
This project was undertaken in 1979 to solve, once and for all, the stylistic problems of Canadian editors. As Canadian style is not one style but the outcome of an amalgam of American and British copy-editing traditions, the committee had a complex task. Consensus on all but general matters was achieved laboriously: ‘only other editors can fully appreciate the poignancy of seven editors sitting around a table for an evening debating the series comma or defining the precise distinction between the en dash, the hyphen, and the solidus’.

The result is not the definitive solution to all the problems of Canadian editors, but a reference work that aims to help its users make sensible editorial choices. It expands the chapters on house style and on bibliographic references in Judith Butcher’s Copy-editing, and will also be useful to editors outside Canada. General issues of editing, which change over time, are discussed in chapters on spelling, compound words and hyphens, capitalization, abbreviations and symbols, and punctuation. British and American spelling practices are detailed, and reconciliations suggested; the treatment of capitalization begins where other guides stop.

The last seven chapters, which deal with subjects that have their own conventions, are more prescriptive. Differing degrees of bilingualism can be expected among Canadian readers, hence guidelines are given for fitting French words and phrases smoothly into English context while keeping their French character. The chapter on removing bias points out common pitfalls and provides terms for avoiding overgeneralizations in the areas of ethnicity and race, gender bias, sexual orientation, and disability. SI/metric measurements are clarified for non-technical readers. The chapter on the content and treatment of references draws on the National Library of Canada’s forthcoming bibliographic style manual, and suggests ‘a vaccinating measure that could eradicate the pit of missing bibliographic information in our lifetime’.

Canadian editors will find this book useful for clarifying or systematizing their own house style. It can be recommended to freelancers as a basic reference but not as a last resort for resolving doubts. Sources are given for each chapter and there are three pages of general reference works, including other style manuals. The 15-page index has no entry for ‘index’, but a long entry for ‘documentation’, with many subheadings, as befits the complexities of footnotes and bibliographies in any style.

This guide embodies ‘typically Canadian’ attributes: the search for historical justifications, and good humour. The compilers modestly hope that it is ‘consistent and harmonious and, in a suitably Canadian way, unobtrusive’.

MARGARET COOTER
British Medical Journal

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Publications received and publications noted


Electronic Publishing: Origination, Dissemination and Design. Pilot issue Jan., 1988. Chichester, Wiley. ISBN 0894-3982. Annual subscription £40.00 ($72.00) for 1988 (2 issues); £80.00 ($144.00) for 1989 (4 issues).

This is a specimen issue of a journal aiming to include research papers on electronic publishing, case studies, state-of-the-art surveys, tutorials and descriptions of implementations.

The Indexer Vol. 16 No. 2 October 1988 143


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The Indexer Vol. 16 No. 2 October 1988