

Quill & Ink

spring
2016



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Quill & Ink (quill-ink.com) is written, photographed, designed, and published seasonally by ScriptAcuity Studio.

Behind the Name

The quill represents creativity and self-expression, in the written word and also beyond it. Because the inky octopus utilizes a wide variety of tools in the course of its day and is associated with such attributes as adaptability, flexibility, diversity, focus, intuition, and transformation—among others—it thus seemed a fitting symbol for ScriptAcuity Studio.

A little disclaimer: all thoughts, opinions, expressions, and comments are simply our perspectives.

A Season of Renewal

Welcome, spring!

While admittedly those of us on the planet who still find ourselves quite beleaguered by snow and ice at this time of year are not yet relishing the explosions of colorful flowers and the serenades of returning songbirds and the moist, rich perfumes emanating from the thawing earth that others of you are ... we at least know they are soon coming at last. It won't be long before we, too, will be able to venture outside barefoot, turn the soil up to smile at the sun, stow away our cumbersome winter survival gear, and meander a stream's edge in search of fragrant wildflowers heralding the arrival of milder days. Throwing the windows open to usher

in fresh breezes, visiting a farm to meet the sweet new arrivals, savoring a leisurely picnic in a beautiful place, and planting those seeds to kick-start that summer garden are a few of the countless ways we can spread our arms wide and embrace spring and all the renewal and rejuvenation it brings, joining with others in many parts of the world where the arrival of spring is cause for tremendous celebration.

Here's hoping you find more ways to welcome and rejoice in the new season!

S&C

—Sara and Chris



Visit ScriptAcuity Studio at scriptacuity.com.
Contact us by e-mail at editors@scriptacuity.com, or call us at (802) 578-6200.

Editors: More Than Just Spell Checkers

If we had a nickel for every time someone asked us, “Can’t people just run a spell check?” after they learn that we are editors, we would be able to edit others’ writing for fun instead of for our livelihood. Editing involves considerably more than ensuring proper spelling or even grammar—elements in which word-processing software applications, despite ongoing improvements, still cannot sufficiently manage. It even involves considerably more than aligning the manuscript with the conventions established by a particular style guide (see our Fall 2015 issue’s “On Style, Guides, and Style Guides” for more about that), which itself is much more involved than most people realize.

Take fact-checking as just one example. One of the roles of an editor is to ensure that the material presented is as accurate as possible. Is a company’s name truly stylized that way? Are block quotations used properly when necessary? Does a person’s name and/or spelling of the name suddenly

change? Is that URL listed in the manuscript actually valid? Does the author properly provide a citation for quoted material? Would someone have really used the word *infusorian* in the first part of the nineteenth century? (The answer would be no; the term was not coined until 1859.)

Even fiction is expected to conform to real-world facts and maintain genuine plausibility. Would the sun really be coming from that direction at that time of day? Does it truly take approximately that long to fly from Seattle to Orlando? Was August 22, 1898, really a Monday? Would firefighters engaged in high-rise operations really approach a firefight with that particular tactic? It is even recommended that editors sketch out fictitious towns, complete with repeatedly mentioned streets and landmarks, to ensure that various details provided within the story are consistent and logical.

Then, of course, there are the elements concerning narrative voice, language choice, sensory

descriptions, plot and character development, pacing, overall style, eliminating ambiguity, and other key components of the text.

So no, people can’t just run a spell check.

The key takeaway is that editing encompasses far more than concern for spelling. We partner with clients to help them create their best possible work. We are not simply grammar police or syntax enforcement professionals; we team up with writers to help them achieve their best work and to facilitate their readers in the enjoyment of that work. Ultimately, we are all on the same side. By working with writers to increase their work’s clarity, editors can help writers to present themselves and their message accurately and convey credibility. The bottom line is that editors help writers to create their best possible product.

What spell check can do that? ▪

Incredible Octopus!

Our octopus mascot represents a number of important elements to our work, as is described in the “Behind the Name” panel on page 1. This fascinating creature continues to inspire awe and enchantment in people around the world as knowledge about the species increases.

It is an outstanding survivalist, having adapted to employ mind-boggling camouflage tactics and skin textural changes to blend into its surroundings

with breathtaking seamlessness—this though it is color blind. It even has mastered the compelling art of shape-shifting to beguile its predators, transforming its appearance to convincingly resemble such venomous sea-dwelling creatures as jellyfish, sea snakes, flatfish, and spiky lionfish. Skilled in the use of weaponry, it can squirt a highly irritating ink at attackers and also tear the vicious tentacles from a Portuguese man o’ war and flail them about in self-defense. *En garde!* Failing that, this incredible invertebrate can sever an arm to distract a predator—closing off the sacrificed arm’s artery to reduce

the loss of its (blue!) blood pumped by its three hearts—while it flees to safety ... and then simply grow the arm back at its convenience. It can also walk on dry land when properly motivated. The ancient octopus is astoundingly intelligent, able to solve complex puzzles, play games, manipulate tools, navigate mazes, distinguish human faces, and escape captivity even from such enclosures as aquariums.

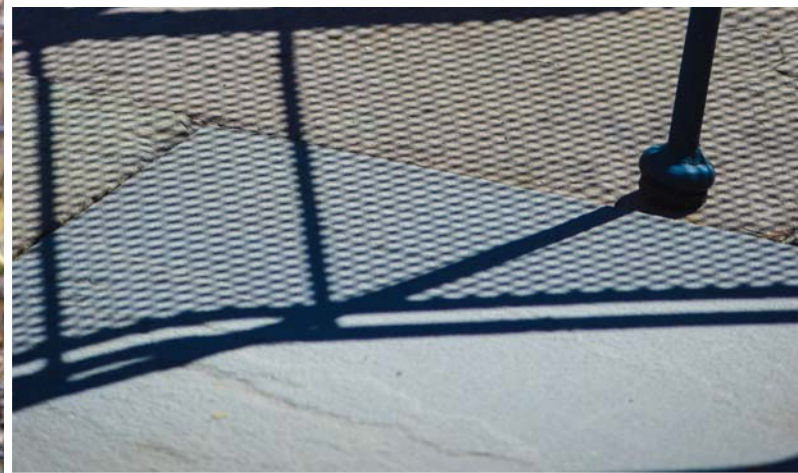
Endearingly, it is also a fastidious housekeeper and enjoys decorating! ▪



If Winter comes,



can Spring be far behind?



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Limiting Your Creativity

On a recent visit to Montreal, we were overwhelmed and awed by the city's sheer number of restaurants. (One source indicates there are more than 6,500 packed into this grouping of small islands!) Even strolling the distance between our bed-and-breakfast and the nearest metro station (about a twenty-minute walk), we passed dozens of tempting establishments—and this was along just one pleasant street on the outskirts of the city itself. Predictably, we found and enjoyed several outstanding places throughout the city, but for a while, there was almost a panic about where we would dine. It seems ridiculous to be burdened by having too many choices, but there it was.

Similarly, engaging in creative projects—and so many of the things we do have creative elements—with seemingly unlimited tools available to us can often cause us to freeze, stare blankly, or remain inactive.

Might writer's block actually be an example of having too many options—a sort of paralysis caused by indecision that is itself a product of seemingly infinite possibilities? When a writer settles in to craft a story, for example, he or she is limited only by his or her imagination. How does one possibly choose the best path?

The processes through which you, as a writer, achieve your most creative work may be virtually limitless, and sometimes restricting yourself might be a method to assist with your endeavors. For example, you might choose to have someone assist you by establishing some major or minor elements of your story. What if you are given a list

of elements—such as situations, objects, or lines of dialogue—to include? What if someone writes a prompt for you to begin or gives you the beginning and end of a scene? The creative aspect might be how to incorporate these elements or how you fill in the blanks, and in some cases, as you write, you might find that you are incorporating some of those aspects in an unexpected or unintended way.

Recently, we picked up a copy of *Fiasco* (published by Bully Pulpit Games), and this illustrates an interesting take on limitations, creativity, and collaboration. On its basic level, *Fiasco* is a tabletop game for three to five people, though it's more of a collaborative storytelling session in which players each take on a role of a character in a situation. Players decide on a playset, which is essentially a list of thematic elements to incorporate into the game session. Consider that there are 144 elements in each playset, but only two elements are used per player (e.g., for a five-player session, there will be a total of ten of these elements in play). While that may not seem restrictive, given the huge number of possible combinations, here's where one such limitation element comes in: players roll four six-sided dice per player, and the values on the dice dictate which elements may be chosen. First, consider there's a chance that you may not roll a certain digit on the dice—that is, if you roll no ones, that limits the elements you can choose. As the remaining pool of dice dwindles, your selections become increasingly more limited, forcing you to choose elements to add to your session that may seem incongruous—but they may also inspire you to think

of new and interesting ways to use those elements.

The same can be said of any creative pursuit. Sometimes you have to improvise. What if you want to paint a landscape but are out of several of the colors you intended to use? What if you wish to build a table but have less wood or fewer nails or screws than you'd thought? What if you don't have some of the ingredients you need for a recipe? Improvisation might lead you down an unexpected path, and the rewards of that path might be far greater than you would have anticipated. Sometimes it might be best not to have too much of a good thing. ■

What We're Reading

Something else we hear a lot of people say is, "Since you read for work, you probably don't read for fun."

Surprisingly, that's not the case. We still do read for fun, though how much recreational reading we do can vary. Maybe not surprisingly, we still can't shut off our editor instincts, be they sniffing out typos or looking at other editors' style choices.

Here's a short list of some of what's on our nightstands and end tables:

Not a Matter of Love by Beth Alvarado

Ficciones by Jorge Luis Borges

The Way We Live Now by Anthony Trollope

Fear and Loathing at Rolling Stone: The Essential Writings of Hunter S. Thompson ■

