"At the Coal-Face of Standardization": Uncovering the Role of Copy Editors

in Standardizing the English Language

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ABSTRACT

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Though much work has been done on the definition of Standard English and on the standardization process, little attention has been paid to the role of copy editors in that process. Editors comprise a class of craft professionals employed to remove errors from texts and make them more consistent, but when editors speak about editors at all, they generally rely on anecdotes rather than hard data about what editors do. Since formal written English is often used as a baseline for determining what is standard, and since corpora of published writing are increasingly used to research questions of usage, it is important to understand the role of copy editors in shaping the text that we see on the printed page.

This study examines the usage and grammar changes made by student editorial interns in twenty-two academic journal articles. Volunteer professional editors were then solicited to edit the same articles, and their changes were compared against the interns' changes. The changes were counted and categorized to determine which usage rules can be considered most important to copy editors and thus most essential to distinguishing Standard Edited English from standard unedited writing.

It was found that the most frequent changes were several grammatical items and a few lexical items, including the *that/which* rule, avoidance of *towards*, increased parallelism, and standardization of s-genitive forms. These changes confirm the idea that editors play a role in standardization, particularly codifying certain forms by reducing optional variation. From this data we can conclude that educated written usage and edited usage are not necessarily the same and should not be conflated. These findings also have implications for the use of corpus data in usage studies by showing that the final version of a printed work does not necessarily show the usage of edited writers but likely has a substantial contribution from copy editors.

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I am also grateful to Dr. Mel Thorne, director of the Faculty Editing Service, for providing the edited manuscripts that were used in this study, and to the volunteers who participated in my editing survey. I appreciate their time and efforts and the valuable data that they provided.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Copy editing is an important but often overlooked stage of the publication process. Virtually everything we see in print has been looked over by an editor or proofreader, but we scarcely stop to consider the effect it has on what we call Standard Written English. Yet editors play a significant role in standardizing written English by deciding which usage rules to enforce in print. This study will explore that role in greater detail using evidence from actual edited manuscripts. It will then discuss the results and some of their implications for definitions of Standard English and future research in usage and standardization.

Previous studies attempting to determine what Standard English usage is have often relied upon corpora of published material, such as the older Brown Corpus or British National Corpus or the newer Corpus of Contemporary American English or Google Books Ngram corpus (see for example Snyder 2007). Usage guides are also coming to rely on data from corpora in their descriptions (for example Garner 2009; Peters 2004). Peters writes, "The computerized corpus is perhaps the single most important development for the description of English usage" (2006: 768). These corpora have given linguists and grammarians powerful new tools for studying language, but they all have the limitation of showing only the final product of the standardization process, after it has passed through the hands of copy editors on the way to publication. This final product appears to be the author's but may in fact have substantial contributions from editors and copy editors. And because the signs of editorial intervention are effaced as part of the editorial process, the usage of English-speaking writers cannot be separated from usage imposed on them by copy editors. Thus, while corpora are useful for telling us about published writing, any corpus-based attempt to answer the question of what should be considered correct—especially when it comes to questions of debated usage—is essentially circular, because

it relies in part on data provided by a class of professionals whose job it is to make a text correct. The effects of editorial intervention are scarcely if ever considered when interpreting corpus data, yet as Deborah Cameron says, "the marks of editing are all over published writing" (1995: 34). She notes that "the belief that language should ideally be used in a consistent or uniform manner is a central tenet of what Milroy and Milroy call the 'ideology of standardization,'" adding that "today's copy editors are involved in [the process of standardization], but in what would seem on the face of things to be rather peripheral ways" (1995: 38, 39). However, she says that "copy editors are crucial, because they help to sustain the *illusion* of a uniform standard language" (39). Just how crucial are copy editors in maintaining a standard language? Are they merely creating the illusion of uniformity, or is their work more substantial than that? If Cameron is right and editors are involved in standardization in only peripheral ways, how are we as linguists to know for sure? We have no tools or data with which to measure the size of the effect of copy editing on Standard English, only occasional anecdotal claims about editors' penchant for imposing invented and unnecessary rules.

Clearly more solid facts about the editing process and editors' role in standardization are needed. To this end I have set out to answer several related questions: (1) What changes are copy editors making with regard to grammar and usage? (2) As a side question that grew out of the data collection method, how do novice and professional editorial practice differ with regard to the kinds of changes made? (3) What role can copy editors be said to play in the standardization of English? (4) Given (1), (2), and (3), what conclusions can be made about the nature of Standard English, particularly about Standard Edited English? (5) What implications do these conclusions have for the use of corpora in describing Standard English? This study is not, however, a definitive description of Standard English, nor is it an exhaustive survey of editing

practice. Furthermore, it is not designed to assess the costs or benefits of copy editing or to determine what is or should be considered correct or incorrect usage. Hopefully, though, this study may lay some groundwork for further research and discussion in those areas.

Literature Review

Standard English has long been a topic of discussion and debate among linguists. Although Standard English is everywhere and is invoked in discussions ranging from syntax to sociolinguistics (see for example J. Milroy 1999a), it is apparently difficult to define with much certainty. Various definitions have been proposed, including "the set of norms to which speakers and writers conform to a greater or lesser extent" (Finegan 2003: 146), "the fixity of spelling, lexicon and grammar which derives from the work of the prescriptivist writers of the eighteenth century" (L. Milroy 1999b: 174), "that form of the language used by professional writers" (Knott 1934: 83), "the social dialect used by educated Americans" (Ebbitt & Ebbitt 1990: 243), or the variety of English which "regulates or limits the variations" found in the various dialects of English (McLain 1976: 247). But Leslie Milroy also says that "standardization is best treated as a process, since attempts to locate a specific standard (product) are doomed to failure" (1999b: 173). Though the definitions variously include notions of prestige, education, and uniformity, they mostly seem to gravitate to the idea that the most standard English is to be found in writing. It is in writing these other definitions all converge. Published writing is generally produced by educated speakers and, aside from fiction written in dialect, is more likely than speech to exhibit the kind of formality and uniformity considered to be necessary features of Standard English. John Joseph notes the natural draw of using the written form of the language as the standard: "The fact that linguistic norms are abstracted from usage which, besides being disparate, is in a constant state of change, makes them seem very tenuous indeed. Hence the appeal of the literary

norm, which offers something material and permanent: the control decision of a writer, probably seconded by an editor, both prestigious cultural occupations. . . . The literary norm is the foundation for some of the greatest achievements of language control, especially the monumental dictionaries which provide literary citations for their entries" (1987: 119).

As Leslie Milroy stated, language standardization is a process, and Einar Haugen proposed four major steps in that process: (1) the society must first *select* a particular norm or set of norms; (2) the language must undergo *codification*, or have its variation limited; (3) it must also undergo *elaboration* of function, allowing the language to be used in a greater range of styles and registers; and finally the language must be *accepted* by the community that uses it (1966: 931). Although these steps may be applied to any form of language, it is in writing that they have the greatest opportunity for conscious or overt application. Joseph writes,

> Typically, writers function as the instrument of elaboration, sweeping with new words beyond the bounds of hitherto accepted usage. The editor—who has the final say in linguistic matters—controls the new utterance, first by deciding whether it is suitable for publication, then by suppressing those instances where the writer has produced, not innovation adding to the language's resources, but mere self-indulgent novelty. This function is given increased weight in standardization by the heavy reliance of grammarians and lexicographers on literary citations: the examples at their disposal are with few exceptions the outcome of previous sifting by one or more editors. (1987: 114)

Unfortunately, linguists have long resisted the urge to treat the written language as *the* language, focusing instead on speech. However, as Edward Finegan argues, "It was certainly wrong to say for English—as linguists did—that spoken language is the language. Linguists

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overreacted to the fact that laypersons, when they talk of language, employ terms that apply better to writing. . . . To the extent that nonlinguists talk of 'language,' writing is their reference point, and writing and speech are often confused, as when people talk about 'sounding out all the letters' of a word" (1980: 169–70). Many linguists have agreed that Standard English is written English. Carter writes, "To a considerable extent standard English grammar may be best defined as the grammar of standard written English" (1999: 166), and Cheshire similarly notes, "Written English has continued to be the reference point for the standard variety, with grammarians during the eighteenth century codifying the forms used in writing" (1999: 130). And McArthur says simply, "Print is privileged" (2001: 3). Bartsch elaborates on the notion that the written language is considered the model of standard language and is therefore the most correct in the eyes of its users: "We thus have a hierarchy of notions that pertain to acceptability and correctness of syntactic form: 1. Syntactically correct according to the standard of written language; 2. Syntactically incorrect according to the written standard, but acceptable in everyday spoken language; 3. Syntactically incorrect and not acceptable in everyday spoken language of native speakers; 4. Otherwise incorrect and unacceptable but can, if at least understandable and interpretable, be acceptable when used by people of whom one does not expect correct speech" (1987: 16).

And written English is, by and large, edited English. Stainton writes, "Editors are everywhere. They are at work wherever words are being written and published" (2002: 3). Copy editing provides a choice opportunity to limit variation in written works. Indeed, publishers are so keen to ensure that their publications conform to Standard English that they employ editors to correct and standardize spelling, correct grammar and usage problems, and remove other errors or infelicities to ensure that the text conforms to audience expectations. McArthur connects

edited English with Standard English, noting that "the editing process . . . [and] the compilation and review of language companions, style guides, and usage manuals . . . necessarily tie in with the question of whether there is such a thing as World Standard English (WSE), within whose framework much of the world's editing is done" (2001: 3).

However, although copy editing constitutes a stage of the publication process for nearly all professionally published material, its role as a sociolinguistic phenomenon in regulating the language and defining Standard English has often been mentioned only in passing or, more frequently, overlooked entirely. Joseph is aware of editors' role in standardizing the language and of their near absence from discussions of standardization: "Another profession whose influence is exceedingly important has scarcely been taken into consideration. I refer to editors" (1987: 114). McArthur, too, says that "there are few beings on earth more prescriptive and single-minded than copy-editors and proof-readers. They have to be. They work at the coal-face of standardization" (2001: 4). As we will see in this study, although usage writers and dictionaries play a role in describing and prescribing usage, it is copy editors who enforce certain usage rules in practice. McArthur then quotes one Lisa Delpit, who more explicitly identifies Standard English with edited English: "I don't use the term standard English. What I talk about is edited English, which essentially is the English you see in books—English that has been taken through an editing process. Some people's home language is more closely related to edited English than other people's, but nobody exactly speaks edited English. It's important to make the distinction because edited English is the language of power" (quoted in McArthur 2001: 8).

Indeed, it seems clear that editing must play a role in the standardization process; editors weed out certain usages or spellings and help keep others alive, indicating that at some level they are selecting forms to be used in Standard Written English or are reinforcing norms that have

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already been selected and codified. However, it appears that editors rarely discuss Standard English; even the authoritative and comprehensive *Chicago Manual of Style* treats it only briefly, in a chapter on grammar and usage by Bryan Garner. He cryptically states, "In any age, careful users of the language will make distinctions; careless users will blur them. We can tell, by the words someone uses and the way they go together, something about the education and background of that person. We know whether people speak educated English and write what is commonly referred to as Standard Written English" (2003: 5.199). Then, before providing a "glossary of troublesome expressions," he writes, "In the short space of this chapter, only the basics of Standard Written English can be covered. Because no language stands still—because the standards of good usage change, however slowly—no guide could ever satisfy all professional editors. What is intended here is a guide that steers writers and editors toward the unimpeachable uses of language" (5.201). It seems implicit in these passages that Standard Written English is being equated with adherence to certain usage items. It is also clear that as language changes, editors must continually choose among variants, which will be judged and either accepted as standard or rejected. In this continuous cycle, editors are at the forefront of the decision-making. Joseph notes that "it is at [the editor's] desk, rather than the grammarians's, Language Minister's, or Academician's, that linguistic innovations make their first appearance, and where, for lack of a precedent, the decision on hierarchization and limitation must be made. Faced with deadlines, the editor assumes the judicial as well as the executive function: . . . the editor must decide *hic et nunc* whether a given word or syntactic device is acceptable" (1987: 114–15). He adds, "No one will overrule this judgment. The editor will be brought to task only for erring on the side of elaboration and allowing the new, seldom or never for erring on the side

of control and being conservative. All these considerations make it very likely that editors play the single most substantial and direct role in linguistic control at the present time" (115).

On the dearth of discussion on edited English, McArthur says, "To my regret, few scholars and teachers of languages discuss print as a medium in its own right, or in its distinctive relationship with writing and editing" (2001: 8). Perhaps part of the reason for the absence of editing from discussions about Standard English is that the copy-editing process is hidden from the public eye; readers see only the end product and never truly know how much of what they see is the author's own text and how much is the result of editorial intervention. Indeed, one of the goals of copy editors is to be invisible; ideally, a reader should never have reason to think about copy editing. When copy editing is too apparent—or too obviously lacking—it becomes a distraction to the reader. Thus editing is by design an intentionally invisible layer of gatekeeping.

Nevertheless, although editing does not appear to have been explored in any real depth, several linguists have treated it as an aspect of Standard English or as a part of the standardization process, especially in the eyes of non-linguists. Edward Finegan notes that "'English' for most teachers then meant *writing*—indeed, monitored, *edited* writing!" (1980: 170). Cameron says, "The key actors in reproducing particular notions of 'style' are not authors and academics, nor even teachers of composition, though they play a significant supporting role, but copy editors" (34). Yet Cameron also takes a rather cynical view of copy editors, stating that "today's copy editors are involved in [the process of standardization], but in what would seem on the face of things to be rather peripheral ways" (39). However, although she then claims that "the activities of copy editors are crucial, because they help to sustain the *illusion* of a uniform standard language" (39), she later argues that style is a commodity and that "uniformity is taken to an extreme that might well be called 'hyperstandardization': the mania for imposing a rule on

any conceivable point of usage, in a way that goes beyond any ordinary understanding of what is needed to ensure efficient communication" (46–47). She then says that "the kind of variation copy editors deal with today—-*ise* or -*ize* and the like—could hardly be said to present a comparable problem" to the differences between dialects around the start of the Early Modern English period (47).

Cameron's "hyperstandardization" seems related to the idea of "regulative rules" put forth by others. McLain, for example, argues that

> standard English is made up of the very large set of constitutive rules common to all dialects, and, where the dialects present variation, standard English regulates or limits the variations. Some textual presentations of standard English go even further than simply regulating inter-dialectal variations, they attempt to govern intra-dialectal options. . . .
>
> Textbook standard American English incorporates features from a number of prestige spoken dialects, not just one. Nevertheless, a regulatory rule which originates in the socio-economic power of a prestige spoken dialect may have a remarkable staying power in standard English, even if the rule is fading as a constitutive rule of the spoken dialect. The standard language may retain its grip on the rule until the rule, through complete lack of spoken currency, becomes arcane. (247)

That is, Standard English does not simply limit the variation found in nonstandard dialects, but rather adds extra regulative rules to increase the perceived prestige and formality of the standard.

Similarly, other linguists have noted that several of the distinguishing features of Standard English are in fact uncommon in other English varieties or are typologically unusual.

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Trudgill asserts that "Standard English was selected (though of course, unlike many other languages, not by any overt or conscious decision) as the variety to become the standard variety precisely because it was the variety associated with the social group with the highest degree of power, wealth and prestige" (1999: 124), while Hope similarly argues that "speakers unconsciously favoured linguistically less likely variants because of their sense of the formality of the written language" (2000: 53). Although it is of course speculation to say that centuries of English speakers have unconsciously favored typologically uncommon forms, a survey of copy editing may provide some evidence for these claims.

Cameron says that it is in editors' interest to "edit copy with extreme thoroughness, both to display conscientiousness and to maximize the hours for which they would be paid" (1995: 52). She argues that "from an editor's perspective, then, hyperstandardization has its advantages: it makes a thorough editing job a relatively long job, a source of financial as well as professional satisfaction" (52). My own experience as an editor leads me to be believe that there is much more to copy editing than the sort of inconsequential hyperstandardization that Cameron discusses, although obviously it remains to be seen just how large a role editors play in standardization and which kinds of variation they are involved in regulating. If Standard English is indeed defined partly by its use of regulative rules, then it is safe to assume that copy editing, as an overt level of application of these rules, favors forms that contribute to the formal and prestigious nature of Standard English. A study of real-world practice will also allow us to determine how much of editing involves the application of constitutive rules (for example, correcting grammatical and lexical errors) and how much involves the application of the regulative rules of usage and style. It will also allow us to determine whether the rules that

editors apply are merely regulating the kind of harmless variation that Cameron discusses or whether they are making more substantial changes that shape the character of Standard English.

It is important to note, however, that editors generally do not view their jobs in the same terms that Cameron and others do. On the role of copy editors, Stainton writes,

> The good copyeditor, above all, is a fusspot—one who cares. This is not to say that other workers do not care. They have their cares. In the arena of writing, the editor cares about honest expression, about order, about clarity, and about logic. Copyeditors hate non sequiturs and arguments ad hominem, ambiguities and muddy thinking, inconsistencies and badly proportioned parts, jargon, cant, and gobbledygook. They believe that commas and semicolons matter, that spelling a word correctly is important. (2002: 4–5)

Stainton continues, "The editor's charge is to make sure that the words written will be comprehensible to those who read them," adding that "the good editor tries to make a murky idea clear and to let a brilliant idea sparkle" (5). Bridgwater similarly writes, "Copyediting is the discovery in a manuscript of all usages that may hinder the reader or may stop him short and make him leave the book altogether" (1985: 70). Rather than seeing themselves as creators of hyperstandard rules whose enforcement ensures their own job security, they see it as their job to correct errors and make texts clear, correct, and consistent—the so-called "three Cs" of copy editing.[1] It is interesting to note that some of these Cs align quite nicely with some of the distinguishing features of Standard English. The desire for clarity reflects the idea that Standard English is a language of wider communication, a lingua franca suitable for communication

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[1] The number varies from three up to seven, adding notions such as completeness, concision, coherence, and comprehensibility. See for example Einsohn 2006: 1, which lists four.

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anywhere and in any function. Correctness is the desire to avoid those forms marked as nonstandard. And consistency obviously aligns with uniformity, Haugen's codification or Milroy and Milroy's "suppression of optional variability" (1999: 15).

Though there is a strong tendency for editors to remove colloquial and informal forms from writing, editors do not appear to be motivated by an explicit desire to make Standard English more distinct from speech or from nonstandard varieties by the introduction of new regulative rules or the retention of fading forms. Rather, editors seem to believe that that they are merely bringing publications in line with Standard English or resisting the encroachment of new or nonstandard forms. However, it is important to note that published work becomes part of the body of Standard English works against which usage may be judged; as Haugen noted, the standardization process is cyclical. Cameron says, "It is these people's labour that produces the uniform spelling and consistent style of published materials, which in turn set the standard against which all written language (and eventually spoken language too) will come to be evaluated" (1995: 42) Furthermore, editors are presumably keeping many words and constructions out of this body of Standard English, ensuring that they remain nonstandard, or at least slowing or delaying their acceptance as standard. Some editors have even deliberately invoked the image of editors as gatekeepers, slowing the advance of new words and phrases from casual speech to more and more formal registers (Brenner 2012).

To date it appears that no real studies of the copy-editing process itself have been conducted. *One Book/Five Ways* (Association of University Presses 1994) was published as the result of an experiment in which one manuscript was given to five university presses to see the different ways in which each would handle the publication process. Though the book includes

images of copy-edited pages from each press, no time was spent discussing the different approaches to copy editing or detailing the kinds of changes copy editors made.

Some research has been done on reader reaction to and perception of error (for example Beason 2001; Hairston 1981; Leonard & Gilsdorf 1990; Williams 1981), while others have evaluated particular usage prescriptions (for example Connatser 2004; Finegan 2003; Mackiewicz 1999; Ottenhoff 1996; Steinberg 1986), sometimes drawing on data from corpora or other databases of published writing. Still others have measured the frequency of certain errors in writing, particularly freshman writing (Connors & Lunsford 1988). But to my knowledge none have examined the kinds of errors copy editors encounter on the job or the kinds of corrections that they make, presumably because of the intentionally invisible nature of copy editing and the difficulty of obtaining marked-up manuscripts.

This survey of copy editing changes will allow us to see how much of editors' work is in service of the ideals of correctness, clarity, and consistency and how much falls more into the realm of regulation or hyperstandardization. It will also afford us a more dynamic view of usage issues and provide an inside look at one of the stages of standardization itself. Though this is a preliminary study, it shows that copy editors indeed have a measurable impact on the types of usages that make it into print, especially in areas of grammar such as relative pronouns and adverbs and genitive forms. Chapter 2 will explain the methodology of this study, while the results will be provided in chapter 3. The results will be explored in greater detail in chapter 4, and finally the implications of this study and areas for further research will be discussed in chapter 5.

And finally, a disclaimer. The careful reader may notice several violations of traditional usage errors throughout this work (for example sentence-initial *however* or sentential *hopefully*).

While there are undoubtedly occasional typographical errors in this work, in many cases I have deliberately flouted rules that I do not hold to be valid or useful based on my own research and experience.

Chapter 2: Methods

The first step in examining the role of copy editors in the standardization process was to create my own miniature corpus of edited English. I obtained twenty-two edited article manuscripts, comprising close to 185,000 words, from Mel Thorne, director of the Faculty Editing Service at Brigham Young University. The manuscripts were written by professional academic and were copy edited by a student editorial intern and then reviewed and further edited by a professional (either Dr. Thorne or an outside freelancer). The manuscripts were edited in Microsoft Word using the Track Changes feature, preserving the author's original text along with the two rounds of edits. This allowed me to see what changes the copy editors were making and to separate the authors' text from the editors' emendations. I carefully looked over all the tracked changes, recording them in a spreadsheet for analysis. Each entry recorded the document name, the page number, the editor's initials, and the immediate context of both the original and edited text.

It should be noted that these intern editors all had at most a year or two of experience, though they were all in the editing minor at Brigham Young University. This means that they all had, at a minimum, a basic copy-editing course and courses in grammar and usage. Some may have also had advanced editing classes and capstone classes, but most if not all had not had any significant job experience beyond their paid on-campus internships. It is not clear from the tracked changes how many interns were involved; the number was inferred from the initials or names shown with the tracked changes, and sometimes one name appeared in various ways, such as Sally Jones, Sally, or SJ. There were also several sets of changes that apparently were made on various shared computers, so it is not clear whether these were unique individuals or individuals who also edited under other names. It appears that there were between six and twelve

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intern editors who worked on the manuscripts, and there were five professional editors who reviewed their changes and made additional changes. It is also important to note that the Faculty Editing Services polishes manuscripts before submission to academic journals, so the edits recorded in these manuscripts do not necessarily reflect the final, published forms of the articles. Further editing was presumably done after submission and before publication, but those edits are not included in this study.

In the course of tallying the results, it became evident that simple counts of changes could not tell the whole story of which rules editors were selecting for application. For instance, *which* was changed to *that* far more frequently than *that* was changed to *who*, but these facts by themselves tell us little unless we know how often the proscribed forms of *which* and *that* were used. It could be that *which* as a restrictive relative pronoun was used far more often than *that* as a relative pronoun with a personal antecedent. Or it could be that they were used roughly equally, or that *that* was used more, and that editors merely changed *which* more often than they did *that*. Thus it became clear that it would be necessary to count not only the changes that the copy editors made but the *opportunities* present in the original text to make those changes. This can give us the editing rates for any particular item.

However, it was not feasible to obtain counts of the opportunities for every item. For instance, the word *that* appears over 2,000 times in the corpus, but it was only changed to *who* with a personal antecedent once. Because *that* may function as a relative pronoun, complementizer, or demonstrative pronoun, obtaining an accurate count of the opportunities to make this change would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Though it would certainly be interesting to calculate the correction rate for every item, time constraints prevented me from doing so.

And of course, as with any corpus, the results drawn from the data are necessarily limited by the type and quantity of the data. Corpora such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the Corpus of Historical American English take steps to balance the data by including equal amounts from different genres and by keeping these proportions consistent over the years, thus reducing the possibilities of anomalous results. Even with these precautions, though, any conclusions drawn about the language as a whole are necessarily extrapolations. This corpus of edited English is even further limited by its relatively small size and its use of texts from only one genre, academic writing. The usage problems present in academic writing may be very different from those of other genres. Not only does usage vary between registers and genres, but editing can vary greatly from one editor or one publisher to another, as demonstrated in the book *One Book/Five Ways*. Editing may well vary from one genre to another, given the fundamental differences between genres and the style guides and manuals that they use. Editors in different fields often use different style guides, for example the *AP Stylebook* for journalism and *The Chicago Manual of Style* for general book publishing, along with a plethora of different styles in different academic fields. Further, if Standard English is generally the writing of the educated, then we may expect academic writing, as the product of more educated writers, to be closer to the standard before editing. This study should not be taken as an exhaustive survey of editing practice generally, but merely as an indication of some of the particular items targeted for standardization by copy editors and the role that copy editors play in the standardization process.

Because much of the editing was done by interns and was not the final edit before publication, I had some concerns about how similar the changes were to those made by professional editors. The usage and grammar rules selected for application by novices may differ

from those applied by professionals; that is, novice editors may have more enthusiasm for certain usage items, which may moderate with more experience. On the other hand, novices have not had as much time to learn the rules and thus may miss usage items that a more seasoned editor would catch. We should expect to see novices and veterans making broadly similar changes, though the items selected for editing and the rates of editing may differ in some particulars.

To serve as a check on the data, professional editors were solicited via the internet to edit the manuscripts, and these respondents were given one of the intern-edited manuscripts, though with all of the intern edits stripped out. These volunteers then marked them up using the Track Changes feature and returned them for analysis. Twelve editors responded to my request for volunteers and received a manuscript to edit. However, only five volunteers returned their edited manuscripts (totaling about 35,000 words), and each manuscript only received one edit. Thus only five of the twenty-two manuscripts that were edited by interns were given to the volunteers for editing. Samples of the original and edited manuscript text are provided below.

Figure 2.1: Sample Original Manuscript Text

Bellow's characters are on a quest for the essential in life; each in their own way ask: What can we do without, slough off, and what, if we were to lose, would so impoverish our lives that they would be scarcely worth living? The Bellovian hero must ask this question. From Augie March and Tommy Wilhelm to Moses Herzog, Artur Sammler and Charlie Citrine—all of these characters grapple with this query. To answer this question or to be in a position to intuit an answer, each must carefully avoid being caught in the nets the world throws at them: poverty, ignorance, hatred, and confusion—one must constantly avoid these entanglements—the myriad distractions of postmodern culture. The unnamed narrator of *The Bellarosa Connection* takes his

Figure 2.2: Sample of Intern-Edited Text

Bellow's characters are on a quest for the essential in life; ~~each~~ in their own way, they all ask these question~~s~~: What can we do without, ~~slough off,~~ and ~~what,~~ if we were to lose, what would so impoverish our lives that they would be scarcely worth living? ~~The Bellovian hero must ask this question.~~ From Augie March and Tommy Wilhelm to Moses Herzog, Artur Sammler, and Charlie Citrine— all of these characters grapple with this query.— To answer this question or to be in a position to intuit an answer, ~~each~~ all must carefully avoid being caught in the nets the world throws at them: poverty, ignorance, hatred, and confusion, ~~— one must constantly avoid these entanglements~~ —the myriad distractions of postmodern culture.— The unnamed narrator of

Figure 2.3: Sample of Volunteer-Edited Text

Bellow's characters are on a quest for the essential in life; each in ~~their~~ his or her own way asks: What can ~~we~~ I do without, slough off, and what, if ~~we~~ I were to lose, would so impoverish ~~our~~ my lif~~eves~~ that ~~they~~ it would be scarcely worth living? The Bellovian hero must ask this question. From Augie March and Tommy Wilhelm to Moses Herzog, Artur Sammler and Charlie Citrine—all of these characters grapple with this query. To answer this question or to be in a position to ~~intuit~~ formulate an answer, each must carefully avoid being caught in the nets the world throws at them: poverty, ignorance, hatred, and confusion—one must constantly avoid these entanglements—the myriad distractions of postmodern culture. The unnamed narrator of

The intern and volunteer edits are not directly comparable without some caveats. First, some edited items do not appear at all in the volunteer edits simply because the opportunities to make those changes did not appear in any of the five manuscripts given to the volunteers. That

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is, in some cases a construction that was edited by the interns appeared only in a manuscript that was not given to the volunteers. Where the data is not available, we cannot safely say what the practice of the volunteer editors may have been. Second, the volunteers were all working individually, with no second copy editor to review their changes and catch anything that they might have missed. It may be that the volunteers were more likely to miss minor problems or were more inconsistent in their edits, but there is no way of knowing what effect, if any, the lack of a second edit may have on the data without comparing their documents to other professionally edited documents that received two rounds of edits. Third, the absolute frequencies of changes in the intern and volunteer edits are not directly comparable because of the different sizes of each corpus. However, where provided, the editing rates should effectively normalize these numbers and provide a basis for comparison. Where they are not provided, rates per 1,000 words will be given in parentheses following the edit counts. Fourth, the interns were all trained at the same institution and presumably followed a single style guide. The volunteers come from different backgrounds and may have been editing according to different style guides or no particular style guide at all, though this would have the biggest effect in the more arbitrary matters of punctuation and other matters of style (such as capitalization or hyphenation rules), which were mostly ignored for the purposes of this study. Thus we may see much more consistency in the intern edits than in the volunteer edits. On the other hand, any areas of convergence between the two groups should be given extra consideration as prime areas of standardization. Areas where there is less convergence and more idiosyncratic application of usage rules should be considered more peripheral. Lastly, since the volunteers were all self-selected, they may have consciously or unconsciously strived to be more thorough or to make more changes, especially since they did

not face publication deadlines. However, after reviewing their changes, I feel comfortable saying that their edits appear to be in line with what I have seen in my own experience as an editor.

Despite these limitations, I believe that this study is adequate to give an idea of which rules editors are selecting and applying and the role that editors play in shaping Standard English. Though previous writers have suggested that copy editors play a role in standardization, this study is the first of its kind in exploring that role using real-world data.

Types of Changes

Editorial changes motivated by a desire for greater clarity, logic, or effectiveness were not counted in this study. Such sentence- or phrase-level changes, though an important part of the editing process, are generally not motivated by the forces of standardization. That is, the goal of such changes is not to regulate the form of expression, but to enhance, clarify, or otherwise alter the expression itself. Furthermore, such revisions frequently defy categorization and analysis, because their motivations and effects are so subjective. Thus sentence- or phrase-level revisions were only counted when they were clearly motivated by concern for a traditional item of usage or grammar, such as the passive voice or *there is* constructions, dangling or misplaced modifiers, fixed phrases like *the fact that*, and so on.

Style issues such as capitalization and typographical formatting or styling were ignored, and punctuation was ignored with one exception. Changes involving punctuation were only counted in the case of genitive forms, where the apostrophe may be considered an element of spelling and morphology, marking the genitive case on nouns. This means that all other punctuation was ignored. Though an exploration of the standardization of punctuation would be interesting, it was simply beyond the scope of this study.

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A few changes ran counter to a traditional rule, leaving the edited text with a proscribed form where the original text had a prescribed form, for example changing *whether* to *if* where the traditional rule dictates *whether*. Such changes are marked in the results with an asterisk, and as with the other changes, opportunity counts and editing rates are provided where possible. It is important to bear in mind, though, that opportunities to break a rule are not exactly the same as opportunities to enforce it, since every prescribed form essentially creates an opportunity to replace it with a proscribed form. However, the fact that rules are broken at all tells us something interesting about the rule, either that copy editors are not as familiar with the rule as they should be or that they are flouting it. Either way, it demonstrates that there is no consensus regarding a particular rule, which tells us that it has a more marginal status in the editing and thus the standardization process.

Categorization

Editorial changes were initially grouped into three categories—grammar, word use, and spelling—but several subcategories were large and coherent enough to warrant treating them separately. The subcategories of relative pronouns and adverbs, genitive forms, parallelism, grammatical agreement, and adverb placement were broken out of the grammar category. Word use was split into word choice, where the motivation for the change was regulating function of a particular word, and word form, where the motivation was regulating the form of the word itself. Sexist language, including the grammatical issue of epicene pronoun use, was also broken out as its own category. The decision to break out subcategories was driven mostly by the observation that many of the editorial changes—particularly the grammatical ones—formed several distinct clusters. Treating all grammatical changes together, for instance, would have partially obscured the patterns of changes and thus the areas of the language on which editors focus.

Chapter 3: Results

Although this is a very preliminary study, and the results are not always clear-cut, they generally seem to confirm the idea that editors are playing a significant standardizing role. Although most of the editing changes that were made may be characterized as suppression of optional variation, many are more substantial than mere regulation of forms like *organise* or *organize*. Many of the changes involve the regulation of grammatical variation, both morphological and syntactic, or the regulation of word meaning.

The results have been grouped into several major categories—grammar, spelling, word form, word choice, and sexist language. In a few cases, large subcategories (e.g., relative pronouns and adverbs, genitive forms, and parallelism) have been broken out. Each item will include a raw count of the number of times a change was made and, where possible, the number of opportunities to make an edit and the percentage of the time a particular rule was applied. However, because this will require manually tallying the number of times a potential usage problem occurred in each manuscript, it will not be feasible to provide the number of opportunities and the percentages for extremely frequent words and for syntactic problems, since such issues are difficult or impossible to search for.

Dashes in the opportunities and rate columns show that it was not possible to obtain numbers for those items. Since the intern edits total about 185,000 words and the volunteer edits only 35,000, frequencies per 1,000 words are also given to normalize the edited counts where the opportunity counts and rates are unavailable. Deletion will be shown as $x > \emptyset$, while insertions will be shown as $\emptyset > x$. Changes that run contrary to the traditional rule are marked with an asterisk.

Grammar

The most frequent changes in the grammar category occurred in the subcategories of relative pronouns and adverbs, genitive forms, parallelism, adverb placement, and grammatical agreement. After these subcategories, the changes become less coherent and occur at fairly low rates, as illustrated in Table 3.1. The subcategories will be treated in more detail below.

Table 3.1: Copy-Editing Changes to Grammar

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
relative pronouns and adverbs (all)	——	——	40	0.2163	24	0.6927	——	——
genitive forms (all)	——	——	36	0.1947	5	0.1443	——	——
parallelism (all)	——	——	18	0.0973	8	0.2309	——	——
adverb placement (all)	——	——	15	0.0811	3	0.0866	——	——
grammatical agreement (all)	——	——	12	0.0649	0	0.0000	——	——
Ø>*that*	——	——	6	0.0324	1	0.0289	——	——
passive>active	——	——	5	0.0270	0	0.0000	——	——
*whether>*if*	——	——	3	0.0162	0	0.0000	——	——
pro>noun	——	——	3	0.0162	0	0.0000	——	——
rather than (conj)> *rather than* (prep)	2	0	2		0		100%	——
get passive>*be* passive	3	0	2		0		66.67%	——
after having>*having*	2	1	1		0		50%	0%
if>*whether*	7	0	1		0		14.29%	——
there is>	96	15	1		0		1.04%	0%

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
historical present> past tense	——	——	1	0.0054	5	0.1443	——	——
that>∅	——	——	1	0.0054	5	0.1443	——	——
how>NP	——	——	1	0.0054	1	0.0289	——	——
**having*> *after having*	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
adverb>adjective	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
common-number *they*>*it*	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
dangling participle	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
each>*all*	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
sing distributed obj> plural	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
prep prep>prep	——	——	0	0.0000	3	0.0866	——	——
adjective>adverb	——	——	0	0.0000	2	0.0577	——	——
stranded prep> fronted prep	——	——	0	0.0000	2	0.0577	——	——
infinitive>gerund	——	——	0	0.0000	1	0.0289	——	——
misplaced modifier	——	——	0	0.0000	1	0.0289	——	——

After the subcategories, the most common cluster involves the deletion or insertion of the complementizer *that*. In the intern edits, it was inserted six times and deleted once. Strangely, the volunteer edits show the opposite tendency; *that* was deleted five times and inserted once. This pattern could simply be an artifact of a small sample size; four different intern editors inserted *that*, but all five deletions in the volunteer edits came from one volunteer. Or it could be the

result of mixed usage advice; some authorities recommend deleting *that* whenever possible, while other recommend retaining it for clarity.

Six instances of the passive voice were changed to the active voice in the intern edits, and two out of three instances of the *get* passive were changed to *be* passives. No *get* passives were made active. No changes involving voice were made in the volunteer edits.

Curiously, in three instances, the intern editors changed *whether* to *if* when introducing noun clauses, a change that runs counter to the traditional rule that only *whether* can introduce noun clauses. In only one case out of a possible seven in the intern edits, *if* was changed to *whether*, following the traditional rule. No changes involving *if* or *whether* were made by the volunteers.

In three cases, the intern editors replaced unclear pronouns with noun phrases. It was not feasible to count the number of opportunities for such changes. No such changes occurred in the volunteer edits.

The volunteers replaced three sequences of two prepositions (e.g., *from within*) with a single preposition (*within*). No similar changes occurred in the intern edits.

In one instance in the intern edits and five instances in the volunteer edits, sentences or clauses in the historical present were changed to the simple past.

In two instances the interns changed the complement of *rather than* from a finite verb to a non-finite form, essentially changing *rather than* from a conjunction to a preposition. Instances of *rather than* followed by a finite verb or other part of speech that could not easily be converted to a noun form were not counted as opportunities. No such opportunities occurred in the volunteer edits.

Twice in the volunteer edits, an editor changed a stranded preposition to a fronted one. No such changes occurred in the intern edits.

In both the intern and volunteer edits, a *how* clause (though not the same one in each edit) was reworded to create a regular noun phrase, apparently under the assumption that such clauses cannot form the objects of verbs or prepositions.

Another curious set of changes involve the constructions *after having pa. ppl.* and *having pa. ppl.* Some authorities consider *after having* redundant and recommend either *having pa. ppl.* or *after pr. ppl.* However, the changes here were inconsistent. In one instance out of two opportunities, the interns changed *after having pa. ppl.* to *having pa. ppl.*, but in one instance an intern changed *having pa. ppl.* to *after having pa. ppl.* No such changes were made in the volunteer edits.

In one instance in the intern edits, a distributed singular object was changed to plural (*their gender role > their gender roles*).

Two changes in the intern edits involved the common-number use of *they*. In one case *they* was changed to *it* when referring to an institution. In another *each* was changed to *all* to maintain numerical agreement with a common-number *them* later in the sentence.

In the volunteer edits, one infinitive clause was changed to a construction with a gerund (*a means to transfer > a means of transferring*).

In the intern edits, one adverb was changed to an adjective, in the construction *some years previous(ly)*. In the volunteer edits, two adjectives were changed to adverbs (*near two thousand points > nearly two thousand points*), though one appears to be based on a misparsing of the sentence by the editor (*one unexpected, externally imposed > one unexpectedly, externally imposed*).

In the intern edits, one dangling participle was reworded, and one *there is* construction (out of 96 opportunities) was changed to an agentive sentence. There were fifteen *there is* constructions in the volunteer edits, but none were changed.

Relative Pronouns and Adverbs

Relative pronouns and adverbs constituted the single largest subcategory of changes, which should perhaps be unsurprising. Relatives occur quite frequently, and the degree of variation which they exhibit provides ample opportunity to impose various rules regulating their use. The most popular rules are the *that/which* rule, proscribing the use of *which* as a restrictive relative pronoun; restriction of relative *where* to locative constructions, replacing non-locative uses with *in which*; and deletion of *that* when it serves as an object.

Table 3.2: Copy-Editing Changes to Relative Pronouns and Adverbs
Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
which>that	49	16	27		12		55.10%	75%
where>in which	9	3	7		0		77.78%	0%
whom>who	2	2	1		2		50%	100%
that> ∅	——	——	1	0.0054	4	0.1155	——	——
that>who	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
what>that which	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
**who>that*	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
that which> what	5	4	0		1		0%	25%
why>∅	2	1	0		1		0%	100%

Among the intern-edited papers, restrictive *which* was changed to *that* in 27 out of 49 instances, or just over 55 percent of the time. In the volunteer-edited papers, however, this jumps to 75 percent of the time, with the rule being applied in 12 out of 16 instances. The likely explanation for this is that some of the interns had perhaps not learned the rule yet or else had not mastered it. Similarly, the interns caught 1 out of 2 instances of misused *whom*, while the volunteers caught both.

Other items show less convergence between the interns and volunteers. For example, the interns changed relative *where* to *in which* in 7 out of 9 instances in which it was used in a non-locative sense, or 77.78 percent of the time. The volunteers never made this change, even though there were three opportunities to do so. The volunteers were also more inclined to delete relative *that* where permissible (as well as complementary *that*, as shown in the section on grammar) and *why* when introducing a relative clause following *reason*.

The changes from *that which* to *what* and vice versa also show no convergence. Though some authorities recommend replacing *that which* with *what*, none that I know of recommend the reverse. *That which>what* occurred once out of four opportunities in the volunteer-edited papers but not at all in the intern-edited papers, and *what>that which* occurred once in the intern-edited papers but not at all in the volunteer-edited papers. Perhaps these changes were not based on rules in usage books but rather on the editors' intuitions about what sounded right.

One anomalous change in the intern-edited papers was from *who* to *that* in a restrictive clause with a human referent. The common rule forbids the use of *that* with human referents, and though some authorities do not endorse this ban, there does not appear any reason for an editor to

make a change in order to flout it. Once again, perhaps the editor was simply editing by ear and thought that *that* sounded more euphonious.

Even though the volunteers had less than one-fifth as much text as the interns, they made just over half as many changes. Overall, the volunteers made over three times as many changes per page regarding relative pronouns and adverbs as the interns.

Genitives

Table 3.3: Copy-Editing Changes to Genitive Forms

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
s'>s's	28	2	23		1		82.14%	50%
es'>es's	4	0	4		0		100%	——
s gen>*of* gen	——	17	4	0.0286	1	0.0289	——	5.88%
x and y's>x's and y's	1	0	1		0		100%	——
es's>es'	6	0	1		0		16.7%	——
of gen>*s* gen	——	——	1	0.0054	1	0.0289	——	——
s gen>attributive	——	17	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	0%
's>s'	——	——	1	0.0054	0		——	——
's>s's	——	——	1	0.0054	0		——	——

Genitives made up the next largest subcategory, with the change from -*s'* to -*s's* being most frequent. Though the question of whether a possessive name ending in -*s* should have an additional *s* after the apostrophe is often treated as a question of spelling or style, it is essentially a question of morphology involving the choice between the *s* form and the zero form of the

genitive. The frequent changes show that editors feel it necessary to regulate this variation. By chance, the papers edited by the volunteers presented far fewer opportunities to change *-s'* to *-s's*, so the raw frequencies are not very comparable to the intern edits.

In a few cases *s* genitives were changed to *of* genitives when used with inanimate nouns and *of* genitives to *s* genitives when used with people. In one instance such an *s* genitive was changed to an attributive noun construction. Since an *s* genitive with an inanimate noun could be changed to either an *of* genitive or a construction such as an attributive, these opportunities were counted together. In another instance an *of* genitive was changed to an *s* genitive when used with a person. Though the restriction of the *s* genitive to people was infrequent, it nevertheless indicates that editors are increasing the grammaticalization of genitive forms.

In one case in the intern edits, a pair of conjoined possessives was given another *'s* (e.g. *Bob and Joe's > Bob's and Joe's*) when the possession was not joint. This opportunity did not appear in the volunteer edits.

One instance of a possessive form of a name ending in *-es* had the extra *s* deleted. This is in accordance with *Chicago* 15 but not 16. All other instances of names ending in *-es* had the *s* added in accordance with *Chicago* 16.

Edits involving simple apostrophe errors—such as a missing apostrophe or an apostrophe put in the wrong place—were ignored.

Parallelism

At first glance parallelism seems like a fairly incoherent subcategory, but upon closer inspection it seems that the changes form some coherent clusters. Most of the changes cluster around either correlative constructions (*not only . . . but also* and *both . . . and*) or coordinate lists, especially coordinate prepositional phrases or complements of prepositions. The interns

seemed especially fond of changes involving the *not only . . . but also* construction. Where the

formulation lacked either the *also* or the *but also*, they supplied them, and where elements were

not parallel, the construction was shifted to make it so. Curiously, the volunteers made no

changes with *not only . . .but also* constructions.

Table 3.4: Copy-Editing Changes to Parallelism

Unavailable data is shown with ———. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
repeated P	——	——	3	0.0162	2	0.0577	——	——
part of speech	——	——	3	0.0162	1	0.0577	——	——
not only…but>not only…but also	——	——	2	0.0108	0	0.0000	——	——
verb tense	——	——	1	0.0054	1	0.0289	——	——
not only>not only…but also	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
not only V PP *but also* PP>V *not only* PP *but also* PP	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
to not only VP *but to* VP>*not only to* VP *but to* VP	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
*not only that…but also that>that not only…but also	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
missing P	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
Ø>*and*	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
V *both that…and* NP>V *that…and* V NP	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
both P NP *and* NP>P *both* NP *and* NP	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
both to V *and to* V>*to both* V *and to* V	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
deleted P	——	——	0	0.0000	3	0.0866	——	——
both to V *and to* V>*to both* V *and* V	——	——	0	0.0000	1	0.0289	——	——

In two different instances an intern editor shifted the *not only* to keep the structures parallel. In one case *not only* was moved to the right of a verb (*not only was useful in . . . but also in* > *was not only useful in . . . but also in*); in the other, the *not only* was moved left of a *to* in an infinitive verb phrase.

In one instance an intern editor moved two *that*s from inside to outside a *not only . . .but also* construction (*not only that . . . but also that* > *that not only . . . but also*). It is not clear what would motivate such a change, because the structure was perfectly parallel to begin with. This change has been marked with an asterisk because it creates grammatical problems with the rest of the sentence; the edited sentence fails to show the expected subject-auxiliary inversion that should follow *not only*.

Several more changes revolved around prepositions in coordinate structures, though there was no clear pattern. In a few cases in both the intern and volunteer edits, prepositions were repeated (*to x and y* > *to x and to y*). In one instance, a missing preposition was supplied (*to x, to*

y, and z > to x, to y, and to z). But in three instances in the volunteer edits, prepositions were deleted (*for x and for y > for x and y*).

Three changes in the intern edits and one in the volunteer edits involved changing parts of speech in coordinate lists to make them more parallel. In another instance in the intern edits, verb tense was changed to maintain parallelism in a list. One nonparallel list with two coordinate items and one noncoordinate item was made parallel by inserting *and* between the first two items.

A few more changes involved *both . . . and* constructions. In one instance a *that* clause had been coordinated with a regular noun phrase. The editor removed the *both* and repeated the verb to maintain parallelism.

In another instance where a prepositional phrase was coordinated with a noun phrase, the editor moved the preposition to the left of *both* to make both elements noun phrases. Curiously, though, one change did not fix a nonparallel construction but merely replaced it with a different parallel construction by moving a repeated preposition to the left of the *both*, while one actually turned a parallel construction into a nonparallel one.

Adverb Placement

Changes to adverb placement also clustered around a few items, notably *only*, *however*, and split infinitives. The placement of *simply* and *not* could be grouped with *only* as restrictive adverbs.

Table 3.5: Copy-Editing Changes to Adverb Placement

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
only	17	2	8		2		59.1%	100%
*∅>initial *however*	——	——	2		0		——	——
simply	2	1	1		0		50%	0%
*medial *however*> initial *however*	65	0	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	1.54%	0%
init *however*>	81	11	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	1.23%	0%
split infinitive>unsplit infinitive	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
*unsplit infinitive>split infinitive	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
not	——	——	0	0.0000	1	0.0289	——	——

The most frequent change involving adverb placement in both the intern and volunteer edits was movement of the word *only* to be closer to the word it modifies.

A few changes in the intern edits involved *however*, but in different ways. In two cases an initial *however* was inserted, presumably to facilitate a better transition from the previous sentence, though this placement violates the traditional rule. One change replaced an initial *however* with *unfortunately*, thus sidestepping the ban on sentence-initial *however*, though it is not clear if the rule was the motivation for the change. Another edit moved a medial *however* to initial position, again violating the traditional rule.

One change in the placement of *simply* in the intern edits and another of the placement of *not* in the volunteer edits appear to follow the same logic as the *only* rule, moving the limiting adverb closer to the word or phrase it modifies.

In the intern edits, one split infinitive was unsplit, and one unsplit infinitive was split.

Grammatical Agreement

Though there were relatively few changes involving grammatical agreement, it seemed prudent to consider them as their own subcategory to better examine the types of agreement problems that editors encounter. Strangely, no changes involving agreement were made in the volunteer edits, perhaps because the opportunities simply were not present in the smaller sample of texts. Due to the nature of agreement problems, it was not possible to count opportunities or calculate change rates.

Table 3.6: Copy-Editing Changes to Grammatical Agreement

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
proximal> grammatical	——	——	6	0.0324	0	0.0000	——	——
plural or singular> singular	——	——	2	0.0108	0	0.0000	——	——
*grammatical> notional	——	——	2	0.0324	0	0.0000	——	——
plural>singular	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
notional> grammatical	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
collective plural> singular	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——

The most common type was the change from proximal agreement to grammatical agreement, where an intervening noun phrase of a different number from the subject has caused the writer to make a verb agree with the closer noun phrase.

Two changes involved a word that is plural in construction but either singular or plural (usually singular) in agreement. Both involved *studies* referring to a field (e.g. *Mormon studies has largely ignored > Mormon studies have largely ignored*).

In two cases involving relative clauses, editors appear to have misparsed the sentences and caused verbs to agree with nouns other than their actual subjects (*land filled with riches that rewards > land filled with riches that reward* and *poems were printed on both sides of paper, which was glued together > poems were printed on both sides of paper, which were glued together*). The context seems to indicate that these sentences were correct as written and were miscorrected by the editors.

In one instance a plural verb form was changed to singular (*Marta laughs at this when telling the anecdote and then simply end by saying > Marta laughs at this when telling the anecdote and then simply ends by saying*).

In one instance notional agreement was replaced with grammatical agreement (*his vast book collection, index cards, and music collection was stored > his vast book collection, index cards, and music collection were stored*), and in another a collective noun was changed from plural to singular agreement (*the Arizona Historical Foundation staff use the concept > the Arizona Historical Foundation staff uses the concept*).

Spelling

Table 3.7: Copy-Editing Changes to Spelling Variants

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited		editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns	volunteers	interns	volunteers
-ise>-ize	24	16	20	0	83.33%	0%
-our>-or	6	1	6	0	100%	0%
insure>ensure	2	0	2	0	100%	——
programme>program	2	2	2	0	100%	0%
acknowledgement> acknowledgment	4	1	2	0	50%	0%
busses>buses	1	1	1	1	100%	100%
affect>effect	2	0	1	0	50%	——
discreet>discrete	1	1	0	1	0%	100%

The next largest category after genitives is spelling, including commonly confused pairs such as *insure/ensure*, *discrete/discreet*, and *affect/effect*. British spellings predominate, which, as stated in the introduction, is presumably the result of a skewed sample that included three pieces (out of twenty-two) by non-American authors copy edited by Americans.

Not counting British spellings, there were very few spelling variants or errors. Outright errors, where the spelling did not correspond to any word, were ignored for the purposes of this study. Only errors involving homophonic pairs, as noted above, and spelling variants that are commonly listed in major dictionaries were counted. Because of time limitations, I wished to focus on areas of optional variability rather than clear-cut errors.

Forms of *affect* for *effect* occurred twice and were edited once in the intern edits; they did not occur in the volunteer edits. *Insure* for *ensure* occurred twice and was corrected both times

by the interns, but it also did not occur in the volunteer edits. *Discreet* for *discrete* occurred once in both the intern and volunteer edits but was only corrected in the volunteer edits.

Aside from the commonly confused pairs and British forms, only a few words exhibited any variation. The variant form *acknowledgement* was changed to *acknowledgment*, but not consistently; it was changed two out of four times by the interns but was not changed the one time it appeared in the volunteer edits. Interestingly, *judgement*, which features similar variation, appeared once in both sets of edits and was not changed. *Busses* also appeared once in both sets of edits; in the volunteer edits, it was changed to *buses*, but in the intern edits, it was simply flagged to draw the author's attention to a potential inconsistency between a quotation and the text.

The results show that spelling is indeed already highly standardized. Few spelling errors or variants of any kind were found in the texts, which may be attributable to the advent of computerized spellchecking. However, such software often fails to identify cases in which a homophone was improperly used, leaving some opportunities for editors to enforce spelling distinctions.

Word Form

Table 3.8: Copy-Editing Changes to Word Form

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
towards>toward	37	9	12		7		32.43%	77.78%
the fact that>∅	17	5	3		0		17.65%	0%

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
till>until	2	0	2		0		100%	——
impact> affect	3	1	2		1		66.67%	100%
's>is	8	10	2		1		25%	10%
in regards to>in/with regard to	1	1	1		1		100%	100%
categorial>categorical	1	1	1		1		100%	100%
human beings> humans	1	0	1		0		100%	0%
publically>publicly	1	1	1		0		100%	0%
signalized>signaled	1	0	1		0		100%	——
legitimation> *legitimization*	1	0	1		0		100%	——
and/or>and	7	0	1		0		14.29%	——
to>in order to	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
in order to>to	39	13	0		2		0%	15.38 %

Editorial changes involving forms that have been proscribed in formal writing, either officially or unofficially, have been categorized under word form. The most popular change is *toward* to *towards*, though the editing rate varies significantly between the interns and the volunteers, with the volunteers deleting the *s* nearly two and a half times as often. This suggests once again that some of the interns might not yet have learned the rule or are not adept at applying it, while the volunteers do so much more consistently.

After this there is a steep drop-off in numbers; many of the other items present only one opportunity, and those that appear multiple times are edited at low rates, suggesting that for many editors these are more peripheral issues.

The fact that is often criticized as overly wordy, and it was deleted in five out of seventeen instances in the intern edits but zero out of three times in the volunteer edits. Even among the interns, this is a relatively low rate of correction. Of course, in many instances it cannot simply be deleted without substantial rewriting.

Contractions are sometimes criticized as being too informal or colloquial, but they too were edited at low rates by both the interns and the volunteers. Interestingly, only contractions with *is* were spelled out; no corrections were made to any others.

The two changes from *till* to *until* were surprising. As some usage dictionaries note, *till* is actually older, but it has been inexplicably on the decline in recent decades. *Till* did not appear in the volunteer edits.

And/or is sometimes criticized as being wordy, legalistic, or, bizarrely (by Garner), ambiguous. It was altered to *and* once out of seven opportunities in the intern edits but presented no opportunities in the volunteer edits.

Verb forms of *impact* appeared three times in the intern edits and were changed to forms of *affect*. A verb form of *impact* appeared once in the volunteer edits and was changed to *influence*.

In order to, like *the fact that*, is often criticized as being wordy and is sometimes reduced to simply *to*. But out of thirty-nine opportunities in the intern edits, none were changed, though one instance of *to* was changed to *in order to*. Two instances out of thirteen were changed in the volunteer edits.

In one instance in the intern edits, *human beings* was changed to *humans*. This runs counter to the traditional advice that *human* by itself should not be used as a noun. No such opportunities were present in the volunteer edits.

In regards to appeared once in both the intern and volunteer edits, and in each case the *s* was deleted from *regards*. (In the volunteer edits, *in* was also changed to *with*.)

The remaining edits in this category are morphological variants exhibiting no difference in meaning. Some usage advice recommends using the shorter form when possible (e.g. *preventative/preventive*, *orientate/orient*), but with both *categorial* and *legitimation*, the words were replaced with longer forms. It appears that the overriding consideration is not length but frequency; the edited forms all appear much more frequently in COCA and other corpora than the original forms.

Word Choice

Table 3.9: Copy-Editing Changes to Word Choice

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
all of>all	25	4	2		1		8%	25%
can>may	——	——	2	0.0108	0	0.0000	——	——
farther>further	1	0	1		0		100%	——
hundred>one hundred	1	0	1		0		100%	0%
i.e.>e.g.	3	1	1		0		33.33%	0%
an h>a h	4	0	1		0		25%	——
over>more than	10	3	1		0		10%	0%

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change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
for >since	14	3	1		0		7.14%	0%
as>since	15	5	1		0		6.67%	0%
since>because	53	10	1		1		1.89%	10%
may>can	——	——	1	0.0054	1	0.0289	——	——
*a h>an h	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
youth>youths	12	10	0		3		0%	30%
adopt>adapt	1	1	0		1		0%	100%
due to>because of	17	1	0		1		0%	100%
each other>one another	6	1	0		1		0%	100%
final>eventual	2	1	0		1		0%	100%
have to>must	5	3	0		1		0%	33%
persons>people	4	3	0		1		0%	33%
redolent>reminiscent	1	1	0		1		0%	100%
utilize>use	9	1	0		1		0%	100%
about>of/on	——	——	0		2	0.0577	——	——
like>such	——	——	0		1	0.0289	——	——
though>although	——	——	0		1	0.0289	——	——
within>in	——	——	0		1	0.0289	——	——

Items were considered word choice if they involved two legitimate forms that are regulated in some way according to meaning or function. These are sometimes claimed to be useful distinctions, preserving one form for one function and another form for another function.

Many authorities restrict *all of* to instances where it is followed by a personal pronoun, but out of 25 opportunities in the intern edits, only two were changed to *all*. It appeared only four times in the volunteer edits and was edited once. Clearly this is not a very important rule to most editors.

Since in a causal sense was changed once to *because* in both the volunteer and intern edits (though different instances of *since* that were changed in each), for a rate of about 2 to 10 percent. Interestingly, one instance of causal *as* and one of causal *for* were changed to *since* in the intern edits, further demonstrating the low traction of the ban on causal *since*.

A few changes involving *can* and *may* show no real pattern. In two instances in the intern edits, *can* was changed to *may* in contexts where *can* was not forbidden, that is, cases in which *can* was not being used to express permission. *May* was changed to *can* once in both the volunteer and intern edits.

One instance of non-literal *farther* was changed to *further* in the intern edits. This is interesting because it is usually the use of *further* with physical distances that is the issue; most usage books note that non-literal *farther* is quite rare. No changes from *further* to *farther* occurred in either set of edits.

In one instance out of four opportunities in the intern edits, phrases such as *an historian* were changed to *a historian*, following the rule that *an* should not be used when the following word starts with a consonant. Puzzlingly, in one case *a historian* was changed to *an historian*. No such opportunities were present in the volunteer edits.

In one instance out of three opportunities in the intern edits, *i.e.* was changed to *e.g.* A similar opportunity was missed in the volunteer edits. It is interesting to note that in some cases it

was not entirely clear which was intended; context alone may not always be enough to inform editors who are not experts in the subjects they are editing.

In one instance out of ten opportunities in the intern edits, *over* was changed to *more than* when used with quantities (e.g., *over two hundred people > more than two hundred people*). No such changes were made in the volunteer edits.

The collective *youth* was changed to *youths* three times out of ten opportunities in the volunteer edits, but not at all in the intern edits.

In two instances in the volunteer edits, *about* was changed to either *of* or *on*. It is not clear what motivated these changes.

Sexist Language

Table 3.10: Copy-Editing Changes to Sexist Language

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Changes that violate a traditional rule are marked with *.

change	# of opportunities to edit		# of times edited				editing rate	
	interns	volunteers	interns		volunteers		interns	volunteers
			# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words	# of changes	# of changes per 1,000 words		
he>they	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
its>his or her	——	——	1	0.0054	0	0.0000	——	——
man>human(kind)	——	——	0	0.0000	2	0.0577	——	——
they>he or she	——	——	0	0.0000	1	0.0289	——	——
she>he/she	——	——	0	0.0000	1	0.0289	——	——
he>he or she	——	——	0	0.0000	1	0.0289	——	——

Sexist language was a surprisingly infrequent problem. Several changes involved epicene pronouns, though each in a different way. In the intern edits, one gender-neutral form of *he* was changed to a form of *they* (and the sentence recast as a plural to maintain strict agreement), and

in one odd case an editor recommended changing *its* to *his or her* with reference to *person (or object)*.

In the volunteer edits, one gender-neutral *they* was changed to *he or she*, and one *she* and one *he* were changed to *he/she* or *he or she*.

Also in the volunteer edits, one instance of *man* was changed to *human* when representing an individual, and another was changed to *humankind* when referring to humanity in general.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Since the invention of printing, copy editing has grown into a professionalized layer of language standardization between writer and audience. Copy editors' work is apparently taken for granted by all parties involved: writers know they will be edited and submit to the process (though sometimes unwillingly), editors believe that their work is essential and expected by readers, and readers either expect copy editing or are unaware of its existence. Arguments have ranged over the validity of particular usage prescriptions and whether they should be taught and enforced in print. What has not been clear, however, is what exactly editors are doing with regard to usage and standardization—which rules they are following and which forms they are codifying in print. There has also historically been no available data on the kinds of usage changes that editors make, further clouding the issue of what role editors play in standardization. The results of this study provide some idea of the nature of that role and indicate some directions for further study.

Research Questions 1 and 2

What changes are copy editors making with regard to grammar and usage? How do novice and professional editorial practice differ with regard to the kinds of changes made? These two questions will be treated together because of their closely related nature. Unfortunately, there are only a few clear patterns in the most popular editing usage changes. However, when the subcategories are collapsed into their parent categories (so that grammar encompasses relatives, genitives, parallelism, adverb placement, and agreement, while word form, word choice, and gender are collected under word use), some general tendencies emerge. The differences between the interns and volunteers also become starker, though it is also clear that they both focus their efforts on grammar. Word use is more variable and shows a larger discrepancy between the two

groups, while spelling is edited at the lowest rate. As stated before, the data for spelling changes may not be very reliable, since the manuscripts seemed to have an unusually high rate of British spellings; furthermore, British spellings were ignored in the one volunteer-edited manuscript in which they appeared. When changes involving British spellings are removed from the count, however, the editing rates become much more comparable. This supports the notion that spelling is already highly standardized, leaving little work for editors to do, especially since most errors will be caught by spell-checking software before the manuscript even reaches a copy editor.

Table 4.1: Intern and Volunteer Editor Correction Counts and Rates by Category

category	interns		volunteers	
	# of changes	# of changes per thousand words	# of changes	# of changes per thousand words
grammar	152	0.8219	61	1.7607
relatives	40	0.2163	24	0.6927
genitives	36	0.1947	5	0.1443
parallelism	18	0.0973	8	0.2309
adverb placement	15	0.0811	3	0.0866
agreement	12	0.0649	0	0.0000
other	31	0.1676	21	0.6061
word use	47	0.2541	41	1.1834
word form	30	0.1622	16	0.4618
word choice	15	0.0811	20	0.5773
sexist language	2	0.0108	5	0.1443
spelling	39	0.2109	2	0.0577
–British	6	0.0324	2	0.0577

The volunteers make corrections involving grammar at over twice the rate of the interns, while they make corrections involving word use at nearly five times the rate. This seems to indicate that word-use prescriptions are harder to acquire, which makes a great deal of sense. Grammatical rules are usually much more black and white—for example, restrictions about

complement type or requirements to use a certain form in a certain construction—while word use is much harder to regulate. Knowing the canonically correct meaning of a word and identifying uses that don't adhere to it is much more difficult, especially given the way that meanings shift or expand little by little. Acquiring these rules obviously takes more work. Many of the word-use changes also occur at a very low rate, so it could be that novices have simply not encountered the particular problems often enough to have become familiar with them.

The following sections will discuss the results in more detail, examining the most common editing changes and comparing the editing rates of the interns and volunteers. It will then answer the research questions of what changes editors are making with regard to usage and grammar and what role editors can be said to play in the standardization process.

Editing Changes to Grammar

Unfortunately, the difficulty of searching unparsed text for grammatical constructions made it impossible to count opportunities for most of the changes in this category. The favorite items for both the interns and the volunteers were the subcategories of relative pronouns and adverbs, genitive forms, and parallelism. After the various subcategories in this group, the changes become less coherent

Relative Pronouns and Adverbs

What is striking about the changes involving relative pronouns and adverbs is that *which>that* is far and away the most popular. Not only does it provides abundant opportunities, but it is edited at high rates. Most of the other changes in this subcategory either provide far fewer opportunities or could not be counted to calculate an editing rate. In some cases we may infer that rules with uncounted opportunities were edited at low rates. The word *that*, for instance, occurred over 2,000 times in the intern manuscripts but was deleted as a relative

pronoun only once. Even if only 10 percent of the 2,000 *that*s were relative pronouns in a deletable position, this means that the rule was applied only .5 percent of the time. Of course, it could be that far fewer of the 2,000 were relative *that*s that could be deleted, but it seems rather unlikely that the number of opportunities was low enough to calculate a high editing rate.

In most cases the volunteers edit at higher rates than the interns, though the volunteers never make the changes *where>in which*, *that>who*, *what>that which*, or *who>that*. The first two are commonly found in many usage manuals, so it is unclear why the volunteers would never make them. The latter two actually run contrary to traditional rules, which may explain why the more experienced volunteers didn't make those changes. Overall, though, the volunteers edited relative pronouns and adverbs at a much higher rate than the interns; they made .693 changes per thousand words, while the interns changed only .216 per thousand words. They showed the greatest convergence with *which>that* and *whom>who*. However, it is hard to extrapolate much with confidence from the low number of opportunities to edit *whom>who* or most of the other changes in this subcategory. (There were no opportunities to edit *who>whom*.) A larger corpus of professionally edited material would provide more reliable data from which we could draw stronger conclusions about the rates of editing. It is nevertheless clear that *which>that* enjoys a central place in the copy editing process and is a clear marker of Standard Edited English as opposed to unedited Standard English.

Genitive Forms

As with the relative subcategory, there is one stand-out change here: the addition of an *s* to genitive forms of names ending in *s*, as in *Jones'* to *Jones's*. It presented fewer opportunities than *which>that* but was edited at a significantly higher rate among the interns. Because of the variation among the manuscripts, the volunteers had only two opportunities to make this change.

Though it was only made once, we cannot extrapolate too much from this data. A larger dataset would show whether professionals make this change at rates comparable to those of the interns.

However, it is worth noting that many style guides differ on this rule. While the current edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* recommends always adding an *s* to genitive forms ending in *s*, other style guides, notably *The Associated Press Stylebook*, recommend always omitting it. Thus we should expect copy editing practice to vary by industry and field, with adherents of *AP* style deleting the final *s* on names ending in *s's* when they appear.

Chicago formerly provided an exception to the *s'>s's* rule for names ending in *es* pronounced /iːz/, as in Euripides. In cases like these, *Chicago* recommended omitting the second *s*. It is not clear whether the one change *es's>es'* was following this exception or was following a different rule or no particular formalized rule at all.

Some of the other changes in this subcategory show a very slight tendency to reserve the *s* genitive for people and the *of* genitive for non-people. These changes occurred at very low rates, however, so it is safe to say that these rules are very peripheral to Standard Edited English.

A few other changes regulated the placement of the genitive *'s* and distinction between the singular genitive *'s,* the plural *s,* and the plural genitive *s'.* These changes also provided few opportunities for editing, indicating that these forms are already highly standardized and that these rules are thus not central to the editing process.

In all, the interns made .189 changes per thousand words, while the volunteers made .144 changes per thousand words. The data here may be skewing the results, since the volunteers had few opportunities to edit *-s'>-s's* and may not have chosen to do so if they were editing according to Associated Press style or some other style that does not require the form *s's*.

Grammatical Agreement

Because of the low number of changes by the interns, the complete lack of changes by the volunteers, and the inability to count opportunities, it is difficult to make generalizations about this subcategory. Unedited Standard English presumably already shows a high degree of grammatical agreement, so it may be that there were simply few opportunities to make changes in this subcategory. The interns made only .065 changes per thousand words, so it seems that this is not a significant area of standardizing work for editors and that these changes do not do much to distinguish Standard English from Standard Edited English. Furthermore, the two apparently erroneous changes (*land filled with riches that rewards > land filled with riches that reward* and *poems were printed on both sides of paper, which was glued together > poems were printed on both sides of paper, which were glued together*) demonstrate that properly parsing a construction and fixing grammatical agreement can occasionally be difficult without sufficient knowledge of the topic being discussed.

Adverb Placement

The only adverb-placement change that was made more than once was the movement of *only*. Though it doesn't enjoy the frequency of changes like *which>that* or *towards>toward*, it seems to be moderately popular. Unfortunately, there were only two opportunities to move *only* in the volunteer edits, so even though the rate was 100 percent, it is difficult to say whether this is an area where the interns and volunteers truly converge. The other changes in this subcategory were infrequent enough that it is safe to say that they are not central to the editing process or the definition of Standard Edited English. However, they did edit at similar rates, with the interns making .07 changes per thousand words to the volunteers' .087. Even if this area is not important

to the definition of Standard Edited English, at least there is not a great discrepancy between the intern and volunteer editing.

Parallelism

Interestingly, most of the changes in this subcategory involve correlative conjunctions; relatively few involve nonparallel items in coordinate lists. The most popular all involve the construction *not only . . . (but) (also)*, though only the interns made changes with this construction. It is possible that the volunteers simply did not have enough opportunities to make such changes. A few more changes were made to constructions with *both . . . and*, though these were not as frequent. Only one volunteer change was made with this construction, and it involved the deletion of *to*, which may be motivated by a desire to avoid repeating a preposition, as explained below.

Both the interns and volunteers made changes involving prepositions in coordinate structures, though with little sign of convergence. Both groups sometimes repeated a preposition (e.g. *for their candor and sharing > for their candor and for sharing*), but one of the volunteers also deleted several of an author's repeated prepositions. It is not clear what is motivating these changes, since rules governing the repetition or deletion of prepositions in coordinate structures do not appear in the popular usage handbooks. Perhaps the deleters are following a principle such as "omit needless words" while the repeaters are editing by ear. Whatever the reason, even though there is editorial activity in this area, it appears to be entirely consistent. Even though the interns and volunteers do not show a high degree of convergence, their changes do form a few interesting clusters. The volunteers also made .231 changes per thousand words to the interns' .097.

Other

As stated in the results chapter, the two most frequent changes not included in one of the above subcategories run counter to one another: the interns occasionally inserted complementizer *that* where it had been omitted, while one volunteer repeatedly deleted it. Because different usage manuals make different recommendations, editorial practice varies. Even though the editors are not converging on a single form, it is interesting to note that they are aware of the variation here and are taking steps to regulate it. It will be interesting to see whether editing practice converges and a single standardized form coalesces at some point in the future.

The other individual rules in the category showed little convergence between the interns and the volunteers. It is difficult to say from the data whether these changes are indicative of broader editing tendencies or whether they are more idiosyncratic practices. However, the volunteers showed a much greater tendency to make changes in this subcategory, with .606 changes per thousand words to the interns' .168. It may be that increased editing for grammar comes with greater experience.

Spelling

Once again, a small set of changes stands out: the Americanization of British spellings. Other kinds of spelling variants and mistakes presented few opportunities for editorial correction. Spelling is more uniform today than it has been at any point in English history, leaving editors little work besides catching typos and other occasional misspellings and changing forms that are standard in other dialects but not in American English. Strangely, the volunteer editors did not make any changes to British spellings. The problem here may be the small sample size combined with my own intentionally vague instructions to the volunteers. There was only one volunteer-edited manuscript with British spellings, and without clear direction, the editor may have erred

on the side of caution and left them as is. Again, more data—especially data taken from already-edited manuscripts and not from volunteers—will show more clearly whether the Americanization of British spellings is a common facet of the standardization process.

Overall, the interns made far more changes, at a rate of .211 per thousand words, compared to the volunteers' .058. When changes to British spellings are removed, the rates are more comparable, with the interns making .032 changes per thousand words.

Word Form

The word form category once again shows a stand-out rule: *towards>toward*. And once again, the volunteers edited it at considerably higher rates than the interns, indicating that mastery of this particular rule is a sign of experience and that its application in print is a sign of Standard Edited English.

The remaining edits were again made at low rates or found few opportunities for application. The strongest area of convergence, after *towards>toward*, was *impact>affect*. Several edits concerning word form, though, found only one opportunity for application, which illustrates a problem with using specific lexical items to judge whether a text is standard: individual words may occur at very low rates in a corpus and may not occur in a given text at all. The volunteers made far more changes per word in this category, with .462 per thousand words to the interns' .162. Again, this may be a sign of their different amounts of experience.

Word Choice

This category shows no clear patterns or popular rules. The changes with the most frequent opportunities were applied less than 10 percent of the time, which seems to indicate that regulating words on the basis of semantics is a difficult endeavor. It is more difficult to proscribe a particular word meaning than it is to proscribe a grammatical function or word form, because it

is harder to determine whether a given use meets the criteria of the proscribed meaning than it is to determine whether it fits the proscribed form. It is thus trickier for editors to master these rules and apply them consistently. Once again, though, the volunteers edited at a much higher rate, with .577 changes per thousand words to the interns' .081. This appears to be the greatest disparity between the two groups.

Sexist Language

Sexist language was a very minor issue, though the volunteers made relatively more changes in this category than the interns did. Though the interns made changes involving gender .011 times per thousand words, the volunteers made .144 per thousand words, over ten times the rate. Because of the trouble in counting opportunities and the low number of changes, it is not clear whether the volunteers simply had relatively more opportunities, though it seems unlikely that the volunteers had over ten times as many opportunities per word as the interns.

Summary: Top Changes

There do not seem to be many clear patterns in the changes. The different sizes and composition of the two groups undoubtedly contribute to this problem. However, when some of the subcategories are considered together, such as genitive form, parallelism, and agreement, some patterns begin to emerge. Still, only *which>that*, *towards>toward*, and parallelism were in the top five for both groups, as shown in Table 4.2 below. Even when considering the two groups separately, though, there do not seem to be true patterns; the changes are essentially a grab-bag of orthography, grammar, and semantics, though with an emphasis on grammar. Some linguists may find it heartening to note that two of the most notorious prescriptive bugbears, the bans on split infinitives and stranded prepositions, are not to be found on this list. It should be borne in mind, though, that this is simply a list of the most common grammar and usage changes made by

copy editors, not a list of the most frequent or most bothersome usage mistakes, as some previous studies have produced. Further studies will be needed to determine whether these items are consistently among the top changes editors in different fields and also whether editors are focusing their efforts on the areas that are the most problematic. For now, we can say that editors are certainly codifying certain forms and eliminating optional variation, especially in specific areas of grammar such as relative pronouns and adverbs, genitive forms, and parallelism.

To get a better idea of which changes were popular and not just common because of numerous opportunities, I calculated a weighted value by multiplying the number of edits by the weighted value, as shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Top 10 Intern and Volunteer Editing Changes by Weighted Value

Unavailable data is shown with ——. Weighted value = # of edits × edited rate.

interns					volunteers				
change	# of edits	# of edits per thousand	edited rate	weighted value	change	# of edits	# of edits per thousand	edited rate	weighted value
British sp.> American sp.	33	0.1514	84.85%	23.76	*which>that*	12	0.3464	75%	9
genitive form	36	0.1568	60%	21.6	*towards>toward*	7	0.2020	77.78%	5.44
which>that	27	0.1460	55.10%	14.88	*only*	2	0.0577	100%	2
where>in which	7	0.0379	77.78%	5.44	parallelism	8	0.2886	——	——
towards>toward	12	0.0649	32.43%	3.89	rel. *that*>Ø	5	0.1443	——	——
only	8	0.0433	47.06%	3.76	historical present>past	5	0.1443	——	——
parallelism	18	0.0973	——	——	comp. *that*>Ø	5	0.1443	——	——
agreement	13	0.0649	——	——	prep. prep.>prep.	3	0.0866	——	——
Ø>comp. *that*	6	0.0324	——	——	stranded prep.>fronted prep.	2	0.0577	——	——
passive>active	5	0.0270	——	——	adjective>adverb	2	0.0577	——	——

It is interesting to note that many of the volunteers' top changes were grammatical and thus could not be counted to calculate edited rates or weighted values. This seems to indicate once again that the interns favored usage rules that prescribe and proscribe forms and functions of certain words, while the volunteers favor more rules that require deeper grammatical analysis. This means that edited text is distinct from educated but unedited text in ways that are frequently difficult to search for in corpora and are thus difficult to quantify. Even many of the changes that are easier to quantify are grammatical in nature, such as relative pronouns and adverbs, genitive forms, and the placement of particular adverbs like *only*. None of these changes individually may seem to add up to much, but the cumulative effect is to produce a standard form of the language that is much more grammatically regulated.

Research Question 3

What role can copy editors be said to play in the standardization of English? With the work of standardizing spelling mostly done, editors focus their efforts on grammar and word use. In nearly every case the editors are regulating optional variability; remarkably few of the edited items deal with clear-cut errors. This accords with Haugen's definition of codification as "minimal variation in form," which says that "the ideal case of minimal variation in form would be a hypothetical, 'pure' variety of a language having only one spelling and one pronunciation for every word, one word for every meaning, and one grammatical framework for all utterances" (1966: 931). It also supports McLain's idea of constitutive and regulative rules, with editors obviously serving as regulators.

The authors of the pieces used in this study are all well educated and seem to have little trouble with the constitutive rules of Standard English, but the editors ensure that the pieces conform better to the regulative rules of Standard Edited English. Cameron's term

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"hyperstandardization" may also apply; although her description of it as "a mania for imposing a rule on any conceivable point of usage" is obviously a value judgment, it seems safe to say that in most instances the editors' usage and grammar changes do little to aid efficient communication. Furthermore, her argument that editors are participating in standardization in peripheral ways seems to have some merit; the most popular changes in this study (*which>that*, *towards>toward*, *-s'>-s's*, and increasing parallelism) are fairly inconsequential compared to the task of standardizing disparate nonstandard dialects.

It is important to note once more that this study did not examine *all* changes made by the editors, only the ones dealing specifically with grammar, usage, and spelling, so it would be imprudent to characterize all editing as mere hyperstandardization. The question of whether editing for clarity, structure, logic, and so on is of benefit to the reader is not addressed here. Though some informal, unpublished studies have indicated that a greater degree of editing correlates with higher reader perceptions of the professionalism of the writing and increased reader engagement (for example Mathewson 2010; Vultee 2012), to my knowledge no studies have yet demonstrated the importance of following particular usage prescriptions. Obviously much more research in this field will be required before we can make any definitive statements about the value of copy editing in general. For now, Cameron's description of editors' role in the standardization process seems rather apt: "The activities of copy editors are crucial, because they help to sustain the *illusion* of a uniform standard language" (1995: 39).

It is also interesting to note that many of the most popular edits (as shown in Table 1) are not attempts to slow language change; many of the rules being applied are rather creations of usage commentators in the last century or two (see the various entries in *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, 1994). For example, *towards* and restrictive relative *which* were

common in print a century ago, and rules restricting or forbidding their use did not become common until the twentieth century. These forms are increasingly rare in written American English due in part to the work of copy editors. It is also interesting to note that the most popular rules do not seem to have much to do with copy editors' stated objectives of clarity or correctness, unless one defines correctness simply as adherence to rules, which is entirely circular. Regarding the rules as the source of correctness is a problematic but unfortunately common view. The desire for consistency, however, certainly manifests itself in the high rates of editing of some items. Reducing the few spelling variations that exist may arguably lead to greater clarity, though, as Cameron says, it is difficult to see what is unclear about a variant like *organise*. Regardless of the clarity or lack thereof of a form like *organise*, it is regarded as incorrect in American English, and this is sufficient reason for an editor to change it to *organize*. Any attempt to answer *why* certain forms are incorrect quickly reduces to circularity or an ipse dixit: *organise* is incorrect because it's not part of Standard American English, and it's not part of Standard American English because it's incorrect.

Research Question 4

What conclusions can be made about the nature of Standard English, particularly about Standard Edited English? Just as previous linguists have defined Standard English in part by certain features that are or are not present (for example Hope 2000; Trudgill 1999), we can at least partially define Standard Edited English by the forms that distinguish it from Standard English or nonstandard dialects. Further studies will be needed to confirm the status of these rules, but I tentatively propose the following list:

1. disallowance of restrictive relative *which* except where grammatically required

(following a preposition or the demonstrative *that*)

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2. stricter grammatical parallelism, especially in correlative constructions

3. disallowance of *towards*

4. regulation of the genitive forms of names ending in *-s*

5. stricter placement of limiting adverbs, particularly *only*

6. disallowance of British spellings

Several more changes are more peripheral or show that editors have not converged on a single form to codify as Standard Edited English, such as deletion or inclusion of relative and complementizer *that* and increased strict grammatical agreement rather than proximal agreement.

From the results it is clear that editors play a significant standardizing role that has never before been fully explored. It appears that editors are reducing variation and codifying forms, based mostly on traditional usage prescriptions The process then repeats cyclically in a sort of feedback loop, with new norms to be codified drawn from the existing body of Standard Edited English. This study confirms the idea that editors play a significant codifying role by eliminating optional variation, particularly grammatical variation; furthermore, when combined with historical data from sources like the Corpus of Historical American English, it indicates that they are not merely policing errors but are in some cases actively introducing changes into the language that define Standard Edited English. As discussed earlier, many of the usage rules being applied, including the *that/which* distinction and the disallowance of *towards*, have been invented within the last century or so of usage advice. When editors apply these rules, they are increasing the distance between educated usage and edited usage. However, usage writers often seem unaware that they are creating and promoting innovations. For example, Bryan Garner rates usages on a "language-change index," which implicitly assumes that all changes are innovations that are initially shunned but slowly come to be accepted (2009: xxxv). But a search

for *towards* and *toward* in the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) shows that *towards* was far more common than *toward* two hundred years ago; today the reverse is true (Davies 2008–). Yet Garner marks *towards* as stage 4, meaning that "the form becomes virtually universal but is opposed on cogent grounds by a few linguistic stalwarts." Clearly copy editors are playing a substantial role in driving this change; *towards* and *toward* appear in roughly equal numbers in the unedited manuscripts and achieve a distribution in the edited manuscripts much closer to that found in recent decades in COHA. Rather than slow language change, the rules are in many cases creating or accelerating change change.

It may be best to think of Standard English not as a discrete and clearly defined phenomenon, but as a range on a gradient from the most nonstandard (spoken, uneducated, informal, and regional) to the most standard (written, edited, educated, formal, and supraregional). But it may also be instructive to view at least two different points on the gradient as marking Standard English in different people's eyes: the formal language, especially writing, of the educated (or the standard in most linguists' eyes) and the formal, *edited* writing of educated professionals once it has been made to conform to certain usage and grammar rules. Therefore Standard English may be seen as either the formal, supraregional written language of the educated or as language that adheres to a particular canon of rules. Linguists see Standard English as a grown order that develops from actual usage, while editors and grammarians see it as a made order that requires constant maintenance. Thus linguists may see editors as creating a hyperstandard, while editors see themselves as simply defending the standard.

These competing definitions lie at the heart of the long-running prescriptive/descriptive debate about usage and Standard English. Linguists who decry and debunk many traditional usage rules may see themselves as peeling back unnecessary layers of hyperstandardization by

repudiating invented rules and unnecessary editing, while prescriptivists simply see linguists tearing down rules and assume that they are tearing down Standard English altogether—rather hypocritically, of course, as linguists themselves write in Standard English.

Research Question 5

What implications do these conclusions have for the use of corpora in describing Standard English? It is natural to take the results of a study and to generalize them, assuming that the sample is a suitable analog for the phenomenon we wish to measure. But there are several problems with assuming that a corpus of published, edited English is essentially the same thing as educated English. Snyder, for example, writes that "one way to discover the rules of standard English usage is to describe what writers actually do in printed, edited English" (2007: 5), but this fails to account for the effect of copy editors on that writing. Her study is designed to address the problems of instruction and assessment of English usage by "go[ing] right to the source of English language arts instruction: the English language itself" (1), but it assumes that a text corpus is a suitable stand-in for the English language. Snyder dismisses the opinions of usage writers such as Fowler or Garner, writing, "These experts, though, are often only prescribing what they think people should do, and they do not necessarily describe what educated writers actually do" (3), but because of editorial intervention, a corpus study does not necessarily describe merely what educated writers actually do either. As McArthur said, "there are few beings on earth more prescriptive and single-minded than copy-editors and proof-readers" (2001: 4), and it is clear from this study that they enforce certain prescriptions in print. A corpus, then, is not the *source* of the English language, but merely one manifestation of highly standardized English, one that conforms more closely to many usage prescriptions than other forms.

Corpora of published writing have other problems besides the inability to separate writers' usage from editors' usage. Even large balanced corpora such as the Corpus of Contemporary American Usage are not necessarily representative of all the English language or even all of written English, since many types of writing (text messages, emails, blog posts, letters, diaries, memos, and so on) are not included. Strictly speaking, any corpus study only tells us about the nature of the corpus. Any conclusions about the language in general are inferences or extrapolations that may not be completely accurate. The same holds true for the present study, naturally, but this study also illustrates one problem with relying on corpora to determine what Standard English is, especially when trying to make decisions about what should be taught or what should or should not be considered correct. We must first of all clearly define—inasmuch as such things can be clearly defined—what we mean by Standard English or by correctness. We must also be cognizant of the limitations of corpus studies, especially when attempting to disentangle usage prescriptions from actual usage.

The problem of deciding what is correct based on what is found in print is illustrated by a recent discussion between usage writer Bryan Garner and author Robert Lane Greene. Greene tries to discredit the *that/which* rule, which this study shows to be one of editors' favorites, but Garner responds with this curious defense: "In American English from circa 1930 on, 'that' has been overwhelmingly restrictive and 'which' overwhelmingly nonrestrictive" (Garner & Greene 2012). But this simply shows that since the rule's introduction and dissemination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, editors have been successful at enforcing it in print. The argument quickly becomes circular: the rule should be followed because editors are following the rule. Circularity may be a natural part of the standardization process, as stated above, since new utterances are measured against the norm of preexisting utterances. But this seems to be an

unsatisfactory way to determine whether a rule should be followed, since usage commentators could invent any baseless rule, editors could diligently enforce it in print, and the resulting text would then be taken as evidence that the rule is valid and should continue to be enforced. Any corpus-based study that attempts to evaluate prescriptions based on so-called actual usage must be clear about *whose* usage is being evaluated; in other words, it must be able to take such editorial intervention into account. All we may infer from traditional corpus data is that certain usages occur at certain frequencies, and given certain criteria for Standard English, we may conclude that these uses are or are not standard. That is, traditional corpus data may tell us that the *that/which* rule is followed in print, but it does not tell us who is enforcing it (the writer or editor), who views adherence to the rule as correct or departures from it as incorrect, or whether it is worth an editor's time to enforce it.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study gives us some important information on the nature of Standard English and editors' role in shaping it. Previous authors have pointed to educated, written English as the most standard (Bartsch 1987; Carter 1999; Cheshire 1999; Finegan 1980; Joseph 1987; McArthur 2001) and have noted the role of copy editing and prescriptivism in defining it, though to my knowledge none have explored that role in detail. Bartsch argued for a view of standard language as a hierarchy, with written language at the top (1987: 16), and it seems clear from this study that *edited* written language is at the very top, with educated but unedited written language below it. Editors clearly play a major role in creating and maintaining Standard Edited English by reducing optional variation.

Perhaps the most important finding of this study is that educated usage is not necessarily the same as edited usage. Many style guides and usage manuals explicitly defend and promote educated usage or the usage of the best writers, but the usage we see on the printed page often diverges from the educated standard in notable ways, particularly in relative pronoun and genitive forms and grammatical parallelism. Even items that occur at fairly low rates, like *affect* for *effect*, are targets for standardization. These changes may seem insignificant individually, but the cumulative effect of these edits is to create a form of the language with much less variation than what is normally found in educated usage. It is also clear that, despite Leslie Milroy's assertion that "standardization is best treated as a process, since attempts to locate a specific standard (product) are doomed to failure" (1999b: 173), edited English is clearly the end product of standardization process.

This study also points out some major problems for linguists attempting to determine what Standard English is by gathering data from corpora of published writing. Standardization is

certainly a process, and it is important to consider the stages of that process and not simply the end result. Even the data from this study cannot answer the question of whether one *should* follow any given particular rule; it can only tell us who *is* following it. This study adds an extra dimension to traditional corpus data about usage but cannot tell us which rules editors should be enforcing or deprecating, nor can it tell us whether the standardizing efforts of copy editors are worthwhile.

Furthermore, corpus-based evaluations of usage tend to rest on the assumption that usage that occurs "naturally" (the usage that people unselfconsciously use) is innately superior to "artificial" usage (the usage that people produce when they are consciously following the rules). Some authors have pointed out that this assumption is not necessarily justified and have even argued that the distinction between natural and artificial language is a false dichotomy (for example Cameron 1995; Joseph 1987). Cameron writes, "If 'natural' here means something like 'observed to occur in all speech communities to a greater or lesser extent', then the kind of norm-making and tinkering linguists label 'prescriptive' is 'natural' too: not all languages and varieties undergo institutional processes of standardization, but all are subject to some normative regulation" (1995: 5).

But an even more fundamental problem is that it is impossible to arrive at a rational conclusion about what *should* be considered standard or correct. Any attempt to do so ultimately rests on an irrational assumption such as "what is natural is best" or "whatever the majority does is correct"; all such appeals reduce to a philosophical *is–ought* problem. Thomas Pyles put it quite nicely:

> Too many of us . . . would seem to believe in an ideal English language,
> God-given instead of shaped and molded by man, somewhere off in a sort of

linguistic stratosphere—a language which nobody actually speaks or writes but toward whose ineffable standards all should aspire. Some of us, however, have in our worst moments suspected that writers of handbooks of so-called "standard English usage" really know no more about what the English language ought to be than those who use it effectively and sometimes beautifully. In truth, I long ago arrived at such a conclusion: frankly, I do not believe that anyone knows what the language *ought* to be. What most of the authors of handbooks do know is what they *want* English to be, which does not interest me in the least except as an indication of the love of some professors for absolute and final authority. (2012: 169–70)

The same holds true for linguists arguing for a democratic basis of correctness or Standard English. An appeal to actual usage—or at least usage as found in corpora—may be more morally defensible than ex cathedra declarations from grammarians and usage commentators, but it is still merely an indication of what we want language to be: democratic and free from what we see as burdensome regulation. It may be impossible to disentangle usage prescriptions from unselfconscious usage and to construct a truly rational basis for determining correctness, but it is important to acknowledge these problems before proceeding.

As stated above, this study cannot answer these questions or solve these problems on its own. However, it seems important to ask these questions. Countless hours are spent editing text for publication under the assumption that edited text is worth the premium it commands over unedited text. And since editors are frequent targets of layoffs and are increasingly tasked with additional responsibilities such as layout, it seems prudent that they focus on the editing tasks that have the greatest return on investment. If one of the goals of editing is to increase

correctness, then editors and style guide authors must first ask what correctness is and whether their changes are in service of that goal.

Areas for Further Study

Though this study is limited in scope and did not have ideal data sources, hopefully it will pave the way for future research in editing and standardization. Perhaps the biggest remaining hurdle is the task of obtaining edited manuscripts for analysis. Unlike many other texts, they are not publically available, and publishers may be reluctant to lay bare the editorial process, though there is precedent. *One Book/Five Ways* (1994) was written as the result of an experiment in which one manuscript was given to five different university presses to see the different ways in which each would handle the project. The entire publication process of each press, from acquisition through copy editing and design to printing, was detailed in the book, including images of copy-edited pages.

Ideally, future studies would obtain a larger number of manuscripts from a variety of publishers and genres, perhaps in a distribution that would make it comparable to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). However, such a project would be incredibly time intensive; this project involved over six hundred pages of edited text and required countless hours of scouring that text for usage changes and then tabulating them. A large-scale study of this nature may simply require too much work for too little reward. Aside from function words like the relative pronoun *which* and the preposition *towards*, many of the individual words targeted by editors occur at relatively low rates. One possible solution is to construct or use corpora of similar types of text, one of which has unedited text and the other of which has edited text. This is not entirely without problem, since it may be difficult to find suitable text; the unedited text should still be professional, formal, and at least self-edited if it is to be comparable

to published edited text. However, such a workaround will not positively identify copy-editing changes in the edited text; the effect of editing will simply have to be inferred from different rates of occurrence of lexical items or constructions in the two corpora. But this may not be a serious problem unless the goal is a sort of ethnographic study of copy-editing practice. Such a study should be sufficient for making generalizations about the nature of Standard English and Standard Edited English. It may also be fruitful to simply compare the results of this study to results gleaned from the Corpus of Contemporary American English, the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), and other corpora. This present study gives us a synchronic view of the codification of certain usage items, while a comparison of data from COHA would give us a diachronic view. Thus we could see how usage has changed over time and infer what effect copy editing has had on slowing or driving usage changes.

I believe that further studies should also evaluate the efficacy of copy editing, especially the value of following some of the more common usage rules. Copy editing is a time-intensive and costly stage in the publishing process, and editing practice is frequently the result of tradition or other unexamined assumptions about reader expectation and how readers engage with text. Though some linguists have called for a more scientific approach to prescriptivism (see for example Liberman 2008), with research methods from fields such as psycholinguistics applied to problems of usage, so far it appears that little to no research in this field has materialized. Perhaps more linguists will take editing and prescriptivism seriously as a social and cultural phenomenon and not simply try to debunk it as a flawed and unscientific approach to language or dismiss its practitioners as cranks and pedants. It is my hope that this thesis may help to close the gap between prescriptivism and descriptivism.

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