

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association
for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)

Documentary Editing, Association for

1980

The Editor and Word Processing Equipment

Larry I. Bland

George C. Marshall Research Foundation

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/docedit>

 Part of the [Digital Humanities Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), and the [Technical and Professional Writing Commons](#)

Bland, Larry I., "The Editor and Word Processing Equipment" (1980). *Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)*. Paper 125.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/docedit/125>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Documentary Editing, Association for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing (1979-2011) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Editor and Word Processing Equipment

LARRY I. BLAND*

The nature of the editor's task frequently forces her to acquire greater knowledge of book production than the normal author, who gladly relinquishes technical worries to the publisher's staff. Necessity is frequently the chief motivating factor and osmosis the method in the editor's acquisition of this esoteric knowledge. Not surprisingly, given the financial resources involved, editors in the commercial sector have been quicker to adopt the latest technology to their tasks than have editors in the low-budget, subsidized, money-losing academic sector. The documentary editor, if she or he hopes somehow to cope with income evaporation and cost inflation, must familiarize herself with the printing industry's new word processing technology, the phototypesetter and the editing terminal or video display terminal (VDT).

The basic printing process developed in the 1440s and 1450s by Johann Gutenberg and his contemporaries was to mold individual letters and symbols in a lead alloy, tie them together and press their inked surfaces against paper. The succeeding four hundred years witnessed modifications of machinery and technique but no basic change. The first major departure in type handling was Ottmar Mergenthaler's linotype machine, developed between 1876 and 1886. This machine greatly speeded composition, but it was still a hot metal process requiring skilled typesetters. The application of the computer to word processing (a jargon term here meaning only text preparation and printing) during the 1960s permitted a major breakthrough to cold type, or photocomposition, and offset printing. Except for specialty items, printing from metal type is dead.

In December 1976 the National Science Foundation decided that it should introduce the publishers and editors of scientific and technical journals to electronic publishing. To that end it called representatives of about two hundred scientific, academic, and commercial publishing organizations together to solicit suggestions for a demonstration project. To its surprise, the NSF

discovered that many organizations had already introduced computer technology into their publications and the demonstration project idea was shelved. In fact, work on computer-based word processing and typesetting systems has been in progress for nearly twenty years. *Time* magazine installed a computer assisted editorial system in the mid-1960s. The first major use of video terminals came in 1970 at the offices of Associated Press and United Press International. But the real watershed was the installation by the *Detroit News* in 1972 of the first electronic newsroom. Since that time, nearly every daily newspaper, and some weeklies, in the United States has installed some kind of computerized typesetting system. Despite initial resistance to automation, most newspaper personnel have accepted the new technology. *Washington Star* columnist Mary McGrory refused to use the editing terminal for a year after it was installed. Later she remarked, "When I found you could erase a whole paragraph and insert words in an instant which would take ten minutes on a typewriter, I began to be addicted. Now I can even think on it." From the newspapers, the revolution has spread to magazines and journals, to government agencies, and now to the book publishers. One recent example of the possibilities with the new system is the unholy speed with which fat books were issued on Guyana's Jonestown mass suicide-murder; editing terminals are not programmed to control their owners' greed and bad taste.

The new electronic tools have made it possible to rethink and restructure the editorial process. Virtually everyone who has become acquainted with a good editing terminal agrees that it is a far better device than a typewriter. The keyboard is faster. It is easy to correct

Exemplary Citations

"The Electronic Revolution and the World Just Around the Corner," *Scholarly Publishing* 10 (1979):195-209.
Word Processing World, September 1977.
Fundamentals of Modern Photocomposition, by John W. Seybold (Media, Pa., n.d.).

— LARRY I. BLAND

*Larry I. Bland edits the papers of George C. Marshall at the George C. Marshall Research Foundation, in Lexington, Virginia. This paper was presented at the Association's 1979 meeting in Princeton, New Jersey.

mistakes or to change your mind and rework copy. It is easier to move copy around, since you always work with a clear version of your manuscript. It is possible to save the current version of part or all of the manuscript text while working on the improved version. A search capacity allows the author to find and replace words and phrases she wishes to check or change. Some of the newer systems check the words in a document against a relatively large dictionary for spelling accuracy, flagging words not in the dictionary as possible misspellings.

Although the new technology's capabilities are rapidly becoming more sophisticated, there are now two basic options available to most editors who wish to use the editing terminal. First, the editor can acquire a system with a typewriter output and produce a clean manuscript to be sent to the printer in the traditional manner. The second commonly available option for those who would like to avoid the printer's retyping job is to send the information on the disk or tape output of the editing terminal. (Obviously the editing project's equipment should be compatible with the printer's, although there are "black box" builders whose products permit interfacing between different terminals and typesetters. One such is the Shaffstall Corporation, 5292 E. 65th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46220.)

The editor can send the printer either uncoded or coded copy. In the first instance, the printer adds those few codes or format statements necessary to make the typesetting computer operate, but if the editing project does its own coding, no one stands between the editor and his galleys. Unless an editor is burdened with a forbiddingly complex book design, the typesetting codes are reasonably simple. The George Marshall Papers are being keyed into a Compugraphic Corporation Mini Disk Terminal, a low-cost (\$115 per month) system without a typewriter output capability. In the Compugraphic typesetting system, practically all of the type necessary for a book can be set with eight codes in addition to those that are simply keys on the keyboard. For example, a page of 10 point Italic, 2 points leaded, set 25 picas wide is coded as p10f2sl120sm2500. The typist rather than the editor can learn the less common codes for kerning letters, underlining, lining-through, super-scripting and the like.

Although the operation of Murphy's Law cannot be completely prevented, most editing terminals have code-storage capabilities that go a long way toward making coding Murphy-proof. For instance, at the beginning of every document, my typist strikes a key labeled "call format" and then the sequence "0,2,1,3,2." The editing terminal automatically inserts the codes that will instruct the typesetting computer to set 10 point type in two columns (one 27 picas wide for the document and one 25 picas wide set 1 pica right of the left margin for footnotes), to call up the first column, and to begin setting in bold face with two points of leading. By typing 'cf03/07,1,'

the typist prepares to type footnote 1: the film advances 7 points from the previous line, column two is called up, and the type is designated as 8 point. Similar predetermined format keys may be established for coding line-throughs, tables, large capitals (for example, at the beginning of chapters, where the type must run around the capital) and superscript characters. It is no longer necessary or even particularly convenient to make changes merely because the publisher does not wish to pay a printer for non-standard typesetting. Neither is the editor forced to modify complicated paragraph or sentence indentations or tabular material to suit typesetters. Coding increases the editor's control over the galleys and corrections by eliminating the printer's need to modify in any way the product the editor sends him. What you codes is what you gets.

In addition to the advantages it derives from its editing terminal, the George C. Marshall project is fortunate in dealing primarily with typed originals and easily read handwriting. The typist works directly from photocopies of the original documents, to which the editor has attached a form specifying the coding and annotation. Each document and its annotation is proofread twice against the VDT screen image. The printer returns galleys set precisely according to the editor's specifications. No one outside the project changes any character or code on the disks.

In contrast to the publishing costs, the price of word processing equipment is increasing at a rate below that of inflation, and in some cases costs are actually declining. This alone makes the application of word processing equipment to editing projects imperative. But equally important for an editor, the new technology gives her better control over the project. Naturally, each editor faces unique problems and constraints. The editing terminal and the phototypesetter open the door to numerous experiments. The Association for Documentary Editing was formed, in part, to encourage and to act as a clearing house for new ideas. Word processing equipment demands our attention.

Rhyme and Reason in Scholarly Publishing

. . . As we were leaving he hinted
That a student could hardly do less
Than see how the volumes were printed
At the time-honoured Clarendon Press.
So I went there with scholarly yearning,
And I gathered from kind Mr. Gell,
Some books were to stimulate learning,
And some were intended to sell.

— *Oxford Magazine*, 1892