

## **Editors—Who Needs Them? Panel Discussion Questions**

1. What do editors do? What is the editor's role?  
Carol Ranalli, Bob Nowacki, Diane Kirsten-Martin
2. What is the difference between editors and writers?  
Bob Nowacki, Lisa Braz
3. How will having an editor change your document development cycle and schedule?  
Caroline Arakelian, Carol Ranalli
4. How big does the writing group need to be before you think about adding an editor?  
Diane, Bob
5. What are the qualifications you should be looking for in an editor?  
Lisa, Carol, Diane
  - A. Skills
  - B. Personality traits (people skills)
  - C. Education and technical background
6. How do you gauge an editor's qualifications?  
Diane, Lisa, Carol
  - A. Interview questions
  - B. Tests
  - C. Editing samples
7. How is managing an editor different from managing a writer?  
Lisa, Caroline

## Who Needs Editors? Everybody!

Here's what editors can do for your department that no one else can do: (1) bring all your documentation up to at least a basic standard of quality; (2) make all the chapters in a book sound like they were written by the same person; (2) give all the docs in the doc set a consistent tone, addressing the same intended reader; (3) create a style guide and by doing so, create a house style.

### Types of Edit

*Developmental Edit:* The concerns are (1) the composition of the document: how its chapters, topics, and sections are organized; (2) the role of the document: how it fits into the larger organization of the whole doc set, including other manuals, online help, release notes, and so on; (3) a head start on correcting global copy-editing and formatting mistakes. Developmental edits should occur early in the document development cycle.

*Copy Edit:* The concerns are (1) writing style: tone, grammar, word usage, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, consistency, technical accuracy, styling of numbers, and so on; and (2) formatting style: fonts, character and paragraph styles, illustrations, headers and footers, and issues that affect how easily the documentation can be ported into different delivery formats, such as HTML and PDF. Copy edits should occur at beta, or when the doc goes out for technical review.

*Final Edit/Proof:* The concerns are (1) to verify that copy edits have been incorporated correctly; and (2) to correct new errors introduced when technical review comments were incorporated. Final edits should occur right before the document is published.

### Recommended References

URLs for Web style:

<http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/>

Addresses the practical concerns of bending and adapting a relatively primitive authoring and layout tool (HTML) to purposes it was never really intended to serve (graphic page design).

<http://www.Sun.COM/sun-on-net/uidesign/>

Jakob Nielsen's "Interface Design for Sun's WWW Site," in *Sun on the Net*, an e-zine.

Style guides:

*Chicago Manual of Style*. 14th ed. 1993.

Sun Microsystems. *Read Me First! A Style Guide for the Computer Industry*. 1996.

*Words Into Type*. 3d ed. 1974.

*Xerox Publishing Standards: A Manual of Style and Design*. 1988.

Computer dictionaries:

*Microsoft Press Computer Dictionary*. 2d ed. 1994.

Raymond, Eric S., ed. *The New Hacker's Dictionary*. 2d ed. 1993.

Williams, Robin. *Jargon: An Informal Dictionary of Computer Terms*. 1993

Scientific dictionaries:

*IEEE Standard Dictionary of Electrical and Electronics Terms*. 5th ed. 1993.

*McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms*. 5th ed. 1993.

Marcus, John. *McGraw-Hill Electronics Dictionary*. 5th ed. 1994.