cultures* outlines the history of the production, distribution, circulation, and reception of the written word. It traces how authorship, reading, publishing, and the physical properties of texts have changed over time and examines, both historically and analytically, the intellectual, social, and cultural impact of changing communications technologies against the backdrop of our current digital age. Understanding how and why the many agents and processes influenced the circulation of the written word evolved offers students exceptional preparation for navigating the current publishing landscape and for meeting various communication and media challenges.

The course moves chronologically through the history of the written word, beginning with the history of early writing technologies such as cuneiform, papyrus, and paper, and concluding with discussions of publishing in the digital age. It draws on scholarship from the fields of writing history, book history, periodical studies, and new media theory. In addition to a selection of articles from key journals such as *Book History*, *Victorian Periodical Studies*, and *New Media Studies* and excerpts from David Finkelstein and Alastair McCleery's *Introduction to Book History* (2013), the course draws readings from Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose's *A Companion to the History of the Book* (2019).

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The course operates as a fully distance-education course. However, it features three synchronous sessions, with the rest of the work conducted virtually and asynchronously. Students complete a series of activities to engage with the readings. When the course meets synchronously, students complete a brief activity to prepare for class. These include a keyword assignment, where students define and discuss key concepts in the field of writing history; a manuscript editing assignment; and group presentations on the work of a contemporary book artist. During the other, asynchronous weeks, students rotate through “discussion leader” positions.

In addition to weekly activities, the major course assignment is a seminar paper, with the aim of its serving as either a conference paper or a springboard to a longer, more developed scholarly article on any aspect of manuscript, print, or digital cultures. In the past, students have taken various approaches in tying their work to publishing and editing: some have analyzed the business practices of booksellers such as Barnes and Noble; others have discussed the local Philadelphia publishing scene; others have discussed the work of editing in translation; and still others have examined questions of authorship and circulation. The assignment proceeds via a scaffolded approach. First, students complete a review of an article or book relevant to their potential project. Next, students craft a proposal for professor approval. At the midpoint of the project, students verbally report on their progress report during a meeting with their professor and provide an annotated bibliography. The final essay is submitted for peer and instructor feedback before final submission.

Disciplinary Electives in English

The English elective can be chosen from among three courses: *Methods and Materials of Publishing; Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing*; and the department’s graduate *Special Topics* course.

Methods and Materials of Publishing

Methods and Materials of Publishing consists of two modules of equal duration. The first module details the twenty-first-century publishing industry. Specifically, it introduces students to the industry’s various sectors, major business trends, the range of editorial roles, diverse authorial options (including self-publishing and commissioning), the function of literary agents, contracts and rights, design and production operations, marketing and publicity, distribution and sales channels. The course’s second half is devoted to the hands-on practice of copyediting. In this module’s initial week, students learn what copyeditors do, the levels and types of copyediting, and the cardinal

copyediting rule to “do no harm” to the document. For the remaining weeks, students complete numerous weekly exercises in which they perform light, medium, or heavy copyediting on an array of documents; the exercises correspond to the assigned chapters for the given week. Interspersed with the copyediting activities are an occasional proofreading assignment and four or five short grammar assessments focused on issues such as dangling participles, use of colon and semicolon, antecedent-referent, and the like. Given Melonçon’s concern about the pedagogical effectiveness of such quizzes (2019, p. 182), we note that these exercises take 10 minutes to complete and are selected based on the issues that emerge as students identify and correct grammatical and mechanical errors in the documents they copyedit.

Each module has its own required text. Angus Phillips and Giles Clark’s bestselling *Inside Book Publishing* (2025) anchors the initial module. This regularly updated work has become the textbook of choice for many publishing studies courses around the world. Although Phillips and Clark draw many of their examples from British publishing, their discussions are nonetheless relevant for both students and publishing professionals in the US (and most countries) due to the global nature of today’s publishing world. That the authors have crafted a text that functions simultaneously as an academically informed work, industry reference manual, and early-career guide helps explain why it is so frequently adopted and read by those in the industry, too. So, too, does its keen understanding of both the ways our digital culture has transformed and, at times, upended the industry and the global nature and accompanying cultural specificity that characterize publishing today. The second module uses Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz’s *The Copyeditor’s Handbook* (2019), now in its fourth edition, an equally revered, essential choice for copyediting courses and professional editors. During some offerings, depending on participant interest, one week exposes students to the process of editing fiction using two pieces from a beta version of Bryan Furuness and Sarah Layden’s *The Invisible Art of Literary Editing* (2023). Both modules incorporate supplementary articles, videos, podcasts, and websites. While this material is recommended, a few chapters from Peter Ginna’s edited collection *What Editors Do* (2017) and Carol Fisher Saller’s *The Subversive Copyeditor: Advice from Chicago* (2016) are required reading for the second module.

Delivered online asynchronously, Methods and Materials of Publishing’s design builds an active community among its students. For the publishing module, students each sign up to summarize a chapter from *Inside Book Publishing*, with the online discussions mirroring those of the foundational course. The instructor augments the information, offering correctives as needed. Each week, two to three assigned chapters are discussed. While

students must respond twice weekly, most contribute more frequently. Furthermore, participants often introduce supplementary material, some from their further research. Thus, the posts are not geared toward ensuring students have read the material, a concern that Melonçon has expressed about heavily weighted posts in editing courses (2019, p.182), but rather opportunities to engage with the material on a metacognitive level. This module closes with a midterm essay in which students choose two or three websites from a list of eight and produce an analysis based on those websites, read through the eyes of the publishing “insider” they have become. In the past, websites have included those of major publishers from various sectors (e.g., Taylor & Francis, Pearson, or Bloomsbury), literary agencies, small publishers operating independently such as Paul Dry Books, the Association of American Publishers, and *The Scholarly Kitchen: What’s Hot and Cooking in Scholarly Publishing*, among others.

Methods and Materials of Publishing is ideally taken early in the student’s academic career primarily because of the knowledge acquired about the industry. The insights they gain about contracts, rights (including digital, film, translation), marketing, innovations, design, and more often help them decide which of the MBA courses they wish to take. Moreover, this background equips them with a solid foundation to approach the MBA material and its relevancy to the publishing field. Similarly, *Inside Book Publishing’s* coverage of design, marketing, and production elucidates the art or design elective. However, if it is not possible to take the course early, the other English certificate courses also afford fine preparation for the non-English offerings.

The second module’s first week continues the collaborative discussions but now based on readings about what copyeditors do, with the instructor leading the exchange on the online forum. As part of the copyediting work, students pose author queries and construct an accompanying guide explaining their processes and rationale for their changes. These supplements ensure that students “think critically about the work and the knowledge production of editing” (Melonçon, 2019, p. 179). Students collaborate on one or two assignments. The documents to be copyedited include specialized pieces for business, higher education, advertising, sales, manuals, public health, general interest, and more. Because almost all certificate students also take Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing, there are fewer assignments dealing with this content. The instructor reviews each copyediting assignment, supplying individual comments, a master sheet with suggested copyedits and a video explaining the master answer key. The feedback process for the grammar exercises adopts the same approach. This module—and the course—concludes with a copyediting final exam.

Both modules represent the kind of academic rigor and practical application of theory expected of graduate credit-bearing courses. More than vocational training, they ask students to think critically; undertake occasional research (whether exploring an aspect of the publishing industry or fact-checking as they copyedit); reflect deeply about language use, style, tone, and audience; consider context as well as content; and recognize the importance of interdisciplinarity and, by extension, the ways in which English studies (and the humanities overall) has decided relevance to many other disciplines and fields.

Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing

The second option for an English elective is *Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing*. This course provides students an introduction to professional editing, as well as the roles of editors in a variety of professional organizations. Introducing the principles and practices of technical, scientific, and medical editing, it discusses diverse approaches for editing and providing actionable feedback on others' writing. This course is centered on editing texts through the lens of rhetorical studies, creating and analyzing texts with a particular emphasis on audience, purpose, and context. The primary textbook for this course, Carolyn Rude and Angela Eaton's *Technical Editing* (2019), emphasizes this rhetorical approach. Additional readings are drawn from industry publications, government sources, and academic research in professional writing and communication. Structurally, the course begins by overviewing the nature and scope of technical, scientific, and medical editing. Thereafter, it moves into discussions of key topics in the field of professional editing: copyediting, editing with clients, collaborating with clients and coworkers online, editing for style, editing as document design, information architecture, designing a style guide, and accessibility.

Because the course is offered fully asynchronously online, class discussion occurs exclusively through recorded lectures and weekly response posts. Students are responsible for two weekly responses to readings and lectures. In addition to online participation, the course features four major assignments. The first assignment, the copyediting exam, evaluates students' mastery of the principles and practices of professional copyediting. In the exam, students work through a series of practical copyediting problems like those they may encounter in the workplace. The second assignment, "Editing for a client," asks students to work with a client of their choosing on professional documents, such as a resume, cover letter, website, or personal statement. In addition to offering students additional experience with copyediting and revision, this assignment provides practical experience working with editing clients in a professional setting.

Once students have mastered the basics of copyediting and working with clients, the course moves into related areas of editing for design and accessibility. Students apply class readings and lectures on design editing in their third assignment, the “Style guide.” In this assignment, students craft a style guide for a business or organization of their choosing. To create this guide, students analyze rhetorical and contextual factors that shape organizational communication strategies in medical, scientific, or technology industries. The “Accessibility manifesto,” the final assignment of the course, tasks students with drafting a brief document that reflects on the core principles of accessibility, or a user’s ability to read and interact with a text, in the context of technical, scientific, and medical editing. Students create a well-researched, well-edited manifesto articulating these principles and their importance to the rhetorical work of technical editing.

Special Topics

The final option for an English elective is the English Department’s graduate-level *Special Topics* course. The *Special Topics* designation enables the program to develop and test a course before formalizing it through the university course approval process. *Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing* first ran as a *Special Topics* course, for instance. This designation also is useful for addressing the interests of a particular cohort or individual student such as a course in children’s publishing or one in editing fiction.

Interdisciplinary Electives in Business and Art

As we have emphasized, publishing is an interdisciplinary field, drawing on skills related to multiple domains of practice. To develop a well-rounded perspective on contemporary publishing and editing, students must understand the industry not only from an English disciplinary perspective, but also from perspectives of business, design, and production. Even if they later acquire positions not directly in business and art, students employed in publishing or editing will benefit from increased competence in those areas, whether it be working with a marketing department on how to shape a fiction book’s promotion to accurately reflect its content or with an art department on the most appropriate way to represent visual information in a science textbook. Therefore, our students take courses in business and art that build on the skills and theory they learned in their English graduate publishing courses.

The business requirement asks students to take one of four courses: *Components of Effective Leadership; Innovation and Marketing Strategy; Law and Ethics in the Business Environment; or Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation*. These courses are offered in cooperation with WCU’s highly-ranked online Master of Business Administration program,

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and each course provides certificate students an opportunity to sharpen their knowledge of many of the areas discussed in Introduction to *Manuscript, Print, and Digital Cultures* and the *Methods and Materials of Publishing* courses: leadership within publishing organizations; the dominance of management and administrative abilities in editorial work (including in entry level positions); the marketing of books, journals, and other published works; the intersections of the professions of publishing and editing with law and ethics; and entrepreneurial innovation in the fields of publishing and editing especially related to digital transformations.

This selection of MBA courses coincides with Baker et al.'s recommendations and those of others on ways to strengthen and balance publishing curricula. Although directed at editing courses she has reviewed, Melonçon observes that “noticeably absent from any of these [course] descriptions is a mention or emphasis on ethics in the practice of editing” (2019, p.184). While the seven-week copyediting portion of *Methods and Materials* adopts as its mantra what is often deemed the cardinal rule of copyeditors—do no harm—and integrates its importance throughout, the course’s earlier focus on all aspects of contemporary publishing also cultivates multiple discussions of ethics concerning everything from business and marketing practices to copyright, AI, hiring and more. The MBA’s *Law and Ethics* course, as its title connotes, delves more deeply into ethical actions and integrity. Similarly, Maxwell (2014) has observed that “in times of rapid change in industry structure and the professional world, a focus on entrepreneurship is a growing theme within publishing studies.” Both the MBA *Innovation and Marketing* course and its *Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation* course address this need to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and think innovatively.

To provide students with insight into the production and design side of contemporary publishing, certificate students also take an art or design elective. As discussed above, this component is undergoing a transition. Additionally, although instruction in document design is incorporated into *Materials and Methods of Publishing* and *Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing*, a stand-alone elective focusing on visual rhetoric (*Theory and Practice of Visual Rhetoric*) has recently been approved and will be offered for the first time in Spring 2026. As it surveys the field of visual rhetoric, the course will offer students hands-on experience with document design and its principles. The program director works closely with each student to ensure the art, design, and production options suit the student’s intended career plans.

Internships

All certificate students must complete a three-credit internship. The internship ensures that students gain practical, real-world exposure to the field by affording them on-site, supervised experience in publishing or media. Designed as a culminating experience, the *Publishing and Media Internship* can be taken only at the end of a student's certificate career. It enables students to both apply their new knowledge and build a professional portfolio. Typically, the internship can occur entirely online; especially since COVID-19, more firms and organizations offer this option. As the course title suggests, students can intern with a media firm, but most opt for an internship with an explicit tie to the publishing industry. The program has established relationships with major publishing firms in the Philadelphia area such as Taylor & Francis and Wolters Kluwer as well as local magazines and several literary agencies. These opportunities afford various choices from production to editorial and marketing experiences. The literary agencies expose the intern to handling volumes of author queries; culling through these queries and assessing them as reject, possible, or pursue; performing some development editing, learning more about contracts, and networking with diverse publishers, some of which are major trade firms. Students are also free to seek other internship options—though the certificate director must approve the site before the student applies.

The internship process begins the semester before the student plans to graduate. The student meets with the certificate director to discuss options and interests and then decides where to apply. If it is an internship with a firm that has an ongoing relationship with the program, the student applies only to that one, and the director alerts the firm that the student will be applying. The student drafts a resume and cover letter for the director to review; they collaborate to fine-tune both. When the documents are finalized, the student is ready to apply.

Once accepted, the student notifies the director, and an internship agreement stipulating the weekly number of hours (typically ten), contact information for all signatories, the duties of the internship, and the responsibilities of all involved—the student, onsite supervisor, and the certificate director who serves as the faculty supervisor. The certificate director meets with the student at least three times during the internship: 1) about a week or so into the internship, 2) after the director's receipt of the onsite supervisor midterm evaluation, and 3) again at the end of the internship to review the onsite supervisor's final evaluation, to answer any questions about the portfolio, and to discuss plans for the four- to six-page essay analyzing the experience and how it has shaped the student's plans moving ahead. The portfolio and the essay are submitted during exam week. While the

three meetings are mandatory, the director will meet with the student more frequently if needed. The director also handles any queries or issues from the onsite supervisor. Finally, while the *Publishing and Media Internship* marks the official end of the certificate program, the certificate director and WCU's Twardowski Career Center will continue to work with the student on job placement. Our graduates have secured positions at Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Red Nucleus, Wolters Kluwer, Harmelin Media, and elsewhere.

Additional Opportunities

In addition to coursework, the certificate program features paid editing opportunities. Born of a university entrepreneurial grant, WCU Word Works is now funded by our Office of Sponsored Research and is the prime ancillary editing opportunity. It provides faculty from across campus with free-of-charge copyediting and proofreading as well as other pre-publication services such as checking a document's adherence to citation and reference style guides, formatting, and indexing. Certificate students are vetted and once accepted, hired to perform these services at a competitive rate. Students receive additional training to undertake this work, and the Word Works administrator (formerly the certificate director) reviews their early work until they are deemed sufficiently proficient to work independently. Besides being compensated to practice and hone their editing skills, they gain a professional line-item for their resumes; moreover, seasoned Word Works students can and do undertake freelance copyediting at the going professional rate. Over the years, students have edited manuscripts for a wide range of disciplines, including criminal justice, business management, marketing, social work, nursing, public health, Spanish literature (written in English), psychology, education, and public administration. Journal articles are the most common submissions, but faculty also request services for book chapters and monographs as well as grant reports and a few proposals. Conceptually astute and highly skilled students are also trained to index books; the turnaround time is often short, but users have been overwhelmingly pleased with the results—the authors as well as presses. The overall feedback received from faculty authors praises Word Works services, noting higher acceptance rates for journal articles and far fewer needs for revisions. The high satisfaction rates have meant continued funding for the program and loyal faculty authors who seek this service before submitting any manuscript.

A successful Pennsylvania Department of Education (PA DOE-Adopt) grant application has offered certificate students another paid opportunity for the past four years. The grant's funding of both faculty authors from across disciplines to write digital textbooks and the support system to produce them has enabled certificate students to gain additional paid editing work. In this case, the faculty authors are not only from WCU but also from several

other Pennsylvania public universities such as Kutztown, Millersville, and Cheyney Universities. Through this PA DOE-Adopt program students have edited textbooks for professional writing, criminology, chemistry, first-year writing, biology, social work, journalism, women and gender studies, mathematics, technical writing, and computer science courses. These textbooks are written not just for courses taught at the faculty's home institutions but instead for distribution across the globe. Again, students are trained and their work reviewed. As with Word Works, they gain not only significant experience but also a paycheck and a line-item for their resume. While this grant ended during the summer of 2025, WCU's Office of Distance Education and its FHG Library are seeking future funding opportunities.

These extracurricular paid opportunities provide the workplace practice and experience performing in virtual environments that Melonçon has urged programs to seek and expand (2019, p.182). Considerably broadening and deepening the training our students receive in copyediting and related skills, these opportunities create the intensive focus on editing skills that Baker et al. recommend (2025, p. 67; 75–76). Moreover, that these editing tasks are not part of coursework means there is more space in the curriculum to address other topics; all the while, students receive more intensive and extensive training in editing.

Conclusion

The WCU Publishing Certificate offers graduate-level students theoretical, historical, and practical interdisciplinary training so that they can move successfully into work in the publishing industry. Drawing on our university's resources, publishing networks, and emerging alumni pipeline, our program has successfully placed nearly all graduates in positions in professional publishing or related media positions. Thus, despite its youth, our program has already begun to yield the benefits that Thompson (2014) has attributed to publishing programs "such as networking, job opportunities, and a well-established alumni" ("The traditional benefits," para. 1). In addition to the certificate's success in placing students, the certificate program has also enhanced recruitment and retention for our Master of Arts in English. When discovering that we offer a publishing certificate and that two to three of the certificate courses can also fulfill the master's degree requirements, many prospective students see the option to add the certificate as a decided advantage and commit to our program. For MA students uncertain about career paths, the certificate affords them a professional direction that results in their staying in our MA program, completing their master's degree and the certificate. While not all our MA students who add the certificate also complete it, they nonetheless acquire marketable

skills and gain important training through the courses they do take, resulting in their finding employment readily in the media or publishing after graduation.

Future Plans

As we grow, we will further diversify our program's offerings and student opportunities to ensure the program meets student needs and the evolving demands of the publishing industry. In the future, we plan to offer additional course options in technical and medical publishing, expanding our overall graduate offerings in professional and technical writing and communication. We would also like to deepen the connections between our program and on-campus resources, such as our library's Special Collections and our Career Center, by integrating them more fully into existing certificate courses and creating further extra- and co-curricular opportunities for our students.

Before COVID-19, we had discussed developing an advisory board that included industry specialists and professionals at area publishing firms. Our internship program's employer evaluations have provided some accountability regarding the program's effectiveness in training students for the industry. Still, an advisory board would further enhance accountability and further tighten the ties we have already established with area professionals (Lawrence et al. 2023, p. 42, 46–47). Finally, we will be seeking to have our certificate listed on the Association of American Publishers' webpage devoted to publishing programs.

Advice for Potential Developers of Publishing Programs

Universities wishing to build a publishing certificate program at their own institutions should consider the following as they begin the development process. First, potential program directors should draw on existing or build new courses that provide students strong methodological and theoretical foundations in the publishing industry. For example, our foundation course (*Introduction to Manuscript, Print, and Digital Cultures*) provides students insight into the ways that the publishing industry—its actors, agents, and technologies—has evolved over time. With this knowledge, students can analyze current trends and look to the future of the industry. Further, the two methods courses (*Methods and Materials of Publishing* and *Technical, Scientific, and Medical Editing*) provide students with extensive theoretical and practical background, preparing them for work in the publishing industry. Student success relies on providing them a strong curricular foundation.

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Second, because publishing is an industry that draws on knowledge from multiple disciplines, elective courses should not be limited to one field. It has been key, for instance, for our program to cultivate ties with colleagues in relevant disciplines such as business and art. These colleagues have been essential in strengthening the interdisciplinary offerings in our program, and interdisciplinarity across related fields allows students to enter publishing with a more comprehensive understanding of the various opportunities available to them as new members of the industry.

Finally, universities wishing to build a successful program should integrate well-supported co-curricular opportunities. Our internship provides publishing certificate students with concrete experience and opportunities to network in the industry. Likewise, in addition to providing students paid experience that they can place on a resume, Word Works allows students to develop their editing skills under a mentorship model.

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The Writing, Editing, and Publishing Major Concentration at the University of Northern Colorado

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Abstract In this article, we describe the writing, editing, and publishing (WEP) major concentration in the Department of English at the University of Northern Colorado. The concentration was developed in 2021 in an effort to build a program that prioritizes vocational training for students while still maintaining a deep commitment to the humanities. Students in the program complete required coursework, which includes a three-course sequence of editing-related classes: ENG 216: *Grammar and Style*, which provides information on foundational language-level concepts editors need; ENG 327: *Copyediting*, which teaches students principles of language-level editing; and ENG 427: *Substantive Editing*, where students practice discourse-level editing through industry-related projects. We describe these courses in further detail, after which, Kevin (one of the authors of this paper) shares a narrative account of teaching the ENG 327 course. We then discuss how we manage artificial intelligence tools in the WEP major. The article concludes with a discussion of our commitment to inclusion, diversity, and community engagement.

Keywords course sequence, editing, program history, publishing, vocational preparation

This article details the writing, editing, and publishing (WEP) major¹ at the University of Northern Colorado (UNCO), an R2 university with just over 10,000 students. In its current iteration, the major features a strong curriculum in the writing and editing components. The focus of this article concerns the editing sequence at the heart of the major. As we continue to iterate, we aim to further develop the publishing component. In this article, we hope to help those developing a major in editing or, at the very least, a sequence of courses. We detail how Kevin and Jordan, two of the authors of this paper, have sequenced grammar, copyediting, and substantive editing across three courses. After this description of the three courses, Kevin shares a first-hand narrative of his experience teaching one of the editing courses.

We open with some institutional context and a brief narrative about the formation of the major and its learning objectives. We pay particular attention to the research that influenced the major's design: work from Eva Brumberger and Claire Lauer provided a scaffold for the interdisciplinary major we sought to build (Brumberger & Lauer, 2015; Lauer & Brumberger, 2019). Our major is an answer to the question: "How might we prepare students to be the multimodal, rhetorically savvy, responsive editors Brumberger and Lauer describe?" Carolyn Miller's (1979) framing of technical writing as a humanistic endeavor helped shape our theoretical commitment to inclusion, diversity, and community engagement. We were not simply aiming to produce workers but citizens with a deep commitment to social justice. Perhaps ironically, those values are more important than ever as we move into an uncertain future relationship with artificial intelligence (AI).

We close considering the place of AI and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in an editing major. While we each hold different opinions of AI, we recognize that vocational programs centered on writing or editing will have to provide students comprehensive instruction and experience with AI tools. Programs will need to embrace what Ethan Mollick (2024) termed the "human-computer interactive" (HCI) approach to AI proficiency. As to DEI, we believe it is essential to teach students the imaginative capacities necessary to productively encounter differences and work with other people. Such things make them not only better at crafting words, but also better at crafting a shared world.

Even with the spectre of AI, we believe our writing, editing, and publishing major provides students a strong career path. Job-market research has historically provided favorable

¹ Technically, our "major" is designated a concentration within the English major at our university for byzantine reasons. For the sake of convenience, we refer to this concentration as a "major" throughout this article.

predictions for writing-related jobs. At the time of this writing, the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook projects 4% growth for technical writers (*Technical Writers*, n.d.) and 5% growth for writers and authors (*Writers and Authors*, n.d.) between 2023 and 2033. The projected outlook for editors (defined as people who “plan, review, and revise content for publication”) is projected to decline by 2% during the same time period (*Editors*, n.d.), though this prediction probably only reflects a decline in jobs solely or mostly focused on editing and not a decline in the amount of editing that people with all kinds of job titles will need to do. As we detail below, editing jobs in the 21st century are multifaceted and multimodal. We believe editing, as a proficiency, will be in high demand.

History of the Program

In this section, we present a brief history of the WEP major, including a discussion of institutional context under which the major was developed and the research that inspired its creation. We also share the courses included in the major and the learning outcomes for students.

Building a Major Around Jobs

Our WEP major was developed during austere times for our university; a budget crisis had led to a freeze on new programs. Planning for the major began late in the Spring 2020 semester; the major was submitted and approved late in the Spring 2021 semester. It was a busy year. We gained support for our major by tying it directly to an institutional emphasis on job preparation. Furthermore, as we share below, we explicitly tied the major’s design to research on the job market, drawing particularly on Brumberger and Lauer (2015), Lauer and Brumberger (2019), and the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Outlook Handbooks for both writers and editors. Additionally, we conducted research on other professional writing majors in our region and demonstrated that none specialized in writing, editing, and publishing. Our administration was particularly impressed that our program would be the first of its kind in Colorado.

Institutional Context

In Spring 2018, our department hired six full-time instructors (on 3/4 teaching loads with research expectations) and one full-time lecturer to support the first-year writing (FYW) program. Several instructors brought additional expertise: Yavanna Brownlee in digital humanities and Indigenous rhetorics, Phillip Goodwin in public rhetorics, and Lauren Brentnell in community engagement and editing. Initially, they were limited to teaching

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mostly FYW. In Fall 2020, Lauren Brentnell was promoted to a tenure-track assistant professor, expanding teaching options and prompting department chair Andreas Mueller to propose developing a major. Lauren's editing focus, combined with Marc's (one of the authors of this paper) strengths in multimodal technology and nonprofit writing, laid the groundwork for a new major supported by other faculty expertise.

At the time of development, our department had a healthy professional and creative writing minor. An anonymous poll of those students, conducted in the Fall of 2020, found that 82% of students surveyed indicated that they would have chosen our proposed WEP major over their current major were it available when they arrived at UNCO (54 minors surveyed, 33 respondents, 42% strongly agreed, 40% agreed). Sixty-six percent of those students were English liberal arts majors, but the other 33% of students came from a wide range of majors, including mathematics, studio art, theater, journalism, and economics. Our department was satisfied that we could develop this major and attract a diverse population of students and that we wouldn't be poaching students exclusively from our literature program.

However, we lacked the faculty required to sustain a 42-credit major. When an early version of the program with six new courses was presented to the dean, we were told quite directly to "be less ambitious." Our proposal would have to require "zero new resources." And so, we became interdisciplinary by necessity as much as by design, incorporating existing courses from Journalism and Media Studies (social media), Business (marketing), and the Arts (visual production). Thankfully, our research into the job market, detailed in the next section, emphasized the importance of such interdisciplinarity.

The program has persisted as it has undergone several personnel changes since it was developed. Lauren Brentnell departed UNCO in the Spring of 2023, right after we debuted the major. In their absence, Kevin, a lecturer in the department with limited editing experience, began the Professional Sequence in Editing program at UC Berkeley Extension. Four months later, Kevin revised and taught our 300-level editing course. He recounts this experience further below. In the 2023–2024 academic year, after another faculty departure, we secured a tenure-track line, and Jordan came aboard. He and Kevin began planning a multicourse editing sequence that includes a 200-level grammar course, a 300-level copyediting course, and a 400-level substantive editing course. We describe this three-course sequence in detail later in this article.

Research that Influenced the Formation of the WEP Major

When Marc was hired in the Fall of 2016, he was tasked with developing a series of professionalization courses. As he explored the complexity of today's job market for writers, he designed a course to help students navigate it: ENG 301: *Writing as a Job*. That course draws on Brumberger and Lauer (2015), who surveyed just under 1,000 different technical communication job advertisements to identify the essential professional, technical, social, and personal competencies and characteristics employers seek. They found that while genre knowledge remained essential, technical writers were increasingly called upon to create multimodal content and to have experience with marketing, branding, visual communication, and social media (pp. 235–237).

In *Writing as a Job*, students spend the first six weeks re-creating Brumberger and Lauer's (2015) research by collectively coding around 200 job ads to produce data for a professional report. Beyond teaching them how to do collaborative qualitative research, the project familiarizes them with the rhetorical nuances of job advertisements while also showing them a wide range of potential career paths. The report itself, written individually, targets multiple audiences: high school students, their parents, writing minors, and university administrators. Students are tasked with figuring out how our WEP major, and other university resources, can help them gain the skills that most frequently appear in those job advertisements, further familiarizing them with university resources and opportunities. Every semester, the class partners with a nonprofit organization for six weeks. Students break into teams and spend this time working on myriad organizational projects: grant research, editing, marketing and/or media kits, social media content planning and generation, web UX/UI testing, and/or graphic design. The final four weeks of the class are dedicated to producing résumés and cover letters that incorporate the knowledge and experience they gained through the job research and community engagement project.

Over the years, Marc has coded somewhere around 800 job ads with students and the findings of that work continue to support Brumberger and Lauer's (2015) conclusions: Writing and editing jobs increasingly require experience with multimodal technologies, social media, and marketing. These findings are reflected in our courses and learning objectives, as shown below.

Lauer and Brumberger (2019) also had a profound impact on the development of the major. After more than a hundred hours shadowing nine different writers and editors, Lauer and Brumberger conclude that:

Advances in social media and other composing technologies and distribution channels have engendered a workplace in which writers are not tasked with “writing” as it is typically taught in the classroom—where students are asked to produce complete documents through a process that begins with invention and drafting and extends through revision and delivery. Rather, our study suggests that many writers actually act as multimodal editors—people who work with myriad modes of content—often encountered *in medias res* after the content has been originated by coworkers or consultants. Multimodal editors are responsible for modifying, adapting, designing, editing, selecting, and constructing content in ways that are dispersed, nonlinear, collaborative, and responsive. We refer to this as “multimodal editing,” because it often involves shaping preexisting content that has been sourced from a variety of people and modes and distributed across a range of channels and uses. Multimodal editing requires rhetorical agility and adaptability. Based on our research, we argue that multimodal editing has, in many ways, become the writing of the responsive workplace. (p. 637)

When we were designing the major, we thought explicitly about the wide range of jobs the nine writers and editors shadowed by Lauer and Brumberger held. We thought about the wide range of jobs that students in ENG 301: *Writing as a Job* find in the job market research project. A program in writing and editing has to introduce students to social media strategy and content marketing as well as more traditional roles like technical editing and public communications for nonprofit organizations. Our major aims are to familiarize students with this range of jobs and to provide them with the option of specializing in one through interdisciplinary electives, course substitutions, extracurricular activities, and internships. Students are advised directly by major faculty at UNCO; faculty are able to personalize students’ plans of study based on their creative interests and vocational objectives.

Major Requirements and Courses

Below is a quick sketch of the WEP major’s sections and the courses we developed within them. Because our major is technically a concentration, we are required by the university to share four classes with our language, culture, and creativity major (itself an innovative reimagining of the traditional literature major that incorporates cultural studies and creative writing courses).

Required Courses (Students take all of these courses)

- ENG 195: *Introduction to the Discipline of English*

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- ENG 220: *Writing, Transformation, and Change*
- ENG 301: *Writing as a Job*
- ENG 218: *Linguistics* or ENG 219: *Language and Society*

Editing and Publishing (Students select three courses)

- ENG 216: *Grammar and Style*
- ENG 327: *Copyediting*
- ENG 328: *Professional Writing and Document Design*
- ENG 427: *Substantive Editing*
- JMS 460: *Media Management*

Inclusivity, Diversity, and Community Engagement (Students select two courses)

- ENG 302: *Cultures, Community, and Civic Advocacy*
- ENG 319: *Rhetorical Theory*
- HUM 200: *Cultural Rhetorics*

Writing and Editing Electives (Students select three courses)

- JMS 215: *Social Media Storytelling*
- ENG 227: *Technical Writing*
- ART 237: *Introduction to Digital Media*
- ENG 229: *Digital Video Production*
- ENG 323: *Advanced Argument*
- HUM 320: *Digital Humanities*
- JMS 350: *News Editing*
- BAMK 360: *Marketing*

Capstone Experiences (Students select two courses)

- ENG 420: *Special Topics in Creative and Professional Writing Seminar*
- ENG 429: *Rhetoric and Technology*
- ENG 492: *Writing Internship*
- ENG 495: *Advanced Cultural Studies*
- BAMK 478: *Social Media Marketing*

Adopting Programmatic Learning Outcomes

The WEP major was built around six primary learning outcomes, listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Learning Outcomes for UNCO’s WEP Major

Learning Outcome Topic	Learning Outcome Description
Communication	Research, compose, and revise communications in a variety of professional, public, and academic genres
Diversity	Think critically and engage questions about cultural, racial, economic, political, gender, and sexual differences, ethics, and intersections
Multimodality	Write and communicate through various modes, media, technologies, and platforms; comprehend and analyze texts in various modes and media
Research	Think critically while reading, analyzing, and conducting research in a variety of venues, including writing to identify needs and/or address problems with creative, evidence-based responses
Theory	Demonstrate understanding of rhetorical theory and core rhetorical concepts, drawing upon classical, postmodern, feminist, queer, and multicultural writers; analyze contemporary problems and contexts using these theories
Engagement	Experience working in publishing, non-profit, civic, and community organizational contexts; engagement work will address audience, rhetorical situational and cultural context, exigence, and/or ethical problem-solving

Our interest in multimodality can be tied to the research detailed in the previous section. Other outcomes, specifically our investments in diversity and theory come from our shared commitment to social justice. We believe Miller (1979) clearly articulates the profound humanistic value of a professional writing program:

To write, to engage in any communication, is to participate in a community; to write well is to understand the conditions of one’s own participation—the concepts, values, traditions and style which permit identification with that community and determine the success or failure of communication. Our teaching of writing should present mechanical rules and skills against a broader understanding of why and how to adjust or violate the rules, of the social implications of the roles a writer casts for himself or herself and for the reader, and of the ethical repercussions of one’s words. (p. 617)

Amen. We believe the learning outcomes listed in Table 1 reflect Miller's (1979) foundational belief that a vocational writing major can have profound humanistic value if we build the kind of "communalist" writing courses for which she advocates: courses that approach writing and editing as "more than the inculcation of a set of skills" but rather as "enculturation" (p. 617). Below, we discuss further why we believe inclusion, diversity, and community engagement are requisite to developing the humanistic writers (and we add editors here as well) Miller describes. In short, editors require creative capacity and a commitment to others if they are to anticipate and address how a diverse set of audiences might respond to the same set of words. But before that discussion, we describe the scaffolded editing sequence we have built into our program, which we believe also helps students "understand the conditions of [their] own participation" (Miller, 1979, p. 617) in an editing community.

The Scaffolded Editing Sequence

As we have continued to refine the WEP program, we have done so with an eye toward building more editing curriculum for students. We do this (1) in response to findings like Shakked Noy and Whitney Zhang (2023), who found professional writers spend more time editing content when they write using AI tools, and (2) because students want more editing curriculum in the program. In a recent survey we conducted of WEP majors, nearly half of the students who provided substantive answers to our question about changes they would like to see implemented in the program mentioned that they would like to see more curriculum focused on editing. The following comment from a student is a clear example of one such request:

I've found myself wanting more editing-focused courses in the program. The editing class that I have taken was more of a crash course in copyediting and felt a lot less like an introduction to print publication and what that might actually look like. I haven't had many chances to work on or learn about developmental editing in print publication, and I would like a course that focuses on that.

Only 0.048% of universities in English-speaking countries offer programs (including majors, minors, and certificates) in Editing and Publishing (Baker et al., 2024). It is therefore rare for students in English or professional communication programs to take more than a single editing course. Students in our WEP major are required to take a three-course sequence of editing-related courses. First, ENG 216: *Grammar and Style* introduces them to the fundamentals of grammar and style. This course is followed by two editing-intensive courses: one focused on copyediting and another focused on substantive

editing. Being able to offer two separate editing-intensive courses gives students the foundational knowledge they need to be effective editors. Initially, the department offered a course in editing for print publication and another course for digital editing. At the time, these courses served students well, but changing technologies and work environments have necessitated a change. In the Fall of 2024, Kevin and Jordan proposed a revision to the ENG 327: *Copyediting* and ENG 427: *Substantive Editing* courses. We reframed both courses so that instead of focusing on the medium of the products (print and digital texts), we focused on the type of editing students will be doing in each course (copyediting vs. substantive). We provide a brief description of all three courses in Table 2.

As described in Table 2, the three-course editing sequence prepares students for the kinds of multimodal and community-engaged work they will encounter in professional settings. Restructuring the two editing courses so that they focus on the different types of work editors do conforms with long-held descriptions of editing as a task composed of different stages. Joy Burrough-Boenisch (2013) notes that “editing is actually a continuum with no sharply delimited editing activities” (p. 144). In spite of this, several attempts have been made to operationalize editing into discrete activities. Many readers of this journal will be familiar with Robert Van Buren and Mary Fran Buehler’s (1980) popular “levels of edit” concept. In this framework, the editing process is broken down into nine types of edit. In a later article, Mary Fran Buehler (1981) noted that these nine types of edit may be combined in various ways to facilitate the use of more standard terminology like “copy editing” (p. 14). Popular technical editing textbooks also commonly break the editing process into discrete steps.² Revising our course sequence according to the editing task brings our curriculum into alignment with established conceptions of editing and, we feel, will better help our students understand the many different ways that editing plays a role in writing, publishing, and content-creation workflows.

² For example, Carolyn D. Rude and Angela Eaton (2011) devote separate sections of their book to copyediting (section III) and comprehensive editing (section IV). The copyediting section includes chapters on editing for consistency, mechanics such as spelling and grammar, and proofreading. The comprehensive section includes chapters on style, organization, and visual design. Donald Cunningham, Edward Malone, and Joyce Rothschild’s (2020) textbook uses a slightly different organizational structure. Chapters 4–11 focus on substantive concepts like editing for organization, navigation, and completeness, while Chapters 12–17 focus on copyediting concepts, primarily editing for grammar and punctuation. Kathryn Riley and others (2015) indicate a difference between the two types of editing more subtly: Chapters that focus on substantive editing begin with the word *revising* (e.g., “Revising for cohesion,” “Revising for conciseness”). Chapters that focus on copyediting begin with the word *editing* (e.g., “Editing punctuation,” “Editing modifiers”).

Table 2: Three-Course Scaffolded Editing Sequence

Course	Description
ENG 216: <i>Grammar and Style</i>	Students are introduced to the basics of grammar and mechanics through a rhetorical lens. Using Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers’s <i>A Writer’s Reference</i> (10th ed.), the course has been broken into four units: parts of speech, punctuation, sentence structure, and style. At the time of writing, this course has not been taught as a part of the editing sequence; however, when it is launched, students will be encouraged to begin thinking of each “rule” taught in the class as a rhetorical choice—similar to how an editor will approach a manuscript. In other words, when does it make sense for a writer to break this rule? Throughout the course, students will begin to compile a grammar log of essential rules, tips, or references they encounter that they think will be beneficial to have on hand. The expectation is that this grammar log will expand and become a tool as students begin copyediting and beyond.
ENG 327: <i>Copyediting</i>	Students are introduced to copyediting through an academic and creative lens. Copyediting, in the way we approach it in this course, involves making language-level changes to a text so that it is consistent with the guidelines of a given style manual or style guide. We use the <i>Chicago Manual of Style</i> (18 th ed.) as our primary style guide, and we use Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz’s <i>The Copyeditor’s Handbook</i> (4th ed.) as well. Students focus on copyediting while understanding editing as a job and best practices for on-screen editing, utilizing resources, and communicating with clients through two larger editing assignments—a chapter excerpt and a research proposal—and a series of editing exercises provided by Einsohn and Schwartz in <i>The Copyeditor’s Workbook</i> . Kevin provides a more detailed description of this course in his narrative below.
ENG 427: <i>Substantive Editing</i>	Students will learn and practice editing at the substantive level. Substantive editing (sometimes called “developmental editing” or “comprehensive editing”) focuses on discourse-level concerns, such as a text’s organization, usability, completeness, accuracy, and style. Jordan is currently developing the course, which will be offered for the first time in spring 2026. In the course, students will work in groups to edit an excerpt of a scholarly or popular edition, with specific projects changing from semester to semester. We have begun working with Jeri Kraver, emerita professor at UNCO and editor of <i>The CEA Critic</i> , to arrange for students to edit submissions for the journal. We also plan to build relationships with local nonprofits, businesses, and publishers to provide more opportunities for hands-on experience. Through this project-based course, students gain audience awareness, skills in editor–author relationships, and ties to a community that we hope will be beneficial to them after they graduate.

We aim to help students see that the editing process is multifaceted and not something that can be done in a single “pass.” As Burrough-Boenisch (2013) wrote, an editor “should

not give an author the impression that copy-editing [sic] and substantive editing can be done simultaneously, because the two activities require a different approach and entail different sorts of concentration on the task” (p. 150). In addition, we aim to help students overcome what Buehler (1981) described as the misconception of “an editor as someone who spends the day bent quietly over a manuscript” (p. 12). Buehler’s statement is now more than 40 years old, but we suspect the misconception remains. For students to be successful as editors today, they must learn that editing today is multimodal (refer to Brumberger & Lauer, 2015; Lauer & Brumberger, 2019; Lang & Palmer, 2017) and that editorial opportunities are available in places they might not think to look. To this end, one of the goals of our editing courses is to give students opportunities to hear from practicing professionals in the editing and publishing world. Though at the time of this writing (fall 2025), ENG 427: *Substantive Editing* has not yet been taught, Jordan is currently developing the course. As part of this preparation, he has met with a local publisher who is eager to provide a guest lecture for students to explain the publishing work she does. She has also offered to connect Jordan with the editor she works with on book projects. Helping students make connections with practicing professionals in the editing and publishing world—particularly with those in the Northern Colorado area, where most of our students are from—will, we hope, expand their sense of the kinds of opportunities available to students interested in editing.

In both courses, we adopt the “situational approach” to editing that Buehler (1980/2003) described in 1980 and that others have echoed since then (e.g., Connatser, 2004; Smith, 2023). This view aligns with Miller’s (1979) call, mentioned above, for technical and professional communication to hold tight to its humanistic roots. In a situational approach to editing, editors acknowledge the flexibility they have to make decisions based on the rhetorical situation—the audience, exigencies, and constraints (Bitzer, 2010)—of the editing task, even if such decisions violate prescriptive rules of Standard English or guidelines in a style manual. Jordan Smith (2023) argues that adopting a rhetorical approach to editing can help editors promote equity and fairness (pp. 196–200), and Angela Eaton and others (2008) found that in some cases, authors prefer to work with editors who took a more flexible approach to their work (p. 126). Rather than teaching students to mechanically follow prescriptive usage rules or rigidly adhere to guidance in a style manual, we aim to help students understand these rules and guidelines in a way that allows them to think critically about when and when not to follow them.

Kevin’s Experience: Learning About Editing

In this section, Kevin provides a first-person narrative describing his experience teaching ENG 327: *Copyediting* and the ways that he has structured his pedagogy to meet the humanistic and rhetorical aims outlined above. Because ENG 427: *Substantive Editing* has not yet been offered, we cannot provide a complementary narrative for it, but we are committed to teaching the course with the same foundational principles.

Spring 2023–Fall 2024: Preparing to Teach Copyediting

When Lauren announced their departure from UNCO at the end of Spring 2023, I was wrapping up my first year of teaching UNCO’s first-year writing courses. Our department chair approached me and asked if I was interested in taking over Lauren’s editing courses. I did not know much, if anything, about editing as a discipline or a career outside of basic grammar checks and revision processes that I both teach and employ. But I was eager to design and teach such a unique class—how many instructors receive that kind of opportunity their first year out of grad school? So, I readily agreed and began to prepare for my first class in spring 2024.

I spent the next year learning about copyediting and reflecting on how I could tie my concentrations and passions—first-year writing and creative writing—into such a technical field. I began taking courses to become a certified copyeditor with UC Berkeley Extension, and I spent time exploring our previous course sequence to get an understanding of how previous instructors approached this discipline. One key learning outcome the previous instructor focused on is “the relationships editors create with authors and the world” (Lauren Brentnell, 2023). This aligned not only with the university’s commitment to diversity and inclusion but also with Brumberger and Lauer’s (2015) assertion that editors in today’s world will be expected to engage in many roles and modes. Similar to Miller’s (1979) assertions about teaching ways to “adjust or violate” standard writing rules, I have always held firm in the belief that there is no right or wrong way to approach writing. However, I wasn’t sure how well this belief would translate to a field that I, at the time, believed was about checking for grammar errors and correcting each one. It is possible that I held some of the misconceptions mentioned above.

Spring 2024: Copyediting, the First Run

During the first few weeks of spring 2024, I was facing a confidence crisis in my classroom. I found myself responding to questions with answers like, “Well it depends on the situation,” while flipping furiously through *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *The*

Copyeditor's Handbook—my selected textbook for the course—and praying that the “right” answer was somewhere in there. Even though all of my course preparation and research had shown me that editing is about rhetorical decisions more so than “correctness,” I felt like a poor teacher for not having firm answers for questions. A conversation with a good friend who works in educational editing helped ease my worries. “The answer almost always does depend on the situation,” my friend assured me. “It’s about thinking through each unique situation and knowing where to look for confirmation” (Morgan, personal communication). This realization struck home for me and assured me that my pedagogy and the department’s focus on diverse voices belonged in my copyediting classroom.

Emboldened with this new idea, our class discussions came alive. I no longer saw student questions as unanswerable challenges. Instead, we discussed potential scenarios, and I would encourage students to think about other ways these situations could be approached. Because many of my students were not singularly focused on becoming editors, I would encourage them to think of scenarios in their own interests or disciplines and how this editing situation could apply there. For example, how might a writing center tutor find the balance between line editing for grammar and helping their peers see and understand the mistake they’ve made? How might a musician draw on the importance of editing for correlating parts when reviewing lyrics or sheet music? Like Marc’s *Writing as a Job* class discussed above, I wanted to ensure that my class prepared students for not one job but many.

This method of open-ended discussion was most effectively displayed in our discussion of editing for problematic language. Unsure how students in today’s political and social climates would respond to examples of intentionally controversial language, I began the lecture with a disclaimer in block letters: “This presentation includes sentences written as purposely biased by the professor or pulled from other sources written purposely biased as points of discussion and do not reflect the beliefs of the professor or authors.” The examples were obvious mistakes, such as a news article about a female entrepreneur who is referred to as “the mayor’s wife” (Hacker & Sommers, 2021) or brushing your teeth in a “zen-like state” (Einsohn & Schwartz, 2019). What followed, though, was a discussion of shared experiences and identities that my students have seen misrepresented in writing. Students with various backgrounds and racial identities were eager to share and hear from each other, and I even felt comfortable sharing some of my own experiences with problematic language.

As part of a major assignment for the course, I asked the students to submit up to ten pages of their own writing. The writing was then redistributed to be copyedited following a set of house requirements for the fictional company Bomely Editors, Inc. Our house style sheet had minimum requirements, such as the use of the Oxford comma and treatment of numbers, but otherwise, students were encouraged to edit as they saw fit. I quickly realized after the assignments were submitted that grading 25 different samples of writing—most of which I had never read before—on how well they were edited to conform to rules that may or may not apply to this writing would be next to impossible. So, I graded on completion but provided comments on the edits they made and how they approached them. The students enjoyed the assignment and were pleased with their grades, but as an instructor, I wanted more from this assignment. To me, equitable grading in editing is a blend of “rule adherence” and the student’s unique approach to the document.

Spring 2025: A Fresh Approach

With one successful class under my belt, I began my spring 2025 *Copyediting* course with a clear vision on how we could improve the experience. Students were given weekly editing assignments that were graded on effort and completion, but I wanted to use these smaller assignments to expand our Socratic discussions about editorial decisions. I set aside four class periods in which we pulled up the answer keys provided by our textbook and discussed them as a class. Together, we would look up specific rules or concerns in *The Chicago Manual of Style* or discuss different ways that an error could be corrected. I wanted students to realize that editing was less about getting the “right” answer and more about rhetorically complex, contingent, and communal situations. This was often reflected in edits that involved changing a word or restructuring a small section. It was very rare that two edits came out exactly the same, and yet both were correct.

Having this sense for how students approached their weekly assignments shaped how I restructured my major assignments for the course as well. Instead of student samples that may or may not have the errors discussed in class, there were two different manuscripts to edit over the course: (1) an early draft of a chapter co-written by Jordan and (2) my thesis proposal from grad school. The book chapter was graded mostly on completion with small point deductions for any obvious errors that were missed and comments on how they approached their edits. From here, I was able to structure the second assignment, my proposal, more thoroughly. Some errors counted for one point, such as a missing explanation for an acronym or a missing bullet point in a sequence. If a student found that error, they received one point; if they missed it, they lost one point. Some issues were considered bonus points—students received a point if they found the error but did not lose

points if they did not. These included calling Victorian police officers “cops” or changing “E-mail” to “email” per the Merriam-Webster spelling. For the second assignment, students were also asked to create a style sheet and transmittal letter, which were graded in the same plus-or-minus point system. Formatting and correcting an em-dash, for example, was a lesson that we covered many times, (have you ever tried to show 20 people how to use four different interfaces of Microsoft Word?) so that was a consistent point deduction. This allowed me to maintain an equitable consistency in my grading, but it also left space for students to make their own editorial decisions for the majority of the document.

Using writing samples from Jordan and me also created a unique opportunity for the students to communicate with the authors for clarity. For example, one of my students approached me regarding Victorian titles and honorifics used in my proposal—a mystery set in Victorian London. The student was unfamiliar with historical titles such as “Honorable Lord” and was having difficulty approaching the capitalization. As an instructor, I was able to guide her through where to find the information in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. As an author, though, I was able to let my editor know that I would capitalize the title. Because the book chapter has been published, students were also able to look up the finished product and compare their decisions to the actual revisions, a benefit I had not even considered until my students eagerly asked me where they could find the publication.

Looking Ahead

Copyediting is not being taught in the upcoming 2025–2026 academic year. While I am going to miss some of the activities and discussions from this course, I am looking forward to the opportunity to expand the other sections of our editing sequence. Since Jordan joined our department in fall 2024, we have been working on organizing a three-course editing sequence: *Grammar and Style*, *Copyediting*, and *Substantive Editing*. In spring 2026, I will teach *Grammar and Style* for the first time, and Jordan will teach the first *Substantive Editing* course. We have been able to use the data and experiences from the *Copyediting* courses discussed above to determine key focuses and learning outcomes for the courses. For example, *Grammar and Style* will be taught with Miller’s (1979) pedagogical theory of knowing when to bend and break the rules. This will hopefully prepare students for more confidence in their decisions in *Copyediting*, which will in turn prepare them for making larger, structural changes in *Substantive Editing*.

Now that all three courses are actively being workshopped, we can begin to think about the writing world's next great challenge: AI. Discussed in more detail below, our editing courses will seek to blend AI into the editing workflow while still maintaining a firm stance that a human editor is an invaluable tool in any writing situation.

Artificial Intelligence and Rhetorically Responsive Editing

Like many departments, we find ourselves racing to keep up with both the scholarship on artificial intelligence and the technology itself. As authors, the three of us hold differing attitudes towards artificial intelligence—ranging from strong resistance to daily use. However, we all agree that artificial intelligence is already having an impact on writing and editing jobs and that its use is highly unlikely to decline over the next decade. Last year, Marc's ENG 301: *Writing as a Job* class found references to artificial intelligence in 12% of the 150 job advertisements they surveyed. Interns reported back that they are advised to use artificial intelligence in all parts of the writing process. If we want our students to be competitive in an already difficult job market, then we will need to prepare them to productively use AI tools while we also expose them to the limitations and problems of AI. We briefly sketch out our initial attempts to balance a professional obligation to prepare our students for a technology-driven (obsessed?) job market (refer to, for instance, Salvo & Sherrill, 2025, pp. 34–35) against our significant concerns about AI's adverse cognitive, economic, environmental, social, and political impacts (Sano-Franchini et al., 2024).

Last spring, our department generated a heuristic for instructors to consider when thinking about AI's integration into their classes. We are sure many others are working on similar policies; we want to contribute to this discussion by sharing the heuristic we developed for faculty to consider when creating syllabi and assignments:

Can students use AI to:

- help understand readings?
- help develop potential research questions or ideas?
- identify research materials?
- outline their essays?
- draft their essays?
- organize/structure their essays?
- revise and copyedit their essays?

Obviously, we were asking our faculty to think about how AI might be used in all facets of the writing process. Such an approach was influenced by Mollick's (2024) concept of "co-intelligence," which proposes that AI can augment human capacity but not replace it.

Mollick's model of productive AI use is built around four core principles:

- Always invite AI to the table
- Be the human in the loop
- Treat AI like a person (but tell it what kind of person it is)
- Assume this is the worst AI you will ever use (pp. 47–62)

All four of these principles have influenced how our department and major are thinking about AI. Programmatically, we are asking our faculty to think about *when* it is appropriate to bring AI to the table and acknowledging that "always" might not be the right answer (even if it is the mandate that interns encountered on site last year). We do not have clear answers to the questions above; however, they are helping us think carefully about learning outcomes and how artificial intelligence can help us focus on particular tasks. Pedagogically, we recognize that strong prompt engineering requires that we provide AI generators with deep contextual knowledge, such that it knows not only who it is, but who its audience is and more about its rhetorical situation (Ranade, Saravia & Johri, 2025).

It is Mollick's second principle, to "be the human in the loop," that most drives our programmatic approach to AI. As Mollick (2024) argued, AI systems require human judgement and expertise; humans offer "unique perspective, critical thinking skills, and ethical considerations" (pp. 53–54) of which machines are largely incapable. Mollick is not a rhetorical theorist, but we would suggest that the critical thinking and ethical considerations requisite for his human-computer interaction (HCI) model of AI use mirrors the audience awareness and cultural sensitivity that we have described as germane to rhetorical editing. Thus, we attempt to construct curricula that expose students to AI productivity *and* its limitations. For example, in Kevin's *Copyediting* class, students learn that AI can help with proofreading. However, they also learn that they should not be fully reliant on the machine. Sure, ChatGPT knows how to check commas against the traditional rules, but, as we all know, there are places where the traditional rules just do not work. AI and other digital editing tools such as spell check or Grammarly might be used as part of an initial file clean-up and for proofreading grammar errors, but editors should evaluate any proposed edits and make an informed case-by-case decision. Marc used AI to help edit the institutional context section of this article, asking it to reduce the section by 35%. Although he did go through the recommendation line-by-line and edited the output.

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In the fall of 2024, Marc taught a capstone seminar, our ENG 429: *Rhetoric and Technology* class, dedicated to artificial intelligence, writing, and editing. The results of that class will be published in a forthcoming chapter; here we can briefly share one assignment as another example of how we ask our students to “be the human in the loop.” The six-week project was based on Douglas Eyman’s (2024) assignment that asked students to compare how three different large language model (LLM) tools summarized technical documents. In our class, students were asked to compare how three different LLMs suggested revisions on academic, professional, and creative writing. The results of those comparisons were rather trivial (they all performed about the same), and the quality of suggested revisions and edits was mediocre (and quite terrible for poetry in particular). However, in our post-project surveys, students found value in developing the prompt engineering documents we used, since they further developed their own metacognitive knowledge of the editing process. While Marc is troubled particularly by AI’s cognitive and ecological impacts, he also recognizes that it is essential to familiarize students with the technology given its growing place in job advertisements. He advocates for developing editing projects that balance human cognition and technological capacity.

Jordan would argue that there might even be room for optimism: that as writers rely more on AI technologies to generate drafts, there will be an increased demand for editors with sophisticated understanding of audience, context, and language. In an experiment comparing professional writers who used ChatGPT with a control group who did not, Noy and Zhang (2023) found that the group who used ChatGPT in their writing workflow spent far less time (about half) composing when compared with the control group, but they spent almost double the amount of time editing compared with the control group. Smith (2024) argues that “as more and more AI tools are adopted into professional workflows, writers will likely continue to spend more time editing the output—both on a substantive and copy-edit level—so that it meets the needs of their audience” (p. 26). Alan Knowles (2024) offered a framework for thinking about the ways that humans and machines can collaboratively work together to author texts; similar to Mollick, he proposed a “machine-in-the-loop” model “in which the human collaborator retains majority of the rhetorical load, and thus, relegates GenAI tools in their workflow to roles more akin to assistants than a co-authors” (p. 8). If AI tools accelerate the generation of content, then humans will need extensive training in tailoring and improving that content. This brings us back to Lauer and Brumberger’s (2019) notion of the multimodal, responsive, hybrid editor we discussed above (albeit in ways that make some of us uncomfortable).

Commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, and Community Engagement

This is a strange section to write—to justify why inclusion and diversity are central to our major. We developed this major before *DEI* became the “devil term” that it is today (Weaver, pp. 222–223).³ Our approach to the writing process is grounded in empathy—the ability to try and imagine how words, things, histories might feel and mean from another person’s perspective (see particularly Blankenship [2019].) People cannot write or edit without such decentering, without developing that creative and imaginative capacity. You probably cannot live a life in a world with other people without that capacity, too. As Walter Ong (1975) described it, as writers and editors, we have to creatively imagine all of the audiences who might read our words in an attempt to imagine their questions, see potential (mis)understandings, and assuage their skepticisms: audiences are works of fiction. We find it disturbing (to say the least) that some states are villainizing and outlawing fundamental skills that help us share the world with other people.

As for community engagement, that also shows up across a wide range of courses, projects, and departmental culture. We wanted our students to actively engage their local communities, to see how what they were learning in the classroom could be carried out into their worlds. Some of this work happens via class projects through community-engaged writing. We have already described how Marc’s *Writing as a Job* class partners with local nonprofits (11 different organizations over the past seven years). Similarly, his graphic design class partners with the Go West Film Festival, an annual weeklong festival celebrating the American West, to design their festival’s program. His ENG 229: *Digital Video Production* class has worked with UNCO’s liberal arts council to develop faculty highlight videos and with the Go West Film Festival to record a series of promotional videos and highlight videos from their fall 2023 festival. As previously mentioned, Jordan’s ENG 427: *Substantive Editing* class aims to partner with *The CEA Critic* in future semesters and will feature guest lectures from local publishing and editing professionals.

The department also looks to build community. All WEP majors are encouraged to participate with *The Crucible*, its longstanding student-produced literary magazine. During his last year with us, Phillip Goodwin partnered with Greeley’s local LINC Library to create Zine Fest. Students in ENG 220: *Writing, Transformation, and Change* and ENG 328:

³ We would also note that we have nothing against equity. We simply developed the major before the acronym *DEI* became commonplace.

Document Design continue to participate in the event (with some extra credit as encouragement). We have been fortunate to sustain this connection with Phillip Goodwin even after his departure.

Internships also form a core experience for our WEP majors. Marc has overseen 21 internships since the Fall of 2020. And, true to the research we presented above, these internships have come in a very wide range of positions including content writing, copywriting, social media management, grant writing, web UX/UI work, marketing, and archival work. We see internships as a capstone for community engagement—an experience in which our students' expertise with the written word, their multimodal capabilities, and their humanistic capacities come together.

Conclusion

We have presented in this article the current state of the writing, editing, and publishing major at UNCO in the hopes that others who are developing a similar major or sequence of courses will find value in what we have shared. We emphasize the phrase *current state* in the previous sentence. As stated earlier, we acknowledge that we still have work to do to further develop the publishing component of our major. In addition, given the rapidly changing ways that people write and edit, and with the shifting cultural views surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion, we recognize the instability that can result for programs like ours. As we observe these changes, we see both opportunities and challenges.

On the one hand, the increasing role that machines play in the writing and editing process—as resource tools, assistants, cowriters, and even in some cases executive decision-makers (McKee & Porter, 2022)—means that writing workflows will evolve and present new opportunities. While the final outcome of these changes is still yet to be seen, we readily anticipate the opportunity to help students grow and adapt to changing job-market needs.

On the other hand, we face challenges as long-held foundational principles of humanistic disciplines—principles such as diversity, equity, and inclusion—come under increasing attack. We remain committed to helping students understand and honor diversity and to use writing and editing as a way to build community with the people around them. Our courses in the WEP major are built on the idea that writing is indeed a humanistic endeavor (Miller, 1979) and that humans are at their best when they respect diversity, treat others equitably, and include people with different experiences and views in their lives.

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In spite of the challenges we face, we eagerly seek opportunities to better prepare our students for fulfilling lives and careers, and we look forward to the future with optimism.

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Editing and Linguistics: Editing and Publishing at Brigham Young University

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Abstract The connection of linguistics and editing is a central feature of Brigham Young University (BYU)'s editing and publishing (E&P) program, which provides a unique and robust combination of courses in linguistic theory, editing, publishing software, and the history and business of publishing. In addition, the program includes essential hands-on experiences through internships, student journals, and other experiential learning opportunities. This paper outlines the history and structure of BYU's program to showcase the programmatic strengths that have come from integrating linguistics with E&P. This approach provides students with a higher-level understanding of language that prepares them to enter the workplace in a variety of fields ready to make informed decisions about writing, editing, and communicating. The BYU E&P program is a good example of an interdisciplinary program that creatively uses its resources to benefit student learning and professionalization.

Keywords editing, publishing, linguistics, program showcase, experiential learning

Courses and programs that focus on editing and publishing (E&P) are found in a wide variety of departments in the English-speaking world. While most programs are in English departments, other host departments include “business, communications, journalism, media and creative arts, publishing, typographic and graphic communications” (Baker et al., 2024). Only one—the Editing and Publishing program at Brigham Young University (BYU)—makes its institutional home in a linguistics department.

The connection of linguistics and editing is a central feature of BYU's program, which provides a unique and robust combination of courses in linguistic theory, editing, publishing software, and the history and business of publishing. In addition, the program includes essential hands-on experiences through internships, student journals, and other experiential learning opportunities. This paper outlines the history and structure of BYU's program to showcase the programmatic strengths that have come from integrating linguistics with E&P.

History

The E&P program at BYU started with a single copyediting course. As interest in editing grew, the course offerings were expanded to include courses in substantive editing, publishing software, and advanced editing. The program also developed experiential learning opportunities, including partnering with dozens of internship providers, promoting and developing over twenty student journals, and creating an academic editing service for BYU faculty. In the early 2000s, the program became an official university minor. In 2018, after several years of sustained growth, E&P was approved as a major, with additional required courses and a more robust linguistics foundation, which will be described below. The program now serves roughly 200 students in the major and minor, which makes E&P compete with the linguistics major for the title of most-enrolled major in the department.

Linguistics Foundation

The initial course offerings for editing were housed in the English Department. In the early 2000s, however, the department was realigned into two departments: English and Linguistics. The E&P courses moved to Linguistics, based on the interests and assignments of the faculty in the program. This move has given BYU's editing program a distinctive linguistic foundation. Aside from the core editing courses, the required and elective courses for both the major and the minor draw from the linguistics and applied English linguistics course offerings. This means that students in the E&P program get in-depth learning in grammar and usage, but they often also learn phonetics and phonology, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, and linguistic varieties.

The design of the E&P major was to help students gain an elevated understanding of language—not just the prescriptive rules, but also the pieces, parts, and complexities. The hope was that as students increased their knowledge of linguistic features, they would be better equipped to make editorial decisions. This hope has been realized in the performance of the program's alumni in competitive publishing internships. Internship providers report that students from BYU's E&P program perform significantly better (usually 30–40 points) than their peers from other universities in hiring tests and job performance measures (Olsen, personal communication, October 30, 2019). Alumni from the program also fare well in professional job placement, freelance editing, and graduate school acceptance in companies and universities around the world.

Student employment development is a major focus of the E&P program, and that development is aided by the program's focus on a solid linguistics foundation. And, as the

publishing industry grapples with the rise of AI and computer-aided writing and editing, students who have a higher-level understanding of language and linguistics have a greater chance to not only be employed in the industry but also to shape the future of publishing (Węcel et al., 2023; Noy & Zhang, 2023).

Editing Minor

Originally designed as an expansion of a single editing course, the editing minor quickly became a robust and popular program focused on the professionalization of students. It is usually paired with complementary majors, such as English, creative writing, applied English linguistics, or linguistics, but it draws students from across the university who seek practical classes to improve their editing and writing skills. The editing minor is structured to provide students with (1) an overview of linguistics, (2) specific training in editing and publishing, and (3) experiential learning and professionalization opportunities.

Linguistics Overview

All editing minor students are required to take either *Introduction to Linguistics* or *Introduction to the English Language*. Both of these courses provide students with vocabulary and tools to understand basic linguistic concepts. They also preview some of the major fields of linguistics, including sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, language documentation, and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

After the introductory class, students take two more courses that bridge linguistics and editing: one on usage and one on grammar. In the usage course, students learn to use style and usage guides but with a critical eye. Students are taught to analyze specific usage guidance and to make informed decisions about their own use of language, whether in writing or in editing. Perhaps most importantly, students learn to decode usage guide entries and to understand whether the presented rules are based in grammar, clarity, tradition, or even prejudice.

The grammar course focuses on helping students learn to describe and analyze the English language. It focuses on teaching students the vocabulary and tools for discussing English and provides extensive exercises and exams to help students identify key features of grammar in authentic texts.

The introduction, grammar, and usage courses are taught by a rotating mix of linguistics, E&P, and TESOL faculty who provide their own perspectives and research on language. The goal is to help students become engaged with the language on a deeper level and to gain an understanding of how English works and the rules and traditions that govern it.

Editing and Publishing Training

The core of the editing minor contains a four-course sequence with specific editing and publishing training. These courses are designed to prepare students for a variety of workplaces and are continually updated with the latest approaches and practices from the wider publishing industry.

The first course is *Introduction to Print Publishing*. This course, taught by faculty in digital humanities, is an overview of the software tools used in publishing. It currently focuses on the industry-standard Adobe Creative Suite. Students learn to edit images, to create illustrations, and to typeset and design different kinds of documents. They are also taught how to prepare electronic files for print publication. The projects in this course include a well-designed magazine spread and a fully typeset book. Students emerge from this class with a variety of portfolio-ready pieces that represent their early education in E&P.

The second course is *Copyediting*. In this course, students learn the practice of copyediting through exercises, exams, and projects. This course focuses heavily on the more concrete decisions an editor can make, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, and style. Students are taught strategies for finding and correcting errors, but they are also asked to employ the critical thinking tools they learned in their linguistics foundation courses to make decisions about how to apply style and usage guidance. In this course, students are also taught important professional skills, such as using software, preparing portfolios, and applying for jobs.

The third course is *Substantive Editing*. This course focuses on the larger problems in editing, including questions of audience, tone, style, organization, and voice. Each section of the course focuses on a different genre of editing, which may include technical editing, academic editing, business editing, fiction editing, and magazine editing. Students focus on learning the details and challenges of editing for a single genre throughout the semester. Although this course also uses some exercises and exams, the primary focus is on larger editing projects that include both substantive and copyediting problems. Most sections of this course include at least one live project, where students work with authentic documents and real authors.

The final course in the editing minor core is a project capstone: *Editing for Publication*. While the other three courses can be taken in any order or even simultaneously, they all must be completed before students enroll in the capstone. Like the substantive editing course, the capstone course is taught in different genres by section: magazine, fiction, or online publishing. The goal of this course is to give students the experience of taking a

publication from draft to publication within the confines of a semester. In the magazine section, students work as a single staff to write, edit, design, and publish a travel magazine. The online course runs similarly, but the publication is a pair of websites that summarize academic or religious content. In the fiction course, students work in small teams to choose a book manuscript and then work with an author through the revision and production process. In each section, students leave with tangible evidence of their editing and publishing skills for their portfolios.

Experiential Learning and Professionalization

Providing students with opportunities for experiential learning and professionalization are important to the entire E&P program. The specific opportunities outside of class, such as internships, student journals, and study abroad programs, will be discussed later in this article. Although these opportunities are not required in the editing minor, they are highly encouraged. The program also emphasizes professionalization throughout the core editing classes. Students are required to build online portfolios, to learn software tools, and to network with other editors and authors. Faculty also spend time working with students to plan their careers and to apply for jobs or graduate schools.

Editing and Publishing Major

When the E&P faculty proposed expanding the minor to become a major in 2016, the criticisms of the program were focused on editing's lack of an academic history and disciplinary home. While the professional preparation elements of the editing minor were proved to be popular and successful, university administrators asked for a more academically rigorous program to be developed before considering the major proposal.

Since editing does not have an established disciplinary identity (refer to Baker et al., 2024), the E&P faculty turned once more to their colleagues in the Department of Linguistics. The linguistics foundation was expanded to include a course in research methods, where students learn the basics of academic research, but also an overview of key concepts in statistics and analysis that prepare them to write and edit academic research papers. The foundation now also includes a course in the history of the English language, which provides additional context of the linguistic origins of modern English.

In the major, the students are required to take two courses that provide perspectives on linguistic context. These courses include *Discourse Analysis*, *Varieties of English*, *Sociolinguistics*, and *Corpus Linguistics*. These courses add depth and context to the

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linguistics core of the E&P major and help students identify their own interests and specializations.

Students are also required to complete an additional three courses from a long list of linguistics courses, which draw from nearly the full catalog taught in the department. Students can pursue linguistic interests further by learning about semantics and pragmatics, phonetics and phonology, or language politics and planning, among many other options. But they can also choose to expand their experiences in the editing courses by taking a different genre of substantive editing or editing for publication. Other popular elective courses include the *History of the Book*, *Social Media Marketing and Analysis*, and *Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. The elective courses give students the opportunity to shape their major to their interests, while expanding their understanding of both E&P and linguistics.

While the primary goals in expanding the minor to a major were to increase the academic rigor, the faculty also felt strongly about requiring professionalization opportunities. In addition to the one software course required in the minor, the major requires an additional course in professional tools, which can include an advanced publishing software course, a web publishing course, a business of publishing course, or an additional linguistics software tools course. The major also requires at least one credit hour of experiential learning.

Finally, the E&P major includes a senior capstone course, separate from the editing project capstone. The senior capstone course is designed to give students an additional intellectual challenge through exploring a topic in-depth by researching academic sources, giving presentations, and writing research papers. While this course was initially cross-listed for E&P, linguistics, and applied English linguistics majors, it is now listed separately to allow for more focused topics based on the interests and skills of the students in each major.

Expanding the Breadth

One of the strengths of the editing minor has always been the wide variety of majors the students represent. The different disciplinary backgrounds provide diverse perspectives and exposure to a variety of complex professional discourses. E&P students have had majors in English, linguistics, business, education, history, and a number of STEM fields (refer to Table 1 for a list of current majors and minors). In many cases, those students drew on their editing training in the minor classes to improve their writing and to prepare for careers and graduate school.

Table 1. Majors and Minors for E&P Minors and Majors

Majors of Editing Minors	Minors of E&P Majors
American Studies	Art
Anthropology	Business
Applied English Linguistics	Communications
Biochemistry	Creative Writing
Chinese	Design Thinking
Communication Disorders	Digital Humanities and Technology
Communications: Advertising	English
Communications: Journalism and Sports Media	Entrepreneurship
Communications: Media and Society	Family History—Genealogy
Communications: Public Relations	Family Life
Economics	French
English	Global Women’s Studies
English Teaching	History
Family Life: Family Studies	Information Systems
Family Life: Human Development	Interdisciplinary Humanities
Graphic Design	International Strategy and Diplomacy
Linguistics	Korean
Marketing	Legal Studies
Microbiology	Linguistic Computing
Neuroscience	Linguistics
Plant and Landscape Systems	Mathematics
Spanish Studies	Music
Spanish Translation	Plant and Landscape Systems
	Professional Writing and Communication
	Professional Writing and Rhetoric
	Psychology
	Scandinavian Studies
	Sociology
	Spanish
	Statistics
	TESOL
	Theatre Arts Studies
	Translation and Localization

Like the editing minor, the E&P major is designed to be paired with other programs. Students are required to complete either a minor in another subject or two years of a foreign language. While BYU has many foreign-language speakers among its students, most E&P students choose to get a minor anyway. The most popular minors include English, creative writing, linguistics, TESOL, communication disorders, and professional writing, but E&P students represent a broad range of minors from across the university.

This focus on interdisciplinary training for both the editing minor and E&P major provides intellectual development for students, but also critical professional preparation.

Professional editors almost always function in fields that require adaptation to the audience, expectations, and language of that field. Interdisciplinary work through paired majors and minors, along with advanced training in linguistics, prepare students to make those adaptations to new environments and new discourses throughout their careers.

Experiential Learning

As noted earlier in this paper, experiential learning has been a central part of the E&P program since before it became a minor. Student journals, internships, the Faculty Publishing Service, and a study abroad all offer in-depth training and skills that cannot be replicated in the classroom. Although these experiential learning opportunities are optional for editing minors, most students still complete at least one. E&P majors are required to complete at least one credit hour (representing 42 hours of work) working in an internship or student journal, although the credit can be earned by completing a study abroad. Once again, however, most students complete multiple internships or student journal semesters in an effort to gain as much practical experience as possible before graduation.

Student Journals

BYU is home to over twenty student journals. While some journals operate as classes, overseen by full-time or adjunct faculty, most operate independently, with an assigned faculty advisor. These journals are managed and produced by students who volunteer their time to gain publishing experience. Some of the journals include *Leading Edge* (science fiction and fantasy); *Inscape* (fiction, non-fiction, art, and poetry); *Schwa* (linguistics research); *Chiasm* (neuroscience); and *AWE* (women's studies).

The wide variety of student journals provides students with opportunities to explore their interests while going through all of the steps of the editing and publishing process. In addition to the practical experiences of editing, students also get real-world experience in management, marketing, finances, copyrights, and contracts. The breadth of experience in working for student journals prepares students well for a wide range of careers.

Internships

Since the beginning of the E&P program, the number and quality of editing internships has grown to include dozens of internship providers on campus, locally, regionally, and internationally. The vast majority of E&P internships connected with BYU are well-paid and highly competitive. On-campus internships include university, college, and department

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publications; the university press in editing, writing, graphics, design, and production; the museums, working on signage and marketing; the copyright and legal counsel offices as editors, writers, and researchers; and the Research and Writing Center as peer mentors and tutors. All of these on-campus internships offer real work experience with focused mentoring from supervisors and managers.

Some of the most competitive internships are the ones working for BYU's Faculty Publishing Service (FPS). This service employs several professional editors and student interns, who work together on helping faculty from different departments prepare manuscripts for publication. The FPS offers substantive editing, copyediting, proofreading, indexing, typesetting and design. Student interns edit papers under the direction of professionals and receive feedback and mentoring throughout the process.

Off-campus internships include dozens of companies, ranging from traditional book publishers to tech companies to religious organizations. Most of these internships are highly competitive and highly regarded in the industry. Even though students are off-campus, the internships are monitored by a member of the E&P adjunct faculty for the quality of the work, the mentoring and feedback, and the overall experience. Students who seek university credit for internships submit reflections and employer reports.

Since 2023, BYU has also formed important relationships with international publishers based in Germany and the UK. Students who are awarded these internships stay in BYU student housing and work for a semester with one of several publishing companies. These international publishing experiences expand the reach of the E&P program and provide students with experiences well beyond the limits of the classroom.

Study Abroad

While the E&P program encourages each student to complete at least one internship, it also allows the experiential learning credit to be completed with a related study abroad. BYU runs one of the largest study abroad programs in the world, with thousands of students traveling each semester. The Department of Linguistics sponsors three study abroad programs: one focused on linguistics in Ecuador, one focused on TESOL that changes locations, and one focused on the English language in the UK and Ireland.

While any of the department-sponsored study abroad programs would be counted toward the credit for E&P students, the majority who choose to go settle on the British Isles program. This program travels for eight weeks through England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Ireland. The courses offered include *Introduction to Linguistics*, *Varieties of*

English, History of the English Language, and History of the Book. Students visit historic locations, publishing houses, museums, and historic presses as they learn through a variety of rich experiences.

Student Success

The goal of the E&P program at BYU is to prepare students for a successful entry into the world of editing and publishing. Through the connections to linguistics and the wide variety of courses and practical experiences, students gain the knowledge, skills, and practice to enter the workforce. Importantly, the E&P faculty encourage students to see beyond the boundaries of traditional publishing to the many broader opportunities to practice their craft. For over two decades, E&P students from BYU have accepted positions in traditional publishing companies, but even more of them have found work in the broader industry.

The nature of the publishing industry, which includes a significant number of freelancing opportunities, makes some alumni employment numbers difficult to track. However, according to surveys of graduating seniors from the E&P program conducted by BYU each year from 2018 through 2023, 78.9 percent of the students were seeking full-time or part-time employment, while 10.1 percent were planning on graduate or professional school. A significant number (18.3 percent) were also planning to be stay-at-home parents (students could select more than one option in this survey). In the same survey, 68.5 percent of students reported that they had already accepted an offer of post-graduation employment at the time of graduation.

The survey showed that E&P alumni are working for local, national, and international publishers; as freelancers; and for a wide variety of other companies, including airlines, marketing companies, research companies, steel mills, technology and Internet companies, startups, libraries, school districts, and universities. In addition, E&P students have gone on to graduate school editing and publishing, as well as law, medicine, history, instructional technology and design, international relations, library and information science, sociology, and linguistics.

The success of the E&P students after they leave BYU is evidence of the strength of the program. As the discipline of E&P grows, the connections to linguistics should be part of the conversation along with the connections to English, professional and technical communication, and journalism.

Key Takeaways

BYU's program in E&P is a unique, robust program that serves its students well and prepares them to enter the workplace with a carefully designed program of practical editing courses, linguistic theory, and hands-on experiential learning. The keys to its success, as measured by student feedback and career placement, include the following:

1. **A strong academic foundation:** While E&P is a new discipline with a developing body of research literature, editing programs can draw on existing related disciplines, especially those in linguistics, writing, technical communication, and rhetoric.
2. **A strong sequence of courses:** The courses in a successful E&P program need to balance learning essential theory with addressing the pressing needs in the industry. The course sequences should be designed with a close attention to detail and a keen understanding of industry needs.
3. **Robust experiential learning opportunities:** No program can provide all of the necessary experience inside classrooms. Experiential learning should be built into E&P programs to give students exposure to different genres of publishing.
4. **A focus on professionalization:** Professionalization should be a consistent theme throughout the program, even in more theory-based courses. Faculty should be familiar with the industry to advise students and guide them through their professional preparations.

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Applied Learning in an Editing and Writing for Publication Course

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Abstract At a small liberal arts college, one TPC course was created that combined editing, writing for publication, and applied learning opportunities. The course was created to meet departmental goals for adding a writing course and adding a course students would be interested in taking. The course includes having students participate in two large-scale editing projects including a project where they work directly with clients. In the publishing section of the course, students have opportunities to write for a variety of options including digital options, college newspaper, and undergraduate journal options.

Keywords editing, publication, academic publishing, applied learning, client involvement

As a newly hired professor in an English department at a small liberal arts college, I was the first technical and professional communication (TPC) hire in over a decade and was faced with a curriculum that focused exclusively on literature with only the freshman writing sequence focused on writing. One of the main focuses of my new job was to create a few classes in the English department that would be writing-focused. In the various discussions that occurred during my first semester, the focus was on what classes could be added that would be writing-focused but also interesting enough so that students would take the course. These concerns were valid, and I spent most of that semester thinking about how to balance my desires for TPC courses with the desires of the rest of the department. Most of the English faculty agreed that an editing class would be a good first class to be added but were concerned that not enough students would be interested in just a class on editing. I proposed that adding a writing for publication component to an editing class might be an option for increasing student interest as well as adding real-world application assignments. While I knew that most universities have separate classes in editing and in publication, due to the context of our college, combining these two classes into one class made the most sense. With department approval, I created an upper-division undergraduate class titled *Editing and Writing for Publication*.

The course is offered every third semester, and, while it is usually offered as an in-person class, it has also been offered in asynchronous and synchronous online formats. The course has proven to be popular with students and usually has one of the highest enrollments for upper division English courses.

Designing the Course

With the approval of the department, I set about creating this course and spent time in planning on how to cover so many different topics while still providing students with real-world opportunities. I started with researching what other colleges were offering for classes and researching the literature on the content and creation of such classes.

As this article is focused mainly on the course I created, the literature review is focused mainly on the pedagogical influences on course creation. I found that editing courses are one of the most common courses in TPC programs (Melonçon, 2019). Courses that focus on publishing are also common. Much less common are courses that focus on both ideas (Baker, Rawlins, & Pierson, 2024).

Even though editing courses are common in TPC programs, as is research on the pedagogy and curriculum of such courses, there is less research on specific types of editing (Bisaillon, 2007). Suzan Flanagan (2019) points out the lack of empirical research on technical editing and the lack of cohesive pedagogy for teaching technical editing. Joanna Schreiber recently reviewed editing courses and the teaching of inclusive editing (2025), and she found some research on ways to include accessibility and inclusive language in such classes, there is still a need to add more inclusive editing strategies.

As I was creating this class, I knew that I wanted to include a client-based editing project and that students would need to learn how to work with clients (Cummings, 2007; Kirkscey & Aataluri, 2022; Van Patten, 2015). To help students understand more about working with clients, I included mock-interviews (Ryan, 2008). I also use the textbook, *Explanation Points*, as several of the chapters specifically focus on editing and meeting with clients for conducting editing projects (Gallagher & DeVoss, 2019).

In creating the writing for publication part of the course, I found the majority of research was with graduate students and focused more on math, science, and social science courses. The research on undergraduate writing for publication classes mainly focused on creative writing opportunities with less focus on other types of publications. The few articles I did find, emphasized real-world applications and encouraged students to submit their writing for publication opportunities (Baker et al., 2024; Russell, 2024; Weiner &

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Watkinson, 2014). Benefits of encouraging undergraduate students to engage in real-world writing applications include having students have more motivation to improve their writing skills, increase critical thinking skills, and develop mentoring relationships with professors (Bresse & Kinkead, 2022; Burns & Ware, 2008; Ishyama, 2002; Jensen, 2024; Kinkead, 2021; Vengadasalam, 2020).

Many of my students are intimidated by the publishing process and often think that only the best writers are the ones that get published. I emphasize in this class that everyone has the opportunity to be published in both traditional and non-traditional mediums. Students appreciate being able to write for the college newspaper and include their essays in the undergraduate journal. In addition to these traditional mediums, students spend time researching online publishing opportunities including *Medium* and *Buzzfeed* (Cummings, 2021; Vengadasalam, 2020).

Course Goals

Editing and Writing for Publication has course goals focused on having students gain editing skills and have opportunities to work directly with clients on editing projects. Course goals also included having students identify specific publication opportunities including both print and online options.

At the end of the course, I wanted students to have had the following real-world experiences (as listed on the course syllabus):

- Edit a client-driven writing project
- Edit for the college undergraduate journal
- Write a newspaper article to be submitted to the college newspaper
- Write an article for online publication (i.e. *Medium*, *Buzzfeed*, online magazine, etc)
- Create a digital poster to present at the undergraduate research conference
- Submit an essay to our college undergraduate journal or submit an essay to an undergraduate research journal of your choosing

Course Organization

The course focuses on editing skills for eight weeks and then focuses on publication opportunities for eight weeks. At first glance, this course seems as if it would be divided into two different sections without a connection between them. However, there is a strong connection between these two sections as the editing skills students develop in the first eight weeks continue to be used throughout the second eight weeks, and the final project

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for the course has students both be student editors of our academic journal as well as publish an article in the journal.

The course has two main books and a variety of Open Education Resource (OER) and digital readings.

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- Gallagher, John R. & DeVoss, Dànielle Nicole (Eds.). (2019). *Explanation points: Publishing in rhetoric and composition*. University Press of Colorado.

The first half of the course is focused on topics related to editing and how to work with clients on client editing projects. Within these weeks, students learn skills in line editing, developmental editing, copyediting, content editing, track changes in Google Docs and Microsoft Word. The second half of the course focuses on publication options including newspaper writing, online publication, research poster, and publishing in an academic journal.

The major assignments for the course and the weeks the assignments cover are as follows:

- Editing-based assignments (Weeks 1–3)
- Mock interviews with clients (Weeks 3–4)
- Meetings with clients (Weeks 5–8)
- Report on editing experience with client project (Week 8)
- Creative writing options (Week 9)
- Newspaper writing (Weeks 9–10)
- Online writing options: *Medium*, *Buzzfeed*, magazine (Weeks 10–11)
- Poster creation for undergraduate conference (Weeks 12–13)
- Prepare student essay for submission to journal (Weeks 12–13)
- Edit and format undergraduate journal submissions (Weeks 14–15)
- Publish undergraduate journal (Week 16)

By the end of the semester, students will have participated in two large-scale editing projects where they have an opportunity to work with an actual client as well as provide academic editing. There is an undergraduate academic research journal (*Belmont Capstones and Letters Journal*) connected with the college and the final project in the course is for students to edit the essays that have been submitted to the journal by other students as well as to format the essays to fit the journal style. Students are guaranteed two publishing experiences with submitting an essay to the undergraduate journal and

being published in the school newspaper. There are other opportunities for publication within the course, but those are not guaranteed options. Students also create a research poster that they present at a college undergraduate research conference. By the end of the semester, students have completed several real-world-based projects that provide them with experience to add to their resumes and LinkedIn profiles. The class is focused on applied learning and providing opportunities for students to use the skills they are being taught for both editing and publication.

Course Revisions

This course has undergone many changes and revisions as various assignments have been added or deleted. Some assignments are a better fit for the in-person version than the online version, and so assignments are changed depending on the medium. I have also asked students to reflect on their experiences in the class and to provide feedback on each assignment, and then I revise the class based on that feedback.

When I teach the course as either an asynchronous or synchronous online course, I usually do not include the mock interviews or direct contact with the client wanting editing help, as I find that these two assignments are difficult to navigate through online spaces. The first time I taught the class online, I had students meet with their clients on Zoom, and I found that this did not work out very well, as both clients and students were not familiar with Zoom, and there seemed to be a lot of miscommunication issues. For these reasons, with my online courses, I have clients communicate directly with me, and then I send the necessary information to students. Students still complete client-based editing projects but do not communicate directly with the client. I find that my being the common connection helps these client projects to go more smoothly and for both the student and the client to feel that their needs and wants are being met.

The number of guest speakers who participate in the course has changed. The first semester I taught the course, I brought in ten different guest speakers to talk on various topics related to editing and publication. While the students and guest speakers really enjoyed the experience, I realized that this was an overwhelming amount of time to spend on guest speakers when the course itself had a lot of assignments and material to cover. I also found that it was hard to have guest speakers for the online version of the course as many of my contacts did not want to record themselves and post to the course. For the in-person or synchronous courses, I usually have three guest speakers during the semester, and they usually cover editing, creative writing, and a variety of other writing for publication topics. Three guest speakers has worked out much better.

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I have also tried several different assignments that I have since removed from the current version of the course. One such assignment was to write a review of a journal article and submit it for publication. To help prepare students to write a review of a journal article, I had them read reviews that professors in the English department had written for journals. I had thought this would be a good way for students to understand what a review includes and to have an opportunity to read something their professors had written. In retrospect, this was not a successful idea as most students felt intimidated by reading their professors' reviews and were unwilling to provide any kind of critical analysis of the reviews. The majority of the professor reviews were written on books that were focused on topics that few of my students were interested in. For this assignment, I had students read articles published in the undergraduate journal, *Queen City Writers*, and then write a review of any of the articles that they read. Several students did have their reviews published, but I found that most students were not very interested in writing a review and did not see how such an assignment would be helpful to them. For these reasons, I have deleted this assignment.

The largest revision I made was to the academic journal submission part of the class. The first two times I taught the class, I had students find undergraduate journals and submit one of their previously written articles to one. I would spend several weeks on this assignment helping students understand how to select a journal, read the submission requirements, and prepare their article for submission. Every semester, at least one student would have their article accepted for publication, but the rest of the class would get discouraged at either receiving a rejection email or never hearing back from the journal. While I tried to keep encouraging students to submit their essays to other potential venues, I felt there had to be a better way of having students engage in undergraduate research possibilities. I changed this assignment to the current version of students being editors and helping me publish our own academic journal.

Impact of Course

The course was designed to provide many opportunities for applied learning in both editing and publication. On course evaluations, students include how much they appreciate the focus on applied and how many skills and practice experiences they gained from the course. Students gain experience with being freelance editors, and this is something they can add to their resumes and LinkedIn profiles.

Several writing-specific options on our college campus are sustained or created because of this course. The school newspaper has largely been able to be published based on the

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articles this course generates. Many of the students in the course write the required newspaper article and then join the newspaper class and continue to write for the school newspaper in subsequent semesters.

In encouraging students to find opportunities to be published in undergraduate research journals, I decided to create a journal for the college. The third volume is currently being created with the skills and time from students currently taking the course. The efforts and involvement of students are why we have the *Belmont Capstones and Letters Journal* and can continue to offer this experience to all students at the college. Students both submit their own essays to the journal and are also the student editors for the journal. They spend the last several weeks of the course in editing, formatting, and getting the journal ready for publication.

Learning about publication and having the experience of publishing their work has inspired several students to pursue other publication opportunities. A recent history major just published an essay focused on public history in *Queen City Writers* (Farris, 2024). Several other students have also been published in this journal, including Desislava Yordanova (2021), who wrote about her experiences being an immigrant to the United States. Another student chose to submit his senior capstone essay to a different undergraduate journal and was accepted for publication (Torres, 2021) in time to be helpful in his graduate school application.

Conclusion and Takeaways

One of the takeaways from the course is that an editing and writing for publication course can be created and can be successful in providing students with opportunities to develop editing skills and writing for publication skills. While there are not many other combined courses, that should not be a deterrent to creating such a class. In creating this course, one of the main concerns was if the course would find enough interested students to be able to meet the registration requirements and be held. By combining both topics into one course, this course has always had the necessary enrollment numbers and usually exceeds those numbers.

Another takeaway from the course is that including real-world editing assignments has been beneficial to students and to other people. Over the last several years, various community members and graduate students have had help with their memoirs, dissertation chapters, nonprofit writings, and a variety of other writing projects. Students have gained freelance editing skills, and clients have gained editing help as well.

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Another takeaway from the course is that providing students with opportunities to be published has then helped students to become more interested in continuing to be involved in publication opportunities. The number of students who had their first newspaper article published after writing the article for the course and then went on to join the newspaper staff or the literary magazine staff or to find other opportunities for publication is high. The course helps students to gain confidence in their own writing abilities.

Creating a course with a balance of editing experiences, writing experiences, and real-world application experience involved a lot of research, time, and effort. The resulting course has been successful and has proven to provide students with experiences and opportunities in these areas.

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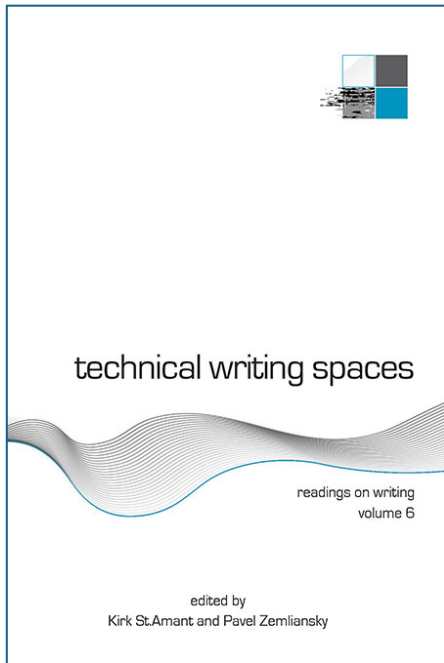
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Technical Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 6

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Zemliansky

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Part of the *Writing Spaces* series published by WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press, *Technical Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 6*, focuses specifically on issues connected to *technical* writing and communication. Editors Kirk St. Amant and Pavel Zemliansky have assembled an expansive collection that is a welcome addition to the *Writing Spaces* series and to any technical communication course.

Jointly published by the WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press, every volume in the *Writing Spaces* series shares a commitment to publishing high-quality, open-access undergraduate classroom materials. Earlier collections have focused primarily on materials for first-year writing courses, so Volume 6 marks the series' first expansion into other fields. Like the authors in each previous volume, though, each author in *Technical Writing Spaces* is an instructor writing for undergraduate students, using an engaging, straightforward style. More, each chapter stands alone, making it easy for instructors to select PDFs of the individual chapters that would work well in their classrooms.

Patriarca on St.Amant & Zemliansky

This entry in the series includes 17 chapters covering a range of technical and scientific communication topics, including accessibility, collaboration, international contexts for communication, and more. Most chapters focus on transferrable knowledge that would apply in a range of upper-level technical and scientific communication courses classes (including service courses), rather than genre-specific content; those chapters that *do* focus on genre (e.g., K. Alex Ilyasova’s “Last to be written, first to be read: Writing memos, abstracts, and executive summaries”) address genres common across upper-level technical and scientific communication courses. Despite the focus on content for upper-level undergraduate courses, some chapters are more appropriate for first-year writing courses aimed at students in technical and scientific majors; for example, Therese I. Pennell’s “Assessing sources for technical communication” focuses at length on academic sources and the teaching resources following the chapter explicitly identify first-year students as the audience.

Each of the chapters does an excellent job of drawing on students’ previous writing knowledge, including their experiences in first-year writing classes and casual writing on social media platforms, to clarify what technical communication is and can do. By encouraging them to think beyond writerly intuition and demographics to focus on research into users’ needs, values, cultural backgrounds, and more, Joanna Schreiber’s “Beyond audience analysis: Three stages of user experience research for technical writers” deepens students’ understanding of the audience analysis that they may have done in first-year writing. Similarly, Clinton R. Lanier’s “Social media as a space for today’s technical communication work” skillfully supports students in making the leap from their previous experiences with casual social media to professional and organizational uses of social media; Lanier’s section, “Tips for using social media in TC,” is a particularly useful heuristic for students to use as they begin planning for an assignment.

Another benefit to this collection’s affiliation with the *Writing Spaces* series is the wealth of accompanying activities, assignments, and other instructional resources. A “Teacher Resources” section follows the Works Cited section of each chapter; these sections include teaching strategies, discussion questions, and other content that will enrich students’ interaction with the concepts. I particularly appreciate the resources that offer ideas about how to adapt discussions and topics for the different kinds of technical communication courses, as well as how to handle topics that typically require significant amounts of time in industry (e.g., Candice Lanius’ and Ryan Weber’s ideas for implementing user-centered design projects or Darina M. Slattery’s discussions of

Patriarca on St.Amant & Zemliansky

adapting presentations depending on students' prior experiences within the technical communication program).

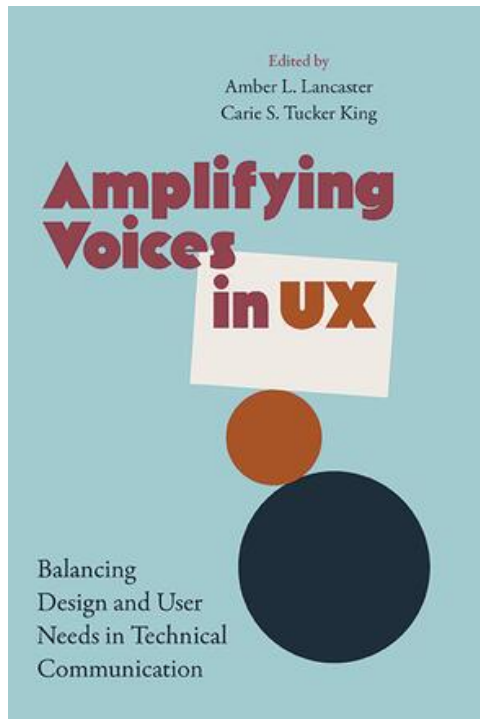
The book's website, writingspaces.org, also hosts a growing archive of technical and scientific communication assignments and in-class activities to support instructors using this volume in their classes. Although the online *Writing Spaces* resources focused on technical communication remain limited in comparison to those focused on first-year writing, they are all thoughtfully designed for adaptation, and several would work well as the starting point for a unit within the technical communication service course. For example, Megan Von Bergen's "Who is this space designed to exclude? Instructions and usability/accessibility analysis (IAUA)" could easily be adapted into a class activity or a full unit, depending on an instructor's needs. It would also pair well with several of the collection's chapters, particularly Cathryn Molloy's "Basic approaches to creating accessible documentation projects: What is accessibility, and what does it have to do with documentation projects?"

The only true downside to this collection is that the chapters are published in black-and-white/grayscale, rather than in color. While this lack of color does not negatively affect most of the chapters, it is a limitation for the otherwise-excellent chapters addressing visual communication. Though Candice A. Welhausen's chapter, "Worth a thousand words: Constructing visual arguments in technical communication," includes an appendix in color, the impact of the content would be even stronger if the full chapter were in color—at least for the online, open-access version.

Technical Writing Spaces is a timely, much-needed volume. Although a number of excellent technical communication textbooks already exist, many of the most expansive are also the most *expensive*. For anyone seeking lower- or no-cost alternatives for students, it's exciting to see the publication of a high-quality, open-access technical communication textbook. *Technical Writing Spaces* is just that kind of textbook, and I am pleased to recommend it highly. More, I am already adding selections to my upcoming classes, and I look forward to future technical communication-related volumes in the *Writing Spaces* series.

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Amplifying Voices in UX: Balancing Design and User Needs in Technical Communication

Editors: Amber L. Lancaster and Carie S. Tucker King

Publisher: State University of New York Press

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Number of Pages: 455

Reviewed by

Cara Haderlie

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Keywords: EquilibriUX, social justice, UX design, pedagogy, technical communication

In *Amplifying Voices in UX*, Amber L. Lancaster and Carie S. Tucker King argue that TPC needs to move beyond the localization of the area and acknowledge diverse audiences that are secondary or tertiary and may not fit most of the local users. This edited collection includes authors offering diverse perspectives and scholarship who study, design, and practice in the field and challenge the TPC audience, both administrators and instructors, to embrace equilibriUX and seek to improve balance and engagement of cultural uniqueness in often controversial content when developing new programs and instructional materials. The editors organize the book into three parts: Part 1: Pedagogical Topics, Part 2: Rhetoric of Health and Medicine Topics, and Part 3: Equity, Access, and Social Justice Topics. Technical communication scholars connect their essays within the

model of equilibriUX by discussing imbalances among designers, localization, and UX (User eXperience) where the struggle for technical and professional communication (TPC) and social justice are prevalent.

Part One: Pedagogical Topics

Part 1 provides methods, materials, and examples for TPC instructors and administrative designers to incorporate greater quality and equality in UX practices and course design. Jason Tham and Rob Grace (Chapter 1) discuss the exigence of including empathy for stakeholders and users while teaching. They especially hit the core of equilibriUX when they demonstrate how to use empathy in UX design, teaching with service learning, and being more stakeholder-centered rather than focusing on client-centeredness.

Jessica Lee & Sushil Oswal (Chapter 2) include a five-point pedagogical framework on teaching students accessibility and usability through UX (p. 51–54). Kristin Bennett (Chapter 3) addresses connections among UX, universal design (UD), and centering disability justice to promote goals of autonomy in online learning spaces and independence for users.

Philip B. Gallagher & Marci J. Gallagher (Chapter 4) bring awareness to the lack of design justice for blind or low-vision users because TPC uses videos and other visual aids so often. They discuss Charles Kostentick’s (1989) visual language matrix as a tool for working with visual language by learning “familiarity with [how] to communicate [a visual’s] intended meaning” (Kostenick p. 36 as cited by Gallagher & Gallagher on p. 118) and then suggest three parts in design rethinking. Lastly, K. Alex Ilyasova and Jamie May (Chapter 5) suggest seven steps on how to include empathy in UX and how to teach students the skill of empathy.

Part Two: Rhetoric of Health and Medicine Topics

King’s experience in the medical field brings an enriching perspective to this section of the book. Over the last few decades, the field of rhetoric of health and medicine (RHM) has increasingly made a strong presence in technical communication and health humanities (Melençon et al., 2020) (e.g. patient experience design and healthcare team collaboration and communication), and Part 2 demonstrates how equilibriUX can continue to improve health and medicine communication processes via critical analysis, expansive research, and intentional user redesign.

Keshab Raj Acharya (Chapter 6) shares findings from a case study about usability issues in global localization with the medical app, mHealth, that was designed for the Global North but is also used in the Global South. This study demonstrates equilibriUX as the author discusses the need to be aware of secondary and tertiary audiences of the same region, yet different from the original region. Felicia Chong and Tammy Rice-Bailey (Chapter 7) discuss readability and design issues for advance directives and provides a list of recommendations for improving form design (p. 216). Mallory Henderson (Chapter 8) writes about her experience as a patient-user and a researcher working with TPC health resources and participants' "lived experience and worlds (ecologies) surrounding patient-users" (p. 254).

Part 2 continues with Brett Oppegaard and Michael K. Rabby's (Chapter 9) study on audio description for the blind, deafblind, or low-vision addressing the issue of social exclusion to the marginalized and multiple intersectional dimensions of impaired users. Furthermore, Oppegaard and Rabby demonstrate what readers of this chapter can learn about equilibriUX and multi-perspectival UX and design. Hua Wang (Chapter 10) concludes Part 2 by discussing another Global North medical app, BabyTree, and its localized usability for Chinese pregnant women.

Part Three: Equity, Access, and Social Justice Topics

Lastly, Part 3 covers a compilation of various social justice problems that are occurring throughout the field of TPC and how they are being addressed through research with an equilibriUX lens. Amy Hodges, Tim Ponce, Johansen Quijano, Bethany Shaffer, and Vince Sosko (Chapter 11) address design justice—the relationship between power and design and challenges TPC to rethink, as Emma Rose (2016) argues, how knowledge and knowing inform design. Hodges et al. provide a list of design justice principles, for example, Principle 1: "We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems" (p. 329).

In Chapter 12, Emma Harris, Ruby Mendoza, and Emily L.W. Bowers posit that TPC should "strive to avoid oppression" (p. 357) and discuss the dynamics of oppression: interpersonal, structural, and institutional (p. 358). EquilibriUX can occur through transformative institutional change. Sarah Beth Hopton, Laura Becker, Max Rünzel, and James T. Wilkes (Chapter 13) provide seven steps for non-discrimination by design from the findings of an extensive study conducted on women beekeepers living in Lebanon. In addition, Hopton et al. discuss the term "glocalization" and define it as "the concept of

designing for groups of users who share some local concerns and needs for design but in slightly larger (i.e.) more global context” (p. 398). To finalize Part 3, Lin Dong and Elizabeth Topping (Chapter 14) argue that “technology is gendered” (p. 411) and through a feminist lens, critically analyze the rideshare app, DiDi (like Uber or Lyft in the US), in China and its subtle ways of reinforcing sexism. The authors end with suggestions for feminist UX practice.

One of the strengths of Part 3 is that the diversity in topics represented in the chapters demonstrate ways in which equilibriUX can expose places where designs have left marginalized users feeling oppressed and further excluded. For example, Hodges et al. speak directly to instructors and administrators regarding a unique perspective in course design and training programs to mitigate social justice imbalance for both instructors and students.

Conclusion

Lancaster and King’s edited collection, *Amplifying Voices in UX*, provides an invaluable resource for TPC scholars, administrators, and instructors by introducing the concept of equilibriUX. Instructors and emerging scholars may find Part 1 the most useful, because it provides ideas for design thinking and how to address wicked problems.

Lancaster and Tucker King demonstrate how equilibriUX can and should be utilized through the following research sites:

- Direct classroom instruction
- Course and program design, especially those working with UX, UD, and disability justice components
- Globally, through technical user apps and the localization of the Global North and South
- Accessibility in medical and legal document design
- Considering lived experiences and world ecologies for user resources

Although the experience and knowledge in health and medicine are evident, Part 2 may seem disjointed at first glance, but that disjointedness contributes to the point of the collection: Multiple voices aren’t going to sound completely cohesive and coherent, and that is why we need equilibriUX. The thread of applying equilibriUX to technical communication research and practice connects throughout the book.

Lancaster and King add to the TPC conversation by claiming that achieving equilibriUX requires technical communicators to design and develop technologies in ways that

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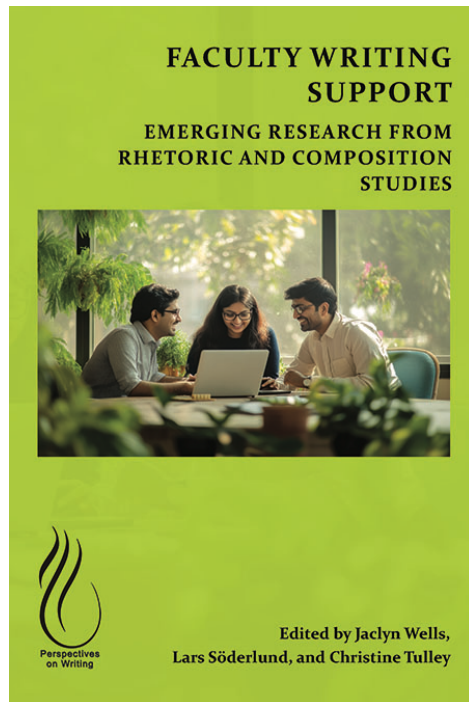
account for their own expertise and cultural competence *and* that of the user and calls to “extend UX design practices beyond translating and tailoring for local users to broader global users, while considering the diversity of user uniqueness, customization desires, all stakeholders, and social needs” (p. xiii).

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Faculty Writing Support: Emerging Research from Rhetoric and Composition Studies

Editors: Jaclyn Wells, Lars Söderlund, and
Christine Tulley

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Reviewed by
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Keywords: faculty writing, writing support, program administration, rhetoric and composition

*F*aculty Writing Support: Emerging Research from Rhetoric and Composition Studies, edited by Jaclyn Wells, Lars Söderlund, and Christine Tulley, is a recent contribution to the open-access *Perspectives on Writing* series. The series features diverse publications and collections on writing, teaching, research, and administration across contexts.

The collection expands the burgeoning subfield of *faculty writing* studies within Rhetoric and Composition. It adds to a growing body of work, such as Christine Tulley's *How Writing Faculty Write* (2018) and Anne Ellen Geller and Michele Eodice's *Working with Faculty Writers* (2013). With a strong disciplinary stance, its intention, as described in the introduction, is to move beyond anecdotal advice to present empirically grounded research on how faculty write and how their writing can be supported. Chapters feature

Cons on Wells, Söderlund, & Tulley

diverse methodologies, mostly including surveys, interviews, case studies, and audio recordings of writing groups, providing "first looks" at research interventions with faculty and advanced graduate students.

Particularly for Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) scholars and administrators, this volume is valuable because it (1) synthesizes current research on how faculty write and (2) foregrounds how institutions can design equitable and sustainable infrastructures on a programmatic, institutional level to support that writing. Readers should note this is not a book about pedagogy in the classroom. Instead, it situates faculty writing as a programmatic and administrative concern, reminding us that faculty writing is central to maintaining the discipline itself.

The book consists of an Introduction, 11 chapters, and an Afterword, and it is structured into two main parts. "Part I: How Faculty Write," presents current research exploring factors that encourage faculty writing, including individual composing styles, the impact of social writing environments, and the nuances of digital publishing. "Part II: How to Support Faculty Writers" examines rhetoric and composition-based support strategies both within and outside of academic institutions.

In Part I, Dana Driscoll's Chapter 1 stands out for its innovative use of Google Draftback, a method that pushes writing research toward new empirical territory, to study composing in real time. The chapter also offers language for supporting graduate writers with three diverse composing orientations to the writing process: Planners, Discoverers, and Hybrid Composers. Written by two of the collection editors, Lars Söderlund and Jaclyn Wells, Chapter 4 highlights the lived experience of Writing Program Administrators, roles often held by TPC faculty, showing how administrative "interruptions" can erode productivity. Paul Muhlhauser and Jenna Sheffield critique the undervaluing of digital scholarship in Chapter 5, suggesting actionable shifts (course releases, inclusive tenure definitions) and advocating for "compositional equity" in evaluating digital and multimodal work, central to TPC scholarship.

In Part II, in Chapter 6, Laura Micciche and Batsheva Guy employ a participatory method to address the needs of faculty of color, highlighting the importance of affinity-based communities and systemic reforms. The authors' approach aligns with TPC's commitment to social justice and inclusive program design. Next, Beth Hewett shifts the lens to external academic writing coaching by studying an LLC in Chapter 7. The chapter's breakdown of clients' needs is relevant to TPC professionals for its blueprint and for a more "industry-focused" perspective on writing support. Charmian Lam, in Chapter 8, turns explicitly to institutional support for TPC genres like grant proposals and job materials, making the

Cons on Wells, Söderlund, & Tulley

case for embedding professional writing training into doctoral programs to strengthen career readiness. Finally, Chapter 11, by Kristina Quynn and Carol Wilusz, addresses collaborative writing in STEMM fields, modeling co-authorship between faculty and graduate students to balance mentoring with productivity.

Even though authors foreground writing studies as their primary disciplinary contribution, faculty writing is explicitly conceptualized as interdisciplinary. Thus, this volume's findings and implications can be transferable for faculty developers and administrators across fields and different "hats" in higher education—such as faculty coaches, librarians, WPs, and more. Critically, many of the chapters, including the introduction and the afterword, advocate for change in academic culture, pushing for equitable evaluation of diverse scholarship and recognition of various forms of academic labor, i.e., what counts as publishing for high-stakes contexts. The consistent focus on identity development highlights writing as integral to professional growth and well-being in our field.

One compelling takeaway from reading the book is its meta-writing emphasis. Any writing studies or TPC scholar—at any career stage—will recognize some aspect of their own writing practices or realities reflected in the collection. Readers might identify with the "Planner, Hybrid, or Discoverer" composing identities, or recognize their struggles with aspects of publishing or managing their workload. This is an especially relevant read for PhD students and early career scholars who anticipate a long career in the field, as it leads to reflection on challenges and practices that shape the nature of our work.

For TPC faculty and administrators, the book offers actionable takeaways. First, faculty and students approach writing through different composing styles, and support structures should reflect this diversity rather than enforcing a single "ideal" process. Second, digital scholarship must be valued equitably; TPC programs are well-positioned to advocate for tenure and promotion policies that recognize multimodal, web-based scholarship as legitimate research, as those are often part of our research agendas, teaching, and service. Third, the collection makes visible the overload faced by admin roles, reminding us that administrative labor should be recognized and that institutions must provide structural protections to these roles. Fourth, encouraging community and collaboration, especially in the writing process, is shown to be central for sustaining productivity and well-being. That can happen through writing groups or structured co-authorship, directly informing TPC program design. Fifth, graduate student training should be intentional in preparing students for professional genres, embedding grant proposals, job materials, and administrative writing into curricula. Finally, the book highlights the necessity of committing to equity by supporting faculty of color and other marginalized groups,

Cons on Wells, Söderlund, & Tulley

designing writing support with an ethic of care that questions competitive, neoliberal models of academia.

Despite its strengths, the collection acknowledges several limitations. Many studies within the book rely on small sample sizes or specific institutional contexts. This limits applicability across contexts, as it presents a recognized lack of diversity in most of the chapters. For readers who work with STEMM programs, such a lack of representation might be frustrating. Some reliance on self-reported data means that perceptions may not always align with observed behaviors. The book frequently describes its findings as "emerging" or "first looks," indicating that more extensive research is still needed to better understand faculty writing's complexities. Most studies predate GenAI, leaving open questions of resistance or adoption from faculty. Finally, as an interdisciplinary scholar, I was struck by the lack of reference to English for Research and Publication Purposes (ERPP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) traditions. These fields bring decades of data on multilingual and transnational graduate student and faculty writing that could have enriched these discussions. The disciplinary boundaries, in that sense (i.e., solely focusing on Rhetoric and Composition), might be a limitation.

Overall, *Faculty Writing Support* is a significant step in legitimizing faculty writing as an area of inquiry. Compared to the earlier literature, *Faculty Writing Support* broadens the methodological range and brings fresh takeaways, particularly in areas like digital scholarship. It holds significant relevance for TPC program administrators and instructors, encouraging reflection and bringing insights into scholarly writing practices.

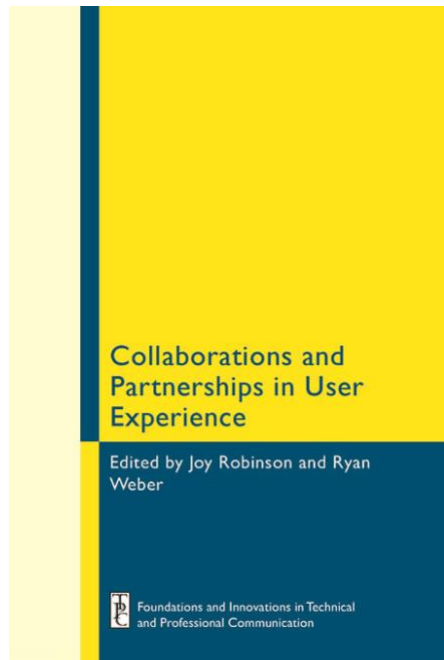
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Collaborations and Partnerships in User Experience

Editors: Joy Robinson & Ryan Weber

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Reviewed by

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Keywords: UX, user experience, TPC, collaboration

Collaborations and Partnerships in User Experience is part of a series of books, *The Foundations and Innovations in Technical and Professional Communication*, which focuses on innovative ideas and approaches to the field. The chapters in this book were compiled and edited by Joy Robinson and Ryan Weber, both established scholars in the fields of user experience (UX) and technical and professional communication (TPC).

The editors open the conversation with a pitch for better collaboration in UX by discussing the remarkably multi-disciplinary nature of UX. Indeed, any project that values UX will involve users, customers, engineers, and more. According to the editors, employers need to know that even though UX is often part of the undergraduate curriculum for aspiring software engineers and programmers, individuals with technical degrees would require a

much more complete understanding of UX to be as successful as someone with a TPC degree. After all, TPC is naturally steeped in reader and user advocacy.

The chapters of this book are organized in three parts: (1) Collaborations in Industry and the Academy, (2) Collaborations in Communities, and (3) Collaborating with Users. The book is dominated by the case study genre, which makes for an interesting read. The depth of reflection and quality of storytelling in the individual chapters brings each study to life.

The first part of the book, Collaborations in Industry and the Academy, opens with Chapter 1, an analysis of collaborations across industry and academia from Benjamin Lauren, Casey McArdle, Jennifer Ismirle, and Keith Instone. The authors examine the differences in expectations and experiences across these domains, noting that professional responsibilities and reward systems are a powerful motivator that naturally affects collaboration. This chapter is notable for its strong research methodology. Findings highlight the challenges of growing and sustaining a network of academic-industry partnerships. The two chapters that follow describe specific contexts. In Chapter 2, Richard Douglas Divine and Mark Zachry describe the post-mortem analysis of a project with activity-based documentation deficits they felt could have been managed by a UX professional because of their unique skill set. Chapter 3 by Heather Noel Turner, Laura Gonzáles, and Liza Potts describes a collaboration between members of a UX professional organization and academia. The study engaged feminist frameworks in its research and analysis methods. The feminist perspective is recognized by Human Computer Interaction theorists as part of a third wave of digital technology integration into the lives of humans where the first wave was defined by human factors, and the second wave was defined by social computing and collaboration (Bødker, 2006). The third wave is defined by engagement with human values, such as feminism, with an active critical component that asks: Who designs what and for whom?

Collaboratively engaged scholars in TPC will likely appreciate the deeply personal description of a university UX research center in Chapter 4 by John Spartz. The center closed five years after opening due to the many challenges in maintaining a continuous pipeline of collaborative industry partners and projects for students. According to Spartz, one of the main issues was the *cadence mismatch* between industry and the academy related to timing—from semester calendars to the reality of promotion/tenure clocks and the cyclical nature of university budgeting processes.

The second part of the book, Collaborations in Communities, describes service-learning projects with industry partners. Such collaborations have the potential to be

transformative learning experiences for the student as defined in Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013).

The first three chapters in this part describe student-community collaborations in detail. Chapter 5 by Billy Kangas and Chalice Randazzo features an extensive review of the community partnership literature. This chapter describes projects involving undergraduate students while Chapters 6 and 7, both by Missie Smith and Felicia Chong, describe and then reflect upon a project involving graduate students. Both noted the importance of flexibility and working *with* partners, not just alongside them. A main takeaway from the Smith and Chong project was that *the experience* of the project was a better description of the success of the collaboration than the quality of the final delivered product.

Chapter 8 by Sushil K. Oswal, Zsuzsanna B. Palmer, and Rita Koris describes a simulated service-learning project. This simulated project may interest instructors who rely on their network of industry colleagues for service-learning projects—which will not always yield appropriate projects. In that case, a simulation may be the next best thing, but care must be taken to ensure a significant learning experience for students. The researchers advise grounding a simulation in student-to-student collaborations that immerse students in specialized TPC topics.

The final three chapters of this part of the book address the challenges in developing and maintaining a network of potential community collaborators for project-based learning. All three of these chapters describe a need to ensure that the curriculum for courses involving community collaboration remain flexible in order to reflect the natural pace of problem-solving in the engaged community. First, in Chapter 9, Tatiana Batova recommends engaging with the *Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network* (EPIC-N). EPIC-N is a repository for completed projects and resources in education-community partnerships. EPIC-N projects are not inherently UX, but technology is often an appropriate solution to problems with great complexity. Next, in Chapter 10, Ashley Patriarca and Kristin Williams describe an ongoing opportunity for students to participate in a complex UX partnership as usability analysts of their university's website. In Chapter 11, Joseph Robertshaw describes a similar partnership along with a list of lessons learned, and it is a must-read for anyone interested in the details of this type of collaboration. Overall, the chapters in this section of the book offer the reader a true appreciation for the complexity of UX collaborations.

The third part of the book, *Collaborating with Users*, describes contextual use-cases in collaborative work. Chapter 12 describes how Amelia Chesley and Cody Reimer used the platform Twitch to demonstrate how user research can be done outside of the constraints

Stella on Robinson & Weber

of the usability lab. This metaphor can be used in the field of online gaming and beyond. Chapters 14 and 15, by Jeffrey M. Gerding and Kirk St. Amant respectively, explore UX collaborations with vulnerable users, emphasizing empathy and compassion. Empathy is a core skill that UX researchers must develop—they need it to create useful personas, journey maps, and other UX research artifacts. These researchers suggest that empathy is enhanced considerably in trust-based collaborations that emphasize humanism, compassion, and mutual respect. The material in this section of the book explores vulnerable users, so references to researchers such as Rosanna Bellini and Sunny Consolvo might also be useful to readers (Bellini et al., 2024).

The chapters by Ginnifer Mastarone (Chapter 18) and Eric J. York (Chapter 13) describe engaging stakeholders and users alike with a human-centered, collaborative UX practice. Mastarone emphasizes strategic involvement at different parts of a project. York takes a higher-level approach by describing how rhetorical and hermeneutic theory can contribute to a user-centered UX research practice.

The last two chapters in this part of the book describe specific tools used in UX research: feature flow analysis and empathy mapping. Feature flow analysis is a lightweight, iterative UX design method that focuses on one feature or task flow at a time. In Chapter 16, researchers Lane T. Lynn, Matthew R. Miller, Holly Lussenden, and Joy Robinson describe using feature flow analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue their design work despite the lack of in-person opportunities for collaboration. Chapter 17 by Sarah Summers and Renne D. Rogge describe a student project using empathy mapping, an analysis tool commonly used in UX design. To ensure the accessibility of the language used in the empathy map, STEM students turned to online forums for individuals with disabilities for feedback.

I highly recommend this book to anyone entering or working in UX and, more broadly, the field of Interaction Design. It may be especially interesting to students and instructors who engage in the valuable, albeit messy, business of service work and academy/industry partnerships.

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