

The subversive copy editor: advice from Chicago (or, how to negotiate good relationships with your writers, your colleagues, and yourself). Carol Fisher Saller. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, and London: The University of Chicago Press Ltd., 2009. 134 pp. ISBN-13:978-0-226-73425-5 (pbk) US\$13.

Having first been introduced to this delightful and extremely useful book at the ASI Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon, earlier this year, where Carol Fisher Saller was the keynote speaker, this was a review that was impossible to pass to another colleague. Carol writes, and indeed speaks, in a most engaging manner, dispensing sound advice with liberal helpings of humour. Lest her potential audience outside the United States is somewhat sceptical of the brasher varieties of US humour, let me hastily add that Carol evokes chuckles in a subtle, quiet manner; more ‘Judi Dench/Geoffrey Palmer (As Time Goes By)’ than the average stand-up comedian. And do not skip the introduction which has some very funny parts as well as interesting items. For all the smiles, though, this slim volume is packed with valuable advice that is most useful for editors, indexers and indeed any freelancer, no matter what their discipline and wherever they are based.

The advice is divided broadly into two sections. The first covers working with the writer, for the reader’s benefit. The second is about working with your colleagues and yourself. After sharing with us the results of her many experiences as the editor of the *Chicago Manual of Style’s* monthly, online Q&A, Carol adds an appendix of useful tips on how to break into the publishing industry. (*Chicago manual of style* is generally referred to in North America as ‘Chicago’, as in the title details above.)

For indexers frustrated with the restraints of deadlines, Carol not only explains the situations that copy editors find themselves in but offers advice on how to cope. Communication, as we all know is vital, but we need to be reminded from time to time that it is important to establish sound professional relationships so that a plea for relief can be discussed with a degree of sanity. We as indexers take pride in our work, but there are occasions when it is necessary to investigate the level of importance of the publication to the publisher; what is to take precedence, speed, accuracy, or quality. While advocating high standards of carefulness, transparency and flexibility, Carol points out that all parties involved in the publication process can benefit when lucid communication between the interested parties takes place. This applies whether working with editors or authors, or working in an office or freelancing from home.

Indirectly, we are reminded that though we often have intense feelings of ownership of our index, we are in fact not only serving future readers, but also doing a task for the publisher who is representing the author. There are times when we have to put aside our pride and accept that the author is in charge.

In the second section of the book, there is a useful chapter on word processing expertise. Carol is writing primarily for editors, but it is important that indexers keep up to date with developments in word processing in addition to indexing programs. These are powerful tools but unless we educate ourselves with each new development, we can be left behind very quickly, or, even worse, create catastrophes without even realising. Organisation is generally fundamental to most indexers, it is what we are good at. Nevertheless, we should be sure to extend this expertise to our computer files.

Deadlines! At least as important an issue to indexers as to copy editors. The chapter devoted to this subject contains some very humorous passages. Enough to lighten our load, but not, sadly, enough to ease their being critical.

That Carol was invited to be the keynote speaker at the ASI Annual Conference (2009), underlines the fact that she has excellent contacts in the field of indexing. Should there be any lingering doubts that this slim volume is superficial, one should turn to the thorough index. Try the following delectable morsels, 'murder, of copy editors by writers'. And under the main heading, 'word-processing', the tempting sub-heading 'resisting compulsions'!

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