

The BELS Letter

Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

Promoting editorial proficiency in the life sciences



From the President

Happy Holidays from BELS! However you choose to celebrate, I hope you're staying healthy and safe and enjoying time with family and friends.

In this issue, we're introducing a new feature, Ask the Editors. If you have a question or conundrum on which you'd like additional input, email it to info@bels.org, and we'll ask the membership to weigh in. You can find the first question and responses on page 3.

This issue also includes a Holiday Gift Guide. Beginning on page 5, you'll find

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The BELS Letter

Karen Stanwood, ELS
(with Eevee)
Managing Editor



Alex Rudie
Publications Coordinator

From the President

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both fun and practical gifts for your favorite editor, even if that's yourself!

Finally, we realize that not everyone is working from home right now, so we've updated the Work From Home Gallery to a BELS Gallery. In addition to photos of your pets and kids, send us photos of your much-loved mug, pen, or plant. We can't wait to see!

*Kristina Wasson-Blader, PhD, ELS
BELS President*

Send in Your Poll Questions!

We welcome YOUR editing-related question for a future poll! Check out past questions [here](#) and email yours to Jane Krauhs, PhD, ELS(D) at jmkrauhs@comcast.net.



Call for Volunteers

Do YOU want to get more involved with BELS? Consider volunteering for a committee!

Committees include:

- Budget and finance
- Membership and marketing
- Certification exam development
- Diplomate exam development
- Exam administration

Worried you don't have the bandwidth? Concerned about having the right expertise? Send us an email at info@bels.org, and let's talk about it! If you're ready to sign up, submit an interest form [here](#).



Ask the Editors

“My organization is embarking on an efficiency push. I’m worried that because Microsoft Word lets multiple authors work in a document at the same time, they are going to have copyediting occur while the authors are still working. My boss has my back on this, agreeing that production should be linear with copyediting as the final step, except for a possible executive review. But, another department has authors and the copyeditor working at the same time. What are your thoughts on protecting copyediting as the last step that happens only after the document is complete?”

Anonymous

“This is definitely an interesting conundrum. On the one hand, if the author is still working on the document, you could end up doing several rounds of copyediting on the same manuscript, resulting in some potentially wasted time. On the other hand, it seems wasteful to ‘skip over’ copyediting-type changes during, say, language editing because you know or expect someone down the line will focus on those changes. Finally, each journal seems to have its own way of approaching copyediting based on its style guide, which can make it difficult for an editor who works across multiple journals or independent of journals, and complicates matters further if the author then switches journals after rejection. I wonder how the emerging preprint world will affect copyediting, as those articles are ‘published’ prior to peer review. I would love to hear other members thoughts on this topic!”

Carrie Thurber, ELS

“My opinion: I have found it to be a nightmare to spend time copyediting a document while the authors are still working on it. I have spent quite a bit of time on first drafts getting them into publishable form, only to receive subsequent versions with authors’ revisions that may require renumbering references, adding abbreviations, and changing multiple style points and data for consistency throughout the document. I make it a rule not to agree to copyedit a document until all the authors have signed off on it, the document has gone through peer review and been accepted, and my job is to copyedit for clarity, consistency, and house style.”

Amy W. Redmon-Norwood, MA, ELS

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Ask the Editors

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“I am currently working on a project that deals with only post-acceptance papers. Sometimes, the accepted papers that come in may not be of the best quality. For such cases, I follow a three-sentence rule: If the accepted paper has more than three sentences/phrases that are unclear, I prefer adding my comments and sending them back to the authors (or the publisher) for revision. It may not be a good idea to send the manuscript to the typesetter in such cases and will unnecessarily delay the publication process.”

Simona Cyril Fernandes, ELS

“I agree that copyediting a document that is still in progress from a content perspective is not desirable. It almost guarantees that some of your work is going to be wasted. My department (of authors’ editors) only does this if there is an extremely tight deadline, and even then, we edit material piece by piece as it is finished, not material that is still being worked on.”

Stephen N. Palmer, PhD, ELS

“As to editing before the text is complete, I just make sure that I understand exactly what the authors want from me. Sometimes they need a draft edit just to see what they still have left to do, and I’m happy to provide that. What I find frustrating is when authors (who have access to or can find their/my work in our shared workspace) go behind me and “clean up” before I have released the document back to them. They don’t understand that editing is not a linear process, at least not the way I do it. If I feel comfortable using a little humor, I tell them that my cat chasing her tail is cute, but in editing not so much.”

Loretta Joy Bohn, ELS

Have a Question for Ask the Editors?

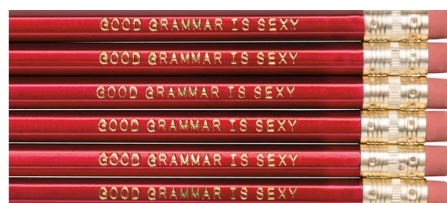
Email your question or topic to info@bels.org, and we’ll crowdsource BELS members’ thoughts, opinions, and answers.

Holiday Gift Guide for Editors

Are you wondering what to get your favorite, hard-working editor for a holiday gift? Look no further: We've rounded up 11 editing- and literary-related items to make gift-giving easier! (Why 11? Because we couldn't pick just 10!)

*Karen Stanwood, ELS
Managing Editor*

1



“Good Grammar Is Sexy” pencils from Frankie & Claude (\$9.95)

<https://bit.ly/2lPSZ58>

4



“An Apostrophe Does Not Make That Word Plural” T-shirt from Grammatical Art (\$15–25)

<https://bit.ly/395TFOy>

2



“I’m Silently Correcting Your Grammar” face mask by Passion Loft on Fine Art America (\$15.50)

<https://bit.ly/32ZF3wI>

5



“Readers Cabernet Sauvignon” wine from J. Bookwalter Winery (\$28)

<https://bit.ly/3pRK8kv>

3



Punctuation throw pillow by lilcubby on Spoonflower (from \$42)

<https://bit.ly/36NTMMg>

6



“Editors’ Blend” tea bags from Murchie’s Fine Tea and Coffee (from \$4.95)

<https://bit.ly/35Vizp>

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Holiday Gift Guide for Editors

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“No. 2 Pencil” socks by Foot Traffic on ModSock (\$10)

<https://bit.ly/3pHtbZL>

10



“Bookstore” candle from Frostbeard Studio (\$19.75)

<https://bit.ly/2IKOVU6>

8



“The Raven” writing gloves from Storiarts (\$26)

<https://bit.ly/3lQwnzV>

11



“Oxford Comma Society” spiral notebook from Bookstonian on Etsy (\$13.95)

<https://etsy.me/32WEiEf>

9



Proofreading marks mug from CafePress (\$15.99)

<https://bit.ly/3nEmFkD>

BELS Gallery



When Robin Richardson needs to get things done, she knows she can rely on her mug of choice to hold her beverage and keep her smiling.



Kristina Wasson-Blader says this mug's sentiment is pretty accurate most days.

You can get one for yourself here:
<https://amzn.to/3oqjz4n>

Send your BELS Gallery photos to info@bels.org

BELS Featured Members



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Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

MEMBER PROFILE

Dhruv Maniar, ELS

Editor-in-Chief
PolarisEditingWorks
enquiries@polariseditingworks.com

Year of ELS certification:
2017

Grammar pet peeve:
Lists without commas.
Seriously, use commas.



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MEMBER PROFILE

Ann Houska, MA, ELS

Senior Medical Editor
Medical Knowledge Group

Year of ELS certification:
2009

Grammar pet peeve:
Oh my, so many! I guess it would be the
incorrect use of its/it's, you're/your, and
there/their. A close second: use of quotation
marks for emphasis!

BELS Featured Members



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MEMBER PROFILE

*Belinda E. Peace,
PhD, ELS*

Owner
Bluestem Medical Writing Services
www.bluedmedwrite.com

Year of ELS certification:
2009

Grammar pet peeve:
Further, not referring to distance



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MEMBER PROFILE

*Michael S. Altus,
PhD, ELS*

Biomedical Writing and Editing
Intensive Care Communications, Inc.®
altus@intensivecarecomm.com
<https://intensivecarecomm.com>

"When your manuscript needs Intensive Care" (SM)

Year of ELS certification:
2000

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Board Member at Large

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Sheryle Hazard, CAE
Executive Director

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was founded in 1991 to evaluate the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences and to award credentials similar to those obtainable in other professions.

Potential employers and clients of manuscript editors usually have no objective way to assess the proficiency of editors. For their part, editors are frustrated by the difficulty of demonstrating their ability. That is why both employers and editors so often resort to personal references or ad hoc tests, not always with satisfactory results. The need for an objective test of editorial skill has long been recognized.

To meet that need, BELS developed a process for testing and evaluating proficiency in editing in the life sciences. The Board administers two examinations—one for certification and one for diplomate status. The examinations, written by senior life-science editors assisted by testing experts, focus on the principles and practices of scientific editing in English.