

Pandora's editorial box

When David Cervi and Ruth Wajnryb sent me the article that opens this issue, they were not sure if it would be right for *ET*. It might not be of wide enough interest and, since they were tyros in the business of editing journals, they might be saying too much too soon.

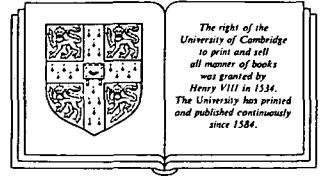
However, I welcomed the article. They are certainly new to editing and the article is certainly in the lighter vein, but the issues it addresses are neither ill-timed nor light. Rather, they are the perennial issues of academic editing for such subjects as English. For Wajnryb and Cervi, though the role is seductive, the editorial chair is often uncomfortable. Readers with experience in editing will, I suspect, nod as they read – sometimes ruefully. Some readers may also feel, as I do, that this is just the tip of an iceberg. Beyond formal editing lies the basic communal process of turning draft texts into public statements: composing, revising, criticizing, and re-writing, all of which involve choice of language, style, usage, and presentational conventions.

Since 1987 I have been engaged in two quite different editorial exercises. I have been working on both *ET* and *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, now completed. It is over 800,000 words long, has some thousands of entries from A to Z, and was produced by around 100 contributors from all over the world. For *ET*, the aim has been to edit lightly, and 'let a thousand flowers bloom' (within reason). For *OCELang*, the need has been to create a homogeneous text full of information and opinion, in which contributors' often passionately defended differences of approach, usage and terminology have been subordinated to the creation of a text whose style sits midway between the narrowly academic and the broadly popular. Often I've worked on *ET* and *OCELang* on the same day. Often I've caught myself editing *ET* like *OCELang* and *OCELang* like *ET*, and had to start again.

In *ET* 22 (Apr 90), David Crystal outlined how he put the *Cambridge Encyclopedia* together; in this issue, the creation of the *EA Journal* is described. Further comment would be welcome on the roles, attitudes, and feelings of editors and editees, critics, reviewers, teachers of writing, and actual and would-be censors, as well as the usage that results from the decisions and comments they make. This Pandora's box may well be worth opening.

Tom McArthur

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