



*Quill
& Ink*

summer
2016

Quill & Ink

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.



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Time Marches

We've hit a lot of milestones in the past few months—both professionally and personally—to include that this issue of *Quill & Ink* marks the one-year anniversary of our seasonal publication.

And it's summer again already. While we've already experienced some weather that's been reminiscent of the previous season and other weather hinting at the warmer days ahead, we've been happy to get out and enjoy the extra daylight—both early in the morning and late in the evening. Even though this happens every year, it still feels odd to have light start filtering in from our east-facing windows shortly after 4:00 a.m., hearing birds beginning their calls. There is one bird in particular, whom we've named Tommy Bird because of his machine gun-like song, who often causes us to jump out of bed and close the windows so we can squeeze in just a tiny bit more rest. But we also know that Tommy Bird is singing his song so early because, after all, it is summer, there's daylight to burn, and those songs aren't going to sing themselves.

Whatever song you're singing today—and every day—make it your best!

S&C
—Sara and Chris



Milestones

In our everyday lives, we keep track of so many things—names, dates, numbers, and more. Some of these things are more important or meaningful than others, and some become more memorable because of time. But why do we quantify these events? Are they measures of time, to distinguish one event from another? Are they markers, like mileposts, to let us know how far we've come in our journeys? Maybe some of it is for nostalgia, some is a measure to mark the passage of time, and others represent landmarks and achievements.

In our business, we keep many records. While many of them are purely to ensure the smooth running of the enterprise (invoicing, scheduling, etc.), others are milestones to show us what ScriptAcuity Studio—now in its eighth year—has achieved. Here are some of those highlights as of the publication of this issue:

- More than 430 books edited
- More than 28 million words edited

That breaks down to one average-length book per week, every week, for eight years. (This doesn't include any of the reading we've done outside of the contexts of editing, be it research or for pleasure.) We've enjoyed many of the books we've read and learned a lot from quite a few of them. We've also been acknowledged in several of these works, as well. Considering how many people are involved in the publishing process (which we will describe further in an upcoming blog post), it's rare to see a copy editor acknowledged, and we are grateful for

these mentions.

But aside from work, we've also had personal milestones; we celebrated Chris's fortieth birthday not long ago. While many people feel a sense of shock when the tens digit of age rolls over, we've both always looked at age as just a marker—but that doesn't mean we don't try to celebrate our birthdays in ways that make us happy (e.g., cake!).

continued on page 3



ABOVE: See acknowledgments from two recent titles.
LEFT AND BELOW: This amazing culinary masterpiece was courtesy of Danielle Devlin at BakeAria (www.bakearia.com).



MILESTONES

from page 2

Also, Sara recently attended her twentieth-year high school reunion.

Additionally, other personal milestones include the ten-year mark since we built our home in this pretty little area near Lake Champlain. A short while ago, both of us also achieved the rank of blue belt in one of the several forms of martial arts we study together—in this case, our blue belts officially classify us as skilled martial artists and place us firmly in advanced curriculum.

There are others, too, but perhaps it is more important to simply regard even seemingly everyday events and occurrences as milestones to be regaled and celebrated. By definition, in fact, a milestone is “a significant point in any progress or development.” Three sunny days in a row? A milestone! Perfecting a recipe we’ve been experimenting with for months? Writing something we’re pleased with?



Acquiring some new knowledge we’ve been actively pursuing? All milestones in their own ways!

We should always find ways to celebrate events in our lives, and sometimes those events, though small, may be right in front of us.

Happy celebrating! ▪

ABOVE: Says Sara, “There I am!” (Class reunion photo courtesy of Heather Cutler, author of the blog *Fine Lines & Wisdom* — finelinesandwisdom.wordpress.com.)

The Synergy of Writers and Editors

One of the more challenging aspects of editing is critiquing manuscripts and making suggestions, particularly in works of fiction. In some cases, it’s easier to explain to an author why he or she may wish to consider making revisions: a character’s name changes throughout the manuscript; a substantial plot hole brings the entire story line into question; anachronisms in time and place are found in the setting and details. But what about when elements of a manuscript are of a less concrete, direct, or factual nature? That’s when it gets tricky.

Here are some examples:

- Are a character’s thoughts or actions contrary to his or her established behavior? (An author might feel this shows a shift or intentional departure from a character’s usual demeanor.)
- Does a plot element or character seem hackneyed? (An author might hold that his or her audience is looking for easily identifiable or relatable elements and conventions, such as a story that wraps up neatly or an archetypal character.)
- Is a plot handily resolved at the last minute from an unforeseen, convenient source,

such as deus ex machina or an unforeseen plot twist? (An author might contend that problems are often solved in unanticipated, surprising ways or by a character whom we expect least.)

This highlights the crux of the author-editor relationship. An editor should point out these elements, but the author may not necessarily wish to make all, some, or any of the suggested changes. Like any relationship, there may be struggles, compromises, and doubt, but there can also be a synergy

continued on page 4

that produces not only long-term collaboration but, more importantly, an amazing end result.

As editors, we try to be supportive of an author's effort both in writing and for putting that work forward for editing. But we also must review a manuscript with a critical eye and let the author know what we really think—even when it may be tough to hear.

As writers, it's easy to feel protective of our work. It would be strange not to feel this way, given the amount of time and heart we can invest in a project. But many writers legitimately want to improve their work, not just receive accolades—and especially not just receive criticism.

Think about how many titles are published every year. Bowker, a bibliographic information company, reported that over three hundred thousand traditionally published titles and over a million nontraditionally published titles were brought to market in 2013.¹

Submitting one's manuscript for editing—and especially a critique—is not easy for many authors, even for those who have had their work published before or have previously worked with writing groups. We try to do our best possible work and present our comments in a constructive way, and this approach has worked well for us, because we've had repeat work from authors whose books we've edited.

The relationship between writers and editors works in both directions—writers and editors benefit from each other to craft the best product. ■

¹ http://media.bowker.com/documents/bowker-isbn_output_2002_2013.pdf.

A Colorful Approach to Editing

Editorial consulting—mechanical editing in particular—requires meticulous attention to detail, and for many, there is also the temptation (some would even argue the obligation) to be a consummate stickler for absolute adherence to the standard to which the manuscript is expected to conform. After all, one of the responsibilities of a copy editor is arguably to ensure conformance and consistency with the publishing industry's exacting standards in order to bolster the perceived legitimacy and polish of the finished product in the marketplace (critics, as we all know, can be brutal). To do otherwise could be perceived as falling asleep at the wheel, right?

And in some ways, adopting and implementing such a staunch, black-and-white approach is easier for the dutiful editor.

Why?

Because while committing to memory the many, many thousands of rules contained within, just as one example, *The Chicago Manual of Style's* 1,026 pages—and having to look up the rest of them—may initially feel daunting, once an editor has developed an expert level of familiarity with them, many revisions to text become automatic, second nature. Stopping to make several such revisions in every single sentence of every single page in what can be a manuscript of many hundreds of pages requires patience and diligence, but some lucky editors can also find something of a meditative flow with it.

Contrast this with editing a manuscript written by an author publishing with a particular publisher who wants a number of specific stylistic choices to remain untouched in his or

continued on page 5



COLORFUL

continued from page 4

her work—even though such stylistic choices are contrary to the style guide’s prescriptions and may even be inconsistent throughout the author’s own work. Now the mechanical edit shifts into a game of memory and of seemingly endless judgment calls; there is no definitive page and section number of a style guide to which editors can refer when they want to reinforce or defend their decisions with regard to the edited content. This may quickly become uncomfortably rocky and gnarled terrain to tread along the editing trail. And considering that many editors are generally working on multiple manuscripts with ever-rolling deadlines in various stages of completion from a variety of clients, many of which were written by a number of authors who all insist upon certain—and different—exceptions to *CMS* and other style guides, it is easy to understand why many beleaguered editors prefer to simply adopt a “*CMS* or bust” approach to their work. Otherwise, keeping countless deviations straight in

their minds amid all these constantly shifting variables may rapidly become a logistical nightmare. Editors are but humans, after all.

This, however, does not align with another critically important element in editorial work: flexibility.

As we discussed in our summer 2015 issue of *Quill & Ink*, editing is also about respecting voice and style, and as we discussed in our fall 2015 issue, an editor’s role is, in essence, to assist the readers with interpreting what is written.

So though it may be tricky at times to keep so many deviations from the standard in mind at one time and in the midst of copious simultaneous projects, an editor will always do well to remember that the job at hand is to team up with writers to help them achieve their best work and to facilitate their readers in the enjoyment of that work.

It may be far easier to adopt a black-and-white approach to editing, but in the end, are not many things also beautiful in color? ■



