



Society Strategies

Federation of Genealogical Societies

P.O. Box 200940 Austin TX 78720-0940

Series Set I Number 22

September 2000

Set I Strategies for Societies

Editing and Proofreading Society Publications

by Kay Haviland Freilich, CG

Supplemental Page

This strategy paper, written some years ago, is an FGS *Classic* that contains ideas and strategies still relevant today in society management.

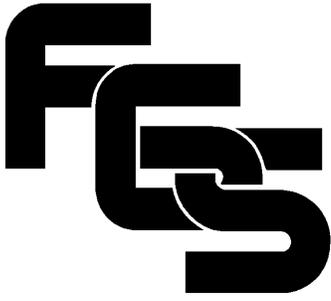
Print or electronic, editing and proofreading skills never go out of style.

The ground rules for establishing style sheets, and guidelines for the establishment of publication procedures for all society publications are presented in this paper.

The information on page 4 which directs the interested person on how to obtain copies of this paper is incorrect. The FGS office no longer reprints the SSS papers, and has phased out paper copies of the SSS papers altogether.

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Set I Strategies for Societies Editing and Proofreading Society Publications by Kay Haviland Freilich, CG

INTRODUCTION

At last—the copy for your latest society publication is ready for the printers! Or is it? Has that copy been edited and proofread? No publication should leave the society office until it has gone through these two final, important steps.

Editing and proofing are the steps that give your publications their polish. They are the steps that will make your publications look professional. Taking the time for them helps put your society's best foot forward.

Every society should establish a procedure for editing and proofreading *all* society publications. The newsletter, quarterly, or journal obviously should be on this list. Other publications include membership brochures, flyers advertising a special event, letters requesting donations, and press releases.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

If your society has a publications committee, it can oversee the editing and proofreading steps as part of its charge. If not, perhaps an individual will volunteer or can be convinced to undertake this duty. Previous experience in the publishing business is not necessary, though it might be helpful.

Realize at the beginning that this is not a one person job. Certainly an author should not serve as his own editor or proofreader. Many publications try to have two or three readers involved because experience has shown that each will find different things.

THE STYLE SHEET

So that the editors and proofreaders have a guide as they work, create a society style sheet. Have the people who work on publications get together and make decisions about style, then commit these choices to paper for everyone to use. A style sheet will provide consistency in all published materials. A style sheet might cover points like:

- **Citations:** Which style will be used? Endnotes or footnotes?
- **Abbreviations:** Will they be used in the text or only in citations, or not at all? Will state names and the names of months be abbreviated or written out?
- **Numbers:** Which numbers will be written as words? One to ten? One to twenty? One to ninety-nine?
- **Punctuation:** Will serial commas be used or not? Census, court, and probate or census, court and probate.

Editing and Proofreading Society Publications

- **Style reference:** What reference will determine basic editing questions? *Chicago Manual of Style* is used in many publications. For genealogical questions, *Evidence: Citation and Analysis for the Genealogist* is a good choice.

A copy of the style sheet should be given to prospective authors. With the information available to them when they start writing, the job of the editor and proofreader will be easier.

PROOFREADERS' MARKS

The use of standard proofreaders' marks can help the editing/proofreading process. These marks have the same meaning for everyone, so it will be easy to understand the suggested changes. A few of the most common marks are:

	New paragraph
	Add space
	Transpose
	Period
	Close (eliminate space)
	Lower case letter
	Insert
	Upper case letter
	Delete
	Indent

THE EDITOR'S TASKS

Once an author has finished writing, the copy should be given to an editor. It's easier to work with double-spaced copy because there is room to make corrections and suggestions. The editor strives to improve the manuscript while letting the

voice of the author remain. Put another way, the job of the editor is to make an author look good.

The editor should review the manuscript for:

- **Clarity:** Is the material presented logically? Is it written to the reader's level of knowledge? Is it understandable?
- **Genealogical Standards:** Is the material documented according to current standards? Are facts and theory separated and labeled? Are quotations presented exactly as they appear in the original?
- **Consistency:** Is the same spelling used for the same proper name? Is the correct spelling used for proper nouns? Are references to a single date the same?
- **Grammar:** Is punctuation used correctly? Do subjects and verbs agree in number? Is the tense of verbs consistent?
- **Spelling and Typographical Errors:** Have words not in spell check been verified? Do the *right* words appear? Should it be *to* or *too*? Are the dates correct? Have title captions, footnotes, endnotes, and references been checked? Mistakes happen in titles, too, and they are the first thing the reader sees. Also check the text in tables and photo captions.
- **Style:** Is a consistent form used for such things as abbreviations, dates, citation style, and use of commas? Here the society style sheet can be helpful.

In this computer age, it's also necessary to check for "leftovers." There are always words in a text that refer to words before or after them. Sometimes one word is changed, but the other is left as it was—hence the name "leftover." As an example, suppose a sentence includes the word *men*. A later sentence might mention *they*. If the word *men* is changed to *man*, the second word needs to be changed to *he*. These words are not next to each other in the text, so it's easy to overlook the second change.

Editing and Proofreading Society Publications

Style Sheet for Our Society Publications

<p>[A] Abbreviations: do not use, write words out.</p>	<p>[B] Book Titles: Italicize titles of books and periodicals</p>	<p>[C] Commas: use serial commas: red, white, and blue Citations: use footnotes</p>	<p>[D] Dates: write out as 4 July 1776 (no commas before or after year) Dates: 1770s (no apostrophe)</p>	<p>[E] Emphasized Words: denote with italics but use sparingly</p>
<p>[F]</p>	<p>[G] Generation numbers: italics, superscript</p>	<p>[H]</p>	<p>[I] Initials: Space between initials in a name, i.e., S. J. Jones</p>	<p>[J] Junior: write out, no commas before or after</p>
<p>[K]</p>	<p>[L]</p>	<p>[M] Measurements: three-by-five inches; two-thirds</p>	<p>[N] Numbers: write out one to ten, use numbers for others</p>	<p>[O]</p>
<p>[P] Postal codes for states: use only in complete addresses Postnomials: use small caps, no periods (FUGA, CG, MA) Punctuation marks: followed by one space only</p>	<p>[Q] Quotation marks: use “curly” quotes</p>	<p>[R]</p>	<p>[S] Senior: write out, no commas before or after SASE: use “an SASE,” not “a SASE”</p>	<p>[T] Titles: write out, Captain, Reverend Time: use small caps, no periods (AM, PM)</p>
<p>[U] Unknown names: [—?—] with em dash</p>	<p>[V]</p>	<p>[W]</p>	<p>[X,Y]</p>	<p>[Z]</p>

AUTHOR APPROVAL

Once the editor is finished, the revised copy should be returned to the author. This step gives the author a chance to be sure that suggested changes do not change the meaning. Any further changes are made and the new version—possibly in final format—is ready for the proofreader.

TASKS OF A PROOFREADER

The proofreader looks for all the things the editor does, and marks necessary changes on the copy. Ideally the proofreader has never seen the material before. It’s much easier to find mistakes when you are reading something for the first time than for the tenth. Any needed changes are made and the written piece is finally ready to print.

Editing and Proofreading Society Publications

If for some reason the society can locate only one person to help with publications, that person can serve as both editor and proofreader. At the very minimum, though, someone who has not read the material before should proofread it prior to printing.

CONCLUSION

Using an editor and proofreader for your society publications is not without difficulty. The extra steps add time to the process of preparing any manuscript. The extra positions require additional volunteers. Both time and volunteers are often in short supply. The benefit of improving your publications, though, make the effort worthwhile.

Suggested Reading

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. "The Editor's Craft." Column in each issue of the FGS publication *Genealogy Today* (formerly FGS FORUM.)

Earnest, Corrine and Russell. *Proof Before You Publish! 21 Checklists For Proofreading Genealogy Publications*. East Berlin, Pennsylvania: Russell D. Earnest Associates, 1997.

Sabin, William A. *The Gregg Reference Manual, Eighth Edition*. New York: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 1996.

Ross-Larson, Bruce. *Edit Yourself: A Manual for Everyone who Works with Words*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Venolia, Jan. *Rewrite Right! How to Revise Your Way to Better Writing*. Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1987.

General References

Chicago Manual of Style, 14th edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence: Citation and Analysis for the Genealogist*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1997.

*Note: This paper is partially based on the author's "Skill building: Polishing Our Everyday Writing," *OnBoard: Newsletter of the Board for Certification of Genealogists*, 4 (September 1998), page 24 and on her lecture "Editing and Proofreading to Get It Write Rite Right" at the 1999 FGS Conference in St. Louis.

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