

A Single Word: Introducing PEN's Inclusive Editing Series

by Kellie M. Hultgren



Do the words we recommend as professionals make a difference? As a member of the Professional Editors Network, you most likely answered yes—of course!

We work in this field, in our many different areas, because we know that language choices shape understanding. Thus, I'm excited to introduce *Networking News*' new series, Inclusive Editing, dedicated to understanding how writing can shut readers out or welcome them into a work.

As professionals, we pride ourselves on always learning, tracking the shifting streams of vocabulary and usage in order to help our clients communicate effectively with their readers. We not only catch errors but also explain what writers often don't have time to learn, and we offer a widely informed perspective for clients who are too close to the text or too distant from it to judge for themselves. However, we must be aware that as experts, our recommendations have the power to override writers' decisions—and if what we recommend is outdated or problematic, it is the writer who will bear criticism for bias.

In "**Beyond Terminology: Zooming Out to Focus on Bias**," Karen Yin, founder of *Conscious Style Guide*, writes, "Avoiding bias isn't incidental to an editor's job but central. . . . Once we think, 'Oh, this story sounds right, so it probably is right,' then we're in trouble. We're not doing our jobs when we've stopped critiquing something old with a fresh mind." I know I have made mistakes due to complacency or ignorance. My clients were gracious enough to educate me, but that should not be their responsibility. At best, I have wasted time and potentially lost trust by making changes the writer then had to undo. At worst, I could have hurt or discouraged the writer, or even made them feel pressured to bring a less-than-authentic voice to their own book. Inconsiderate edits have even caused people to step away from publication or writing entirely. None of us wants that.

We all know the answer to many language questions is "It depends." Inclusive editing is a logical extension of the nuance we need to help writers reach their audiences effectively. We find elements of this nuance in each of the four core values of **PEN's mission statement**:

- **Excellence:** When we are aware of and alert to how language is actually received by readers, regardless of intention, we can deliver accurate, clear, concise, and compelling communications to clients.
- **Inclusion:** When we identify and change practices and processes that shut some of our peers out of full participation, we embrace a diverse membership of all professionals who work with words.

- Education: When we are open to a multiplicity of perspectives and resist the lure of “how we’ve always done it,” we present learning opportunities to stay abreast of industry standards and changes.
- Community: When we listen to and learn from our colleagues, within PEN and in the larger writing world, and strive to expand our understanding of language and each other, we truly create and nurture a supportive community of professionals.

This series can serve all of those goals by strengthening our understanding and expanding our knowledge. But, as with every other newsletter feature, it depends on *your* input to do so. Have you researched a usage change or navigated resistance to change in a client, or yourself? Share what you’ve learned! Members have expressed interest in the following topics:

- Overview of industry style guides and how they support inclusive editing
- Introduction to or comparison of trusted resources or guides to complement style guides
- Understanding and avoiding unconscious bias
- How editorial approaches differ depending on context
- What an inclusive editing philosophy looks like
- How to deal with resistance from clients
- Handling terms from other languages in English text
- Editing for nonnative speakers of English
- Editing translations
- Specific editing considerations for:
 - Ethnicity, race, and nationality
 - Gender, sex, and sexuality
 - Ability and disability
 - Socioeconomic status
 - Religion
 - Appearance—size, skin conditions, etc.
 - Mental health

I look forward to this series because I cannot succeed as an editor if I stick only to what I know now. Worse, I can harm the people I set out to help by failing to learn. When I reach that single word at the end of a long day—or the biased phrase, or the unspoken assumption, or the exclusionary practice—I want to be able to make the right change.

To contribute your knowledge to this series, email editor@pensite.org.



PEN Stays Virtual for the New Season

by Madeleine Vasaly

It’s official: PEN will be all virtual for the coming season! At our annual planning meeting and in the poll conducted on PENchat, we asked you whether we should hold all our 2020–2021 events online or start off virtual and reassess midway through the season. The consensus was for going all online, and given the ongoing trends of the pandemic in the United States, the board agreed that was the responsible route regardless of whether local restrictions ease up in the new year.

We held our April and May meetings on Zoom using the meeting format. While this format is good for discussions, it has drawbacks when it comes to presentation-style meetings. For the majority of our meetings in the new season, we will be using Zoom’s webinar format, which is

more conducive to a speaker-audience dynamic. Attendees will still be able to ask questions, but you'll do so using the Zoom Q&A feature rather than using video and audio.

In addition—as mentioned in the announcement email for our September 8 event, **Digital Proofreading Optimized**—we've changed the way we handle registration. We heard from several members that they didn't receive their Zoom confirmation emails for one or more of our spring meetings, and we've since heard from other organizations that they've experienced similar problems. To get around this, we've added a new registration system to the **PEN calendar** that will allow you to register right on our website instead of through Zoom. You will receive an immediate confirmation email directly from us so you know your registration went through. We will then send out the webinar link directly to all attendees the day before the meeting, rather than relying on Zoom's automated system.

We're happy that the virtual format will make it possible for more of our members to attend our events in real time. However, we do plan to record all of these meetings so that we can make them available in the **members-only section** of the website for anyone who can't attend on the day of the meeting or wants to review it later.

Our 2020–2021 schedule is below; there has been just one small change from the lineup sent out at the beginning of July, which is that the September and March meeting topics have traded places. Our fall and winter events are live on the PEN calendar now, and the spring events will follow shortly.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

September 2020

Digital Proofreading Optimized

October 2020

Defeating Imposter Syndrome in Your Editing Practice

November 2020

Editing Memoir

January 2021

Breaking into Developmental Editing

December 2020

Holiday Event (TBD)

February 2021

Identifying Knowledge Gaps in Your Editing

March 2021

Book Distribution for Self-Publishing Authors

April 2021

Editing Poetry

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Keep track of upcoming events.

You can easily add any PEN event to your iCal or Google calendar. Just click on the event in the **PEN calendar** and use the buttons just below the description to instantly import all details.

Follow us on social media!

If you haven't liked PEN on **Facebook** and followed us on **Twitter** and **Instagram**, what are you waiting for? By connecting on social media, you help more people discover us online—which can mean more people viewing your **directory** profile!

Join the conversation on PENchat.

PENchat is our members-only discussion group where you can ask and respond to work-related questions, share and find job and project leads, ask for help with software issues, and more. To post, send an email to **PEN@groups.io** or read and post messages at **groups.io/g/pen**. Remember to include at least one official PENchat hashtag in the subject line: **#biz**, **#chat**, **#events**, **#jobs**, **#scams**, **#tech**, and **#usage**.

WELCOME TO PEN

*The following word workers recently became new members. If they opted to create a listing in the directory, you can learn more about them at **pensite.org**. Type the member's last name into the search field, scroll to the bottom of the page, and click "SEARCH."*

Marie Vidger, Lino Lakes, Minnesota, just launched her business, Proofreading by Marie. She recently completed a course offered through Proofread Anywhere. Marie loves proofreading because it helps to exercise her appreciation for details and rules.

Erika Zabinski, Saint Paul, Minnesota, is an academic copyeditor and indexer. She has an MA in theology and specializes in theology, religion, and Russian history. She's grateful for a warm welcome at a test-the-waters visit to a recent PEN meeting and looks forward to connecting in-person with new colleagues, pandemic permitting.



Calendar

September 8 at 1:00 p.m. CDT—Digital Proofreading Optimized. Recent changes in the standard design tools make it worth (re)considering digital proofreading using Adobe Acrobat and how to make it work best for all involved. In this webinar, book designer Paul Nylander will share the pros and cons of digital markup, compare three paths through the digital jungle, and offer a peek behind the curtain to see how proofreader markup makes its way onto the typeset page. Learn more and register **on the event page**.

Scott Pearson is a full-time freelance writer and editor. His first professional fiction sale was *The Mailbox*, a *Minnesota Monthly* Tamarack Award winner in 1987. His first major editing project was 2003's *Will to Murder: The True Story Behind the Crimes and Trials Surrounding the Glensheen Killings*. He's had short stories and novellas published in genres such as horror, mystery, urban fantasy, and science fiction. After ten years as an in-house editor, he turned freelancer. He copyedits the *Star Trek* novel line from Simon & Schuster, a variety of titles for Baen Books, and the *Star Trek Adventures* role-playing game, and he also works with many independent authors.



What led you to editing as a career choice?

A series of accidents! I've pursued being a writer since high school but only started editing as a favor to a friend starting up a small press. After my daughter entered kindergarten and my stay-at-home-parent duties ended, I started looking for a job. A local publisher was hiring, and I had the editing experience from working with my friend. I was there for ten years until I was laid off—suddenly I was a freelance editor.

What is your editorial specialty?

Although I have more than ten years' experience in nonfiction, primarily military and aviation history, I've focused on science fiction and other genre fiction since going freelance about six years ago.

What has surprised you most about editing?

For one, the amount of satisfaction you can feel even though your efforts are entirely behind the scenes. Another is how much it has helped my own writing; the critical eye you develop as an editor can help you revise and polish your own work.

Which PEN events and aspects have been especially helpful?

I've not made it to many of the events, but I find the website and newsletter helpful, and I look forward to digging into the recordings and other materials archived on the site. Plus, it's nice to have approachable colleagues to ask for advice.

What is the best career advice you were given?

Since I stumbled into editing, it seems like I haven't received advice about it. I would just have to credit my college writing professor, the late, great Joe Maiolo, for teaching me so much about the craft of writing which, in the long run, informed my editing style.

Which project are you most proud of?

I can't pick just one. As a writer, my first pro sale and my first *Star Trek* sale were turning points. As an editor, *Will to Murder* is a standout, an ambitious project for which I did additional research for the appendix. I'm a huge space geek, so editing *The Space Shuttle: Celebrating Thirty Years of NASA's First Space Plane* meant a lot to me. And working on various *Star Trek* projects is a dream come true for a lifelong fan.

What are your go-to resources for professional development?

PEN is the starting point for any career research I do.

What editing tip do you have for other members?

I wrote about this in the August 2019 newsletter. I always create a custom dictionary from my style guide and then use that to run a spell check on the manuscript after I'm done copyediting. I've caught a lot of little things with that technique.

What has changed the most since you started editing?

The rise of independent authors self-publishing their work without the stigma of the old vanity-press industry is a big change. I've worked on manuscripts for indie writers that were as good as anything being published by traditional publishers.

What do you do when you aren't working?

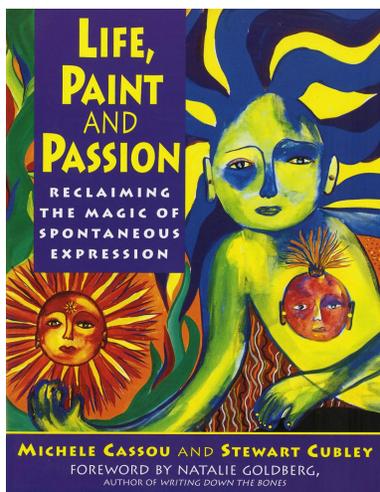
I read and watch movies; my wife and I like to watch foodie shows together. I work on my own writing. I have a long-suffering novel as well as a number of short stories, novellas, and self-publishing projects. My daughter and I do a podcast together called *Generations Geek*, available on most of the major streaming apps. I also have some websites and blogs which I don't post to enough.

What is the most surprising thing about you?

I've cowritten two IMAX space documentaries, *Space Next* and *Touch the Stars*, but neither of them has played in the Twin Cities, so I've only seen them on a monitor!

All Booked Up

*As editors and writers, many of us are also voracious readers, so we're bringing book reviews back to the PEN newsletter! All Booked Up is a revival of the "What are you reading?" column of newsletters past where members can submit short book reviews and reading recommendations for all kinds of books, genres, and topics. To submit, use this **form!***



***Life, Paint and Passion: Reclaiming the Magic of Spontaneous Expression* by Michele Cassou and Stewart Cubley** details artist and author Michele Cassou's artistic journey of discovering how the power of painting for the sake of the creative process, rather than trying to produce "art," freed her own creativity. Cassou writes in a conversational, down-to-earth style, as if she's talking to you over coffee. She talks about "the myth of inspiration" and instructs us to "just play," like children do, without judgment. She tells us how to overcome stumbling blocks, for instance, the belief that our paintings are ugly. She says, ". . . try intentionally painting an ugly painting. It can be an effective liberation from

the tyranny of good and bad." Other chapters cover inspiration, the negative tricks and crutches we use that hamper our artistic endeavors, the use of repetition, and self-censorship. For anyone interested in learning to explore and develop a creative practice, this is a wonderful, colorful book, and it's filled with many of Cassou's own paintings. The author reminds us that we are all creative, and have a need to express ourselves free from judgment. In the end she says, "Painting does not inhabit a limited compartment of life, but thrusts its roots and branches into the deepest parts of us, transforming our ways of being. . .

. A discovery made in any creative action will transfer spontaneously to another part of your life." —Carla Lomax



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