

**Chicago Writers Conference March Writers Night Out:
Secrets of Smart Self-Publishing Panel Discussion
Kim Bookless - March 3, 2014**

Editing for Self-Publishing Authors

- ✎ Editing is one of the most important parts of the publishing process--hire the best editor you can afford.
- ✎ Editors want the same thing you do: To help you produce a great book.
- ✎ Your editor may tell you things you don't want to hear, but you always have the final say.

The Publication Process:

Write manuscript in MS Word → developmental edit → copyedit → interior format → proofread → publish

The Three Basic Levels of Editing

1. **Developmental Editing** - Your manuscript probably needs to be developmentally edited.
 - Sometimes called content editing or substantive editing.
 - Should be done while writing the manuscript or right after it's complete.
 - Focused on improving the content, voice, etc.
 - Before beginning developmental editing, get a manuscript evaluation to learn your book's strengths, where it needs improvement, and how ready it is for publication.
 - Developmental editing can involve cutting, adding to, and rewriting parts of the manuscript – often all three.
 - A good developmental editor will improve your manuscript's content without compromising your voice or style.
 - If you're not a strong writer, consider hiring a writing coach or ghostwriter.
 - Skipping developmental editing makes copyediting more difficult & sometimes more costly.
2. **Copyediting** - Your manuscript definitely needs to be copyedited, preferably two rounds.
 - Sometimes called line editing.
 - Happens after developmental editing and before interior formatting.
 - Focused on mechanics – correcting errors, improving sentence construction and flow, etc.
 - Will highlight awkward phrasing, lack of clarity, repetition, etc.; may suggest rewrites.
 - Clarify the number of copyediting rounds before the project begins.
 - Discuss style guides up front, as well as anything else you want to the copyeditor to keep in mind while editing.
3. **Proofreading** - Your book definitely needs to be proofread at least once.
 - Happens after design but before publication.
 - Focused only on grammar/spelling/punctuation errors, and design issues.
 - Proofreading is the last chance to catch errors before your book is published.
 - Your copyeditor can proofread your manuscript but it's usually better to hire someone else.
 - Print books and ebooks are proofread separately.
 - Proofreading addresses only outright errors. Make sure all editing is finished before design begins; excessive changes at the proofreading stage can be costly and time-consuming.

Before you look for an editor

- Understand the three basic levels of editing.
- Ensure your manuscript is a MS Word file set in 12-point Times New Roman and double-spaced.
- Save images (photos, charts, graphs, etc.) as individual jpg or PDF files, separate from manuscript.
- Know your manuscript's word count because it directly impacts editing fees.
- Know when you'll be ready for the editor to start working on the manuscript; editors will need this start date and your target publishing date to determine whether they can take on your project.
- Understand and be able to explain who your audience is. Having clarity on this issue will be helpful in finding an editor who fits well with your project.
- Prepare yourself for constructive criticism – feedback, suggested changes, and advice.

How to choose a book editor

- Schedule an initial phone call to gauge compatibility and whether you'd work well together.
- If it helps your comfort level, ask for references.
- Most editors will ask you to send them your manuscript – this is a valid request. It helps editors determine if they are right for your project and also enables them to quote more accurate fees.
- An editor may tell you that your manuscript needs more editing or a higher level of editing than you anticipated. Keep an open mind and get a second opinion if you're unsure.
- Most editors will agree to a reasonable request for a short sample edit.
- Editing rates, fee structures, and contracts vary – have your attorney review agreements, contracts, etc., and address any concerns with the editor before signing.

How to work with a book editor

- Be prepared to pay an up-front deposit (usually 50% of the estimated total).
- Familiarize yourself with MS Word's Track Changes feature or ask your editor to explain it.
- Schedule a phone call before the project begins to discuss expectations, timeline, style guide, etc.
- Understand that editing is very labor-intensive. The timeframe is often fluid and delays sometimes occur. If you have a hard deadline, be sure to discuss it with the editor before the project begins.
- Be prepared for a few typos to sneak through – all books have errors, even traditionally published.

Finding professional book editors

- Contact me at kim@kimbookless.com for recommendations.
- Search Chicago Women in Publishing (CWIP) [Freelance Directory](#) or send a job listing to jobvine@cwip.org.
- Search Editorial Freelancers Association (EFA) [Member Directory](#) or send a job listing to www.the-efa.org/job/joblist_form.php.
- 5 Ways to Find the Right Freelance Book Editor (web article) janefriedman.com/2013/05/31/find-freelance-book-editor.

Resources

- *The Editor's Eye: A Practical Guide to Transforming Your Book from Good to Great*, by Stacy Ennis (available on Amazon as a print book and an ebook). <http://amzn.to/1b9pj5q>
- *The Fine Print of Self-Publishing: A Primer on Contracts, Printing Costs, Royalties, Distribution, Ebooks, and Marketing*, 2014 edition, by Mark Levine. www.bookpublisherscompared.com

Kim Bookless is a Chicago-based publishing consultant. She educates and guides authors through self-publishing, including copyediting manuscripts and project managing book production. She is an Executive Director at [Chicago Women in Publishing \(CWIP\)](#) and leads the [Chicago Self-Publishing Group](#).