

Behind the Red Pen: The Editorial Experience of the Interns

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What were your expectations before the beginning of the internship?

Anna Savchuk: Before the beginning of the internship, our expectations were shaped by our academic program as well as a genuine interest in the practical aspects of publishing. Our main expectations were to gain experience in editing and formatting theses and understanding how the communication between editorial team members and authors works in reality. What is more, we are approaching the end of our Master's degree and it was truly valuable to gain insights into how the good thesis should be written and formatted, additionally what topics are considered a good fit for the final work. One of the main goals was to gain proficiency in formatting documents to meet professional and academic requirements. Also, getting inspiration for writing our own theses and having more confidence in proceeding

with them was a huge advantage. We expected to hone our skills in refining academic work, ensuring clarity, coherence, and adherence to specific formatting guidelines. It was also interesting to find out how communication with authors influences the process of editing and to what extent can effective collaboration enhance the quality of a final product. In reality, our expectations were met and some of them even exceeded our initial ideas. We had a great practical opportunity to edit various theses and apply theoretical editing principles in practice, which improved our editing skills and ability to create clearer and quality academic works. Interacting with authors was an intense but educational experience since not every change from our side was happily accepted. We realised how important it is to maintain a friendly tone and not to discourage writers as they have put an enormous amount of time and dedication into crafting their texts. Collaborative work is key because only effective efforts of the team and authors can lead to quality results.

What were the most exciting parts to work on?

Aastha Dutta: The whole editing process has been an exciting and insightful journey. As Master's students in English literature, language, and culture, our internship has given us practical experience in applying our academic knowledge and writing skills. From the initial formatting to the final edits of the theses, every step has been a learning experience. One of the most exciting aspects of the internship was reading outstanding theses from the English Department of the University of Göttingen. Reading theses on multiple topics helped us enhance our perspectives on different research fields that we might not have explored yet. Furthermore, being a part of the GSEP 17 publication series gave us a sense of achievement. The proof-reading stages, conversing with the authors, and ensuring the content is well-structured and readable have given us indispensable skills in different dimensions of academic writing. This experience has been rewarding, as it has sharpened our editorial skills and given us a meaningful role in being involved in scholarly work that will inspire and influence future research. We are grateful for the opportunity and excited to move forward with these invaluable experiences in our future endeavours.

What were the personal challenges of being a copy-editor?

Aastha Dutta: Copy-editing, a rewarding experience, came with challenges we understood while editing the manuscripts. We initially believed that we were Master's students in English literature and that our extensive practice and time management would shield us from significant difficulties. However, we were wrong; the practical experience made us aware of the challenges we can encounter in the publishing industry and other academic fields. One of the foremost challenges was dealing with perfectionism. The intent for perfection can be both a strength and a challenge. While striving for flawless text is important, it was also crucial for us to learn when to stop editing and avoid over-polishing. In the pursuit of perfection, we could have

diminished the original text's integrity, which proved to be a daunting task. Another challenge we had was to maintain objectivity while also applying our conscious judgement to improve the text. It is crucial to respect the author's voice and intentions, and not let our personal opinions overshadow their originality. Balancing our personal opinions and preserving the authorial voices while still improving the coherence required of the text, was the challenge we learned to navigate.

The next challenge for us was time management. Managing time for the internship with writing the term papers and thesis, proved to be the most challenging. Allocating sufficient time to each university's academic assignments, simultaneously dedicating ourselves to editing the bachelor and master theses, along with maintaining high standards of quality and meeting deadlines, was a demanding aspect of the experience. Managing this situation means more than just creating a timetable for our studies and editorial work. It requires proper strategic planning and a keen sense of prioritisation to ensure that each assignment receives equal attention. We had to balance tight deadlines and multiple responsibilities while maintaining excellence in both academic and editorial work. This experience taught us to work under pressure and know how to multitask under tight deadlines.

How helpful was your theoretical background in the publishing industry?

Anna Savchuk: Undoubtedly, the theoretical background in the publishing industry was an advantage for the GSEP 17 internship. The theories and principles of editing, clear communication, logical structuring, and grammatical precision guided us through the editing work. Understanding our target audience helped us revise theses accordingly and enhance the readability and coherence of the final product. Theoretical knowledge about communication strategies was invaluable. Understanding how to provide constructive criticism and maintain a positive tone assisted us in the process of effective interaction with authors, ensuring productive and respectful exchanges. Conflict resolution and negotiation prepared us to handle professionally any disagreements or misunderstandings with authors, establishing smooth collaboration. Theoretical frameworks on audience analysis were crucial and helped us tailor the theses to be more engaging and accessible, making the content suitable for its intended audience. What is more, the theory on the publishing workflow provided a contextual understanding of the different stages and roles involved. Our theoretical background undoubtedly allowed us to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This knowledge provided a strong foundation, and practical experience reinforced and expanded this knowledge, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the publishing industry.

Did the theory you learned work in practice? Or was it different from what you were taught?

Anna Savchuk: The internship provided a distinctive opportunity to apply theoretical frameworks on the publishing industry gained during the university courses in

a real-world context and to be prepared for its challenges. For instance, principles of effective communication and the communication circuit were crucial. At GSEP 17 understanding how a text flows from author to editor to final reader is pivotal. The theoretical models of communication mirrored the practical processes of editing and formatting which we could observe during our internship. The significance of each editorial team member and collaborative efforts ensured a seamless workflow and emphasised the interconnected roles within a publishing process. Maintaining clear communication with authors, understanding target audiences, and adhering to genre-specific criteria, were directly applicable to our tasks at GSEP 17. When editing theses, these principles guided us in enhancing clarity, ensuring readability, and meeting specific academic standards. This practical application confirmed the value of these editorial theories. It is a truly valuable experience for those who want to see how theory works in practice.

How much background research and checking were needed? Was the background in Literature helpful for working on the papers?

Yuliia Lynnyk: The papers we had to work on were written by the students of the English Philology Department, so the topics were chosen accordingly. They varied from the ones that had etymology in focus to the topics concerned with the notion of power, otherness and monstrosity. To be able to understand the main ideas of the theses the background in Literature and Culture Theories was very beneficial. As a copywriter, one is not supposed to rewrite the paper, of course, but understanding the main concepts of the topic makes the process of reading and editing much easier. Our team was dealing with papers that were already estimated as good or very good, but it was still necessary to check every single source or fact. The most common mistake, though, was the complexity of writing. Some of the sentences were too long and worded in a complicated way that made the whole idea vague and hard to follow. They stood out from the rest of the text and needed to be paraphrased or, at times, simplified. We did not have the audacity to just replace such sentences with the ones we considered better. Instead we left our suggestions on the margins or asked the authors to rewrite them. Before I embarked on the GSEP 17 Project, I needed to learn about the publishing business, of which copy-editing is a big part. Information on that was available in the Literary and Cultural Management module that proved to be very helpful due to its practical approach that was substantiated by theory.

Finally, yet importantly, it was good to have the Anglophone Literatures background at my disposal. Again, it did not affect my work on papers significantly, yet it helped me find the connections between the authors' opinions and the works of literature the papers dealt with. I could better relate to theoretical approaches authors used to strengthen their argumentation when talking about a specific literature movement and novels that were representative of it.

From the plot perspective, thanks to the knowledge of Literature and Cultural Theories no additional research was required. The exception was the paper on J. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* due to multiple allusions the author was referring to. The writer included geographical names and historical figures that do not come to mind immediately when reading the novel. Thus, when working on this thesis, some fact-checking was required. From the technical side, things like grammar, punctuation and word choice needed plenty of attention. It was especially important for the papers that contained words from other languages and sentences with intricate syntactic structures. Personally, I do not trust AI tools completely, so when the suggested corrections still did not look convincing to me, I resorted to online dictionaries.

Did you get tips on how to write your own theses in the future? Which ones?

Anna Savchuk: Work on GSEP 17 gave us valuable insights and tips that are undoubtedly useful for writing our own theses. Firstly, we found out how a Master's thesis should be written per university requirements and what parts it consists of. Also, we learned how to structure our texts properly and what parts we should include while working on our final papers. A well-organised structure is fundamental and includes a clear introduction, coherent body sections, and a concise conclusion. Each section should flow logically into the next, providing a cohesive narrative. Using descriptive headings and subheadings helps in organising content and making it easier for readers to navigate through the document. These rules could be clearly observed in the works of other students and we could critically evaluate how important it is to make our own texts as clear to readers as possible. Additionally, conducting a thorough literature review to provide a solid theoretical foundation for the thesis should not be ignored. This demonstrates an understanding of existing research and identifies gaps that the thesis will address. Properly citing all sources used in the thesis is essential to avoid plagiarism and to give credit to original authors. Familiarity with citation styles (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) is important. We have found out some of the rules of proper citing, for example, how to format block quotes in a thesis. Adhering to specific formatting guidelines such as font type, size, margins, spacing, and citation style was essential for our smooth workflow. Ensuring that the thesis reflects the author's unique perspective and original contributions to the field was vital for us since authors have their own unique styles and we wanted to maintain them. While reading various points that writers made, how they proved their points and structured their thoughts, we have understood that critical thinking and presenting new insights or findings will help us craft our own works uniquely and professionally.

How did you ensure the credibility of the sources in the papers?

Aastha Dutta: To ensure the credibility of the sources in the paper, we thoroughly checked the sources one by one and followed certain key practices. We researched the given sources on different academic sites, such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Project Muse, and other reputed institutional access provided by the university library. Furthermore, we also searched for reputable publishers such as Oxford, Cambridge, Bloomsbury Publishing, and more scholarly articles written by various authors. We cross-referenced the Work cited from multiple sources to verify its accuracy. If several credible sources corroborated the same information, it helped us rely on the source and increased our confidence. In addition, we also paid attention to the images included in the thesis, for which we checked the references of each on different sites and verified the source. There was one instance, where we stumbled across a source named “Chicken Guide to the *James Joyce Digital Archive*”, from the thesis written on *Finnegan’s Wake*. Initially, we felt like the source did not have credibility, but after researching thoroughly together and discussing it with Dr. Reitemeier, we did find out that the source was credible. The process and verification were required so that we could only include trustworthy sources.

Let’s talk about time management. Do you have any tips and suggestions on how to plan the work on the text for the next batch of interns?

Yuliia Lynnyk: At the start of the internship, I was convinced that editing would not take too much time, as the papers were well written and graded with a good mark. In reality, some texts required medium edit, as they contained quite a few sentences that had to be reformulated, repetitions, overly complicated vocabulary, unclear ideas and very long paragraphs. It was necessary to polish those texts to the extent that the targeted reader can effortlessly navigate the text and use it, for example, as a template for writing their own research paper or see how bibliography should be compiled.

I organised my work in such a way that I would edit and proofread the text at weekends. Before my concentration span would go down, I could manage to edit ten pages, and if the text had only a few minor issues – twenty. The time spent on editing also depended on the topic of the text and the style of how it was written. To be honest, as I was editing the paper that captured my interest, it was more interesting to me and I proceeded faster. My main tip would be to estimate the complexity of the text and your stamina correctly. Before you start working on a text, it is a good idea to get yourself acquainted with the whole text. Our head of the team suggested dividing the Project into the following stages: formatting, editing, cross-editing and then proofreading. In this way, every time we had a deadline for a specific task. I reckon that doing one thing at a time is the best approach, despite the popularity of multi-tasking that every employer wants to see on a CV. I have noticed that if I shift my attention from one thing to another, I end up spending more time on the task than usual. Maybe, it is just me, yet I advise someone who

wants to try himself or herself as an editor to choose an approach to editing that proves to be effective for them in the first place, even if it does not work for others.

What is also important is a well-structured plan that ranks the tasks from the ones that do not take too much time to time-consuming tasks. For example, after an editor is done with the text they should always have some buffer time before the deadline. This extra time can be used for final remarks and cross-editing. You should not forget that the other editor also needs time to go through the text and check your suggestions. Apart from that, if there are questions to the text that only an author can answer, they need to be contacted as soon as possible taking into account that the author might not respond to an email immediately.

How about the communication with the authors? How did the authors react to the suggestions?

Yuliia Lynnyk: At the stage when all the mistakes were pointed at and necessary comments were added to the text, reaching out to authors came into play. This was done via email. We sent copies (Word and PDF) of the edited theses and asked the authors to go through all the changes and suggestions. In my case, communication went very smoothly and I received prompt replies. The authors, for their part, revised the remarks and edited the sentences marked by us. However, at the beginning, it was not completely clear to one of the writers how they should approach the work on mistakes, so I gladly provided additional explanations. After that, all the comments in the thesis were addressed and the paper looked ready to be added to a manuscript. I would say, the authors I was staying in touch with showed quite a positive attitude and did not react to criticism in an emotional way. At the end of the day, our criticism is meant to improve the readability of the papers and not to devalue the writers' effort.

Unfortunately, not all of the authors agreed with the corrections and were happy about changes being made to their papers. One of the writers replied to our email with a detailed answer explaining why the headings cannot be changed or why a certain word should be retained. It was a stumbling block for our team, I must confess. We had to organise several meetings in order to discuss how to deal with the corrections that the author disapproved of. In the end, we altered only the most necessary things like the style and formatting, grammar, and a few words that were not the best fit for a sentence. I think that is one of the most challenging parts of copy-editing: trying to maintain the balance between editing and rewriting someone's ideas and then explaining your decisions to writers. For authors reading this: a manuscript differs from a dissertation, so things like layout, format, style, and so on have to be modified. Your papers are still great!

How was teamwork? What went particularly well, what was a challenge?

Aastha Dutta: When the concept of teamwork emerges, it is often found that to make teamwork successful, it is required that all individuals' viewpoints and efforts

are respected and united. There will always be a challenge to working in a team due to varied opinions. In our case, we challenged this notion during our GSEP 17 internship and strived to work as a cohesive team. As a team, we decided that the work must be divided equally among us and that no individual should bear the burden of the work. We followed this procedure and divided the theses equally for editing, each individual had one thesis project, and the remaining were equally divided among us. In order to function smoothly as a team, we organised regular meetings to track our individual progress with the thesis projects and resolve our queries related to the projects. In addition to meeting regularly, we were always active online to answer any urgent questions, as we formed a group online where we discussed and posted the updates. In this way, we were also able to bond together as a team and ease our workload. In my opinion, the concept of teamwork enables and pushes you to work harder and better. During the internship, working in a group has been a rewarding experience. It helped me understand the perspective of fellow team members. Moreover, working as a team enabled us to learn something from each other. As we were all new to the field of editing and working together, we supported each other to understand certain aspects of editing. On top of this, we mutually respected each other's viewpoints and collaborated actively, fostering creativity, which in turn led to success as a team.

However, not every journey is smooth, and during our journey of copy-editing, we encountered our own set of challenges. As a team, we had disagreements regarding the direction of certain parts of our project and arguments over equal division of the workload. In the process of resolving the issues, we had long discussions and gave constructive criticism to each other. These moments required all voices to be heard, instead of coming to conclusions in the first place. Nevertheless, through patience, active listening, and constructive feedback, we were able to resolve our disagreements and strengthen our teamwork in the process of working together on the internship for GSEP 17. Moreover, I believe that these discussions and arguments make a team effective and efficient.

What did you learn from the internship?

Anna Savchuk: During our internship at GSEP 17, we gained valuable insights and practical skills that significantly enhanced our understanding of the publishing industry. Firstly, we developed a more thorough attention to detail when editing academic theses. What is more, we learned that ensuring consistency in formatting, grammar, and style is crucial for producing high-quality work. Theories on editing and communication from academic studies proved to be really useful which significantly enhanced our confidence during the internship. It is important to add that the principles of clear and effective writing improved the readability and overall quality of the theses we worked on. Moreover, providing constructive feedback to authors is a skill that can be gained only through practical application. This way, we

learned to balance criticism with encouragement, ensuring that authors felt supported while also understanding the necessary revisions. It was also vital for us to gain insights into professional communication and teamwork to maintain positive working relationships and ensure smooth collaboration. Surely, our editing skills improved greatly and we could ask team members for help in case something was unclear, thus, our weak points became known to us and we could work on them together. Adhering to formatting standards, which is critical in academic publishing, and consistent formatting skills helped us improve the readability and professional appearance of documents. What is more, editing the texts involved many different aspects that include not only checking grammar but also maintaining the overall flow of the paper, correspondence to content, simplifying complex ideas, and making text more engaging for readers. GSEP 17 taught us that understanding the target audience is key to enhancing readability. Tailoring content to meet the needs and preferences of readers ensures that the final product is effective and accessible. Adaptability was another skill we have learned throughout the internship, emphasising on the importance of being flexible and responsive to new challenges and opportunities, which is essential for success in this field. Finally and most importantly, we surely gained insight into the workflow of a publishing team and how different roles and responsibilities interconnect to produce a polished final product.

How did the internship influence your career or academic goals?

Yuliia Lynnyk: I believe that this internship has become a real-life scenario of work in a publishing business, namely in the role of a copy-editor and a proofreader. When I was applying for this position, I was delighted at a chance to see how things really work after reading about them. Of course, our team was quite small and the scope of our main tasks remained within editing, proofreading and contacting authors; however, the result of our effort – a manuscript that would be published – made it all feel very rewarding. Besides, being able to present a published work as proof of experience in the publishing field adds even more value to this internship. If I were asked which things were surprising for me when working on the GSEP 17 Project, I would answer – the fact that an editor is more than someone who edits the text. It is also holding discussions, organising meetings, contacting authors, brainstorming ideas and finally writing. Some of those aspects were especially challenging, like communication. Our interaction among team members did not always go well causing misunderstandings, and because of this, deadlines had to be postponed. I learned that figuring out each other's strong sides and being fair about the scope of work are essential if one wants the project to be successful. Thus, communication is the key, not only with team members but also with the authors. Criticism of the methods and disagreement with your suggestions are a part of the process and the best true-to-life experience.

As for the work on text, sometimes it felt tiring to keep a focus. You are sitting at your computer and scrutinising every sentence, deciding if it is a good argument

for the thesis, or if the idea is clear enough, or if this word could be replaced with a better synonym. I spent a lot of time just thinking about how a sentence could be tweaked to place the idea on the surface and how to make sure that a sentence would be understood “at first read”. At the beginning, the editing process felt very exciting but with the pages going on and on ... Eventually, it became somewhat exhausting, especially if the text contained many places that had to be addressed by the editor (later I will elaborate on how to manage work on text in a better way). Overall, this experience showed to me the backstage of the editing process, deepened my interest in the publishing industry and encouraged me to learn more about professions in this field. For now, I can maintain that, to become an editor, one should be fond of reading, have an eye for mistakes, have the patience to work with large chunks of text and be ready for criticism from the author or during the cross-editing sessions.

In terms of academic goals, the internship became an integral part of my study focus. After going through theoretical materials, I was prepared for the specifics of work and got an opportunity to see what other skills are needed to be fit for a job in publishing. This internship sparked my interest in workshops and specialised courses in the sphere of publishing. Considering that the manuscript consisted of Master theses mainly (and I am going to write one myself), this experience influenced my choice of research topics and helped me understand the structure of the dissertation, its formatting, how to cite sources and use secondary literature.

Can you imagine working on similar projects in the future? Why or why not?

Anna Savchuk: The internship at GSEP 17 has deepened our interest in the publishing industry; and the skills we developed in editing, formatting, and improving readability directly align with our career aspirations in this field. Working on academic theses has given us a specific interest in editing and publishing which is also helpful in the academic field and is truly advantageous for the university and working life. The hands-on experience in editing and proofreading is applicable in future projects, ensuring high-quality outputs in academic and professional publishing. The satisfaction of producing polished, high-quality content is a strong motivator that ensures that written work is not only accurate but also engaging and accessible to its intended audience. The dynamic nature of the publishing industry requires constant learning and adaptation, so working on similar projects can be beneficial to stay in the flow and keep up with the changes. Also, engaging in similar projects will help build a robust portfolio of work for potential employers or clients in the publishing industry. Such experiences are valuable for the future career and help decide on the future job as well.