

Professional Profile

Name: Kristin Vorce Duran

Number of years professional copyediting: 6

Professional history: Worked in-house at John Wiley & Sons and Hachette Book Group in New York before moving to Seattle and becoming a full-time freelancer

Specialisms: Trade fiction and nonfiction books

Professional bugbear: Excessive use of scare quotes

Reading for pleasure: Literary fiction and narrative nonfiction

Professional links: kristinvorce.com



1 GETTING STARTED

Q: How did you get your career off the ground?

I initially wanted to work in newspapers—I was an editor at my college paper and held internships at several newspapers. I instead found my first full-time job as an editorial assistant at John Wiley & Sons, and I discovered I loved working with books. After about a year and a half, I was promoted to project editor (another name for production editor).

While I was working at Wiley, I completed an MS in Publishing at New York University, where I learned about the business side of publishing—marketing, branding, finances, digital strategy. My NYU coursework also included copyediting and developmental editing classes. I started freelance copyediting and proofreading on the side, building and strengthening my connections at other publishing houses.

Then I moved over to Hachette Book Group, where I worked as a production editor, managing the copyediting and proofreading stages of adult trade fiction and nonfiction titles. This means I hired, supervised, and evaluated freelance copyeditors, proofreaders, and indexers. I collaborated with editors and designers

to keep all my books on schedule. I also copyedited and proofread cover copy and reviewed bound galleys.

When my family moved to Seattle, I felt prepared to freelance full-time. Most of my clients are in New York, but I also work for a few Seattle-based publishers.

2 IN-HOUSE COPYEDITING

Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in-house?

A major advantage of working in-house is the opportunity to learn from coworkers. I met very smart people at publishing houses, and I got to see how different editors tackle problems. It was great to easily get the opinion of a veteran editor when issues arose. When you are a freelancer, you need to actively build your network of mentors and peers. But you do have more freedom to set your hours and choose your projects.

Q: What advice would you give a budding copyeditor who is keen to find an in-house position?

Cast a wide net and start with internships. I had many writing and editing-related internships in college before I landed my first in-house job as an editorial assistant at Wiley.

Entry-level positions are very competitive, so don't be too picky starting out—your first job will probably not be working on bestsellers or literary fiction. But it will be an opportunity to learn as much as you can from people who have been in the business a lot longer than you. Show them your eagerness to learn and work hard. Pay attention to the details. If you demonstrate that you can complete even minor tasks with precision and care, they will be happy to give you more responsibilities.

3 FREELANCING

Q: What do you find hardest about being a freelancer and why?

Maintaining work-life balance. When I first started as a full-time freelancer, I said yes to nearly every project, and I quickly became buried in work and stressed out. It seems like a good problem to have—too much work—but then I found myself editing on the weekends and missing out on valuable time with friends and family. I've learned from my mistakes, though.

Now, before I accept any project, I estimate how many hours it will take to finish based on the genre and length of the work (either page count or word count). Then I fill in those hours on my work log for the upcoming weeks, planning exactly how long I will work each day. If you really plan out your work hours like this, it is clear when you must say no. And because I carefully track my *actual* working

hours (using an app called Toggl), I've learned to recognize patterns (certain types of books that take longer to edit), so my estimates continue to improve.

4 WORKING PRACTICES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Q: What style guides, manuals, or other editing books are on your virtual and literal bookshelf?

I have an ever-growing collection. Here are some of them:

- *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed. (online subscription and physical book)
- *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (online subscription and physical book)
- *Garner's Modern English Usage*, 4th ed.
- *The Copyeditor's Handbook* by Amy Einsohn
- *Recipes Into Type: A Handbook for Cookbook Writers and Editors*
- *The Subversive Copy Editor* by Carol Fisher Saller
- *But Can I Start a Sentence with "But"?: Advice from the Chicago Style Q&A*
- *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Q: How do you keep up with the latest usage trends? Can you recommend any particular resources?

I read copyediting blogs—CMOS Shop Talk, Copyediting.com, An American Editor.

I read the *Chicago* Q&A every month, and I'm always updating my collection of grammar books.

I follow other copyeditors on social media.

And when I'm editing I sometimes use the Google Books Ngram Viewer to compare the frequency of phrases in published works over time. It's a great way to see data on how people are actually using language.

Q: Besides knowing how use Track Changes in Microsoft Word, what tech skills should new copyeditors make an effort to learn?

I recommend that you learn about advanced search in Microsoft Word, including wildcards. Advanced searches can save a lot of time and improve the work of even the sharpest copyeditor.

I also use PowerGREP, a powerful tool that uses regular expressions and can search many documents at the same time. It takes time to learn and set up, but

now I have a library of searches that I run on every manuscript—for example, I run a search that will catch any opening quote mark without a matching end quote mark, a common error in fiction. (Yes, there are false positives, but sorting through a few false positives is a small price to pay for the guarantee of always catching certain egregious errors.)

You should also know how to mark up PDFs in Adobe Acrobat, since proofreading is often a way to start out as a freelancer. Some publishers want you to use the built-in Acrobat tools and others ask you to import stamps, but either way it's good to have a strong working knowledge of the software.

Q: Do you network with other editors? If so, how and why?

I'm on the programming committee of the Northwest Independent Editors Guild, and I attend the meetings and events in Seattle. When I lived in New York, I met a lot of fun book people in the Young to Publishing Group and as a volunteer at Housing Works Bookstore. I also made lasting connections through internships and in-house publishing jobs, and those friends introduced me to their editor friends.

This year I attended the American Copy Editors Society (ACES) conference in Portland, Oregon, where I learned a lot and had fun getting into book-nerd discussions with other editors. I am now convinced that periodically attending similar conferences is a good investment in my career.

5 THE FINAL WORD

Q: What are your top three tips for copyeditors who are just starting their careers?

1. Learn as much as you can from other editors.
2. When you are first building your client base, accept a wide range of work—any opportunity to edit is an opportunity to improve your craft.
3. If you make genuine connections and think about how you can help fellow editors, those people will be more likely to reciprocate when opportunities arise.