

EMBARK EDITORIAL AGENCY

Your copyediting
career starts here.

The Embark Q&A: Interviews with Professional Copy Editors

#6 January 2017

Professional Profile

Name: Rachel Henry

Job Title: Copy Editor, *The Daily Californian*

The Daily Californian is an independent, student-run newspaper published by the Independent Berkeley Students Publishing Company, Inc. *The Daily Californian* covers both the UC Berkeley campus and the city of Berkeley.



Established in 1871, *The Daily Cal* is run entirely by current or recently graduated UC Berkeley students.

Rachel contributes to *The Daily Cal* blog *Strikeout: Musings and Insights from the Copy Desk*. Check it out: <http://www.dailycal.org/section/blogs/grammar/>

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What is the function of the copy desk and its place within the newspaper's publishing process?

The copy desk serves as the ultimate grammar and style editing department. Everything that goes into the newspaper or online goes through the copy desk first. It is the copy desk's job to find and fix all grammatical and stylistic errors in articles.

How did you land the role on the copy desk?

I applied for a copy editor position my second year of college, having copyedited in high school. I took a copy test and was interviewed before being selected to be a copy editor for *The Daily Californian*.

What are your tasks as a copy editor on *The Daily Californian*?

As a copy editor, it is my job to edit news articles. It is also my job to google all proper nouns and make sure they are spelled and referenced correctly. All changes we copy editors make are done by means of Track Changes, and these changes become permanent once the article and the Track Changes have been seconded by either the night editor or assistant night editor. I then place the articles into *InCopy*ⁱ and headline them, adding subheads, **jump heads**ⁱⁱ, and photo captions where necessary.

What are the most and least enjoyable aspects of your role?

The most enjoyable aspect of my role is being able to read the news articles I am editing. It is a great way to stay up to date with on- and off-campus news. The least enjoyable aspect of my role is probably coming up with headlines for stories. Some headlines are very easy, but other times, the way the article is formatted in the paper makes it very difficult to come up with good headlines that fit into the allowed space.

In your experience, what errors are most common?

The most common errors are probably stylistic. Since we at *The Daily Cal* follow *AP Style*, many things that are not necessarily grammatically incorrect have to be corrected to follow *AP Style*. A common example would be that *The Daily Cal* does not use the Oxford comma.

What key skills have you learned during your time on the copy desk?

I have definitely become much more meticulous and detail-oriented. When I started out at the copy desk, it was more difficult to catch errors, but as time progressed, it became second-nature. My skills at headlining articles have also improved tremendously.

What's your most embarrassing / funny / horrifying copyediting story?

My first semester as a copy editor, one of my copy editing shifts was every Thursday from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm. One week, I had a midterm from 7 pm to 9 pm, and in the flurry of stress and last-minute studying, I completely forgot about my copy shift. I apologized profusely, and luckily I had a great night editor who didn't get upset with me, but I was beyond horrified. After that, I never accidentally missed a copy shift again, but I can say I'm still pretty embarrassed!

What are your top three tips for copy editors who want to work in a newsroom?

1. Know what you're getting yourself into. Being a copy editor can be a demanding job, depending on where you are working. Make sure you know what is expected of you before you accept a job as a copy editor.
2. Know your style guide. I can't stress this enough. The better you know your style guide, the more effective a copy editor you will be.
3. Have fun! You have an extremely important job, but that doesn't mean you can't have fun while doing it. My fellow copy editors are some of the best people I know, and I've made some of my most memorable experiences during college with other copy editors.

ⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adobe_InCopy

ⁱⁱ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/jump-head>