**TWR - episode 101**

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you're listening to think right revised episode 101. Hey there, and welcome to think right revised a podcast that offers a peek behind the scenes of productive writing life. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Lynn. On this episode. I thought I would talk a little bit about what editors do and this is inspired a little bit by a book that I've been kind of perusing for a little while now also titled.

What editors do a link to it in the show notes and I really appreciate this book because as you know, I love peeking behind the scenes of what like pulling back the curtain of what these things actually mean. And I feel like when we think about book editors or Journal editors or other kinds of editors, we don't quite know exactly what it is that they do.

They just kind of work their magic on our materials and because I do more editing work now in a range of different ways. I thought it would be helpful to talk a little bit about what. Editing means to me in terms of the kinds of things that I've included with it and I see it kind of broken out into several categories, but one of the biggest ones is what it's called developmental editing.

And this is really when you're working with an author on the structure of something and it's really kind of at the ideal level of what it is that they're trying to do and I would say a lot of the editing work that I do now is developmental editing and it has a lot to do with asking questions. And I think that part of the reason I'm drawn to developmental editing is it's actually overlapping a lot with coaching because a big core element of coaching is.

This idea of powerful questions and that you would ask people powerful questions that would allow them to better understand themselves and how they want to move forward in the world. And I think that this has a lot to do with how you would talk with an author about something like a book manuscript or an article.

When you're really trying to get at for example, what is the most important argument that they're trying to make or what is the key evidence that's going to help them support that argument or what is the best structure to communicate that argument to an audience of readers that may not be super familiar with this topic and those kinds of questions can help you too.

Shape a particular piece of writing and it helps the author to really kind of dig in and reflect on what are they trying to do and and kind of more importantly, how are they trying to do it in a particular way? I also think that when I work with authors on developmental editing in some ways, you're kind of holding up a mirror of what you see in what they're working on and I think about this particularly around things like book proposals and I was working with someone recently on a book proposal and an initial chapter that they were writing for a book that they're working on and I was able to talk with that person about in some ways.

They were kind of starting their initial draft. Themselves as an audience. It was almost like they were making notes to themselves about the kinds of things. They wanted to include and so there was a lot of telling and not a lot of showing in that draft. And as soon as I kind of held up the mirror and said, you know the way that this is written and kind of the tone of this you're not really delving into examples.

You're not real you're just kind of listing out the things that are important that you know, you want to address so in some ways it was kind of like an extended outline more than it was an actual. And as soon as I kind of held up the mirror and said this is kind of how this. Reading to me. This is kind of my perception of what this looks like.

The person who is working on. That was like yes, I see exactly what you're saying, you know, like as I'm as we're working on our writing often times. We're just kind of in it like we don't necessarily have the space to step back and kind of look at what it is that we're doing. And to have someone else come along who's who's an interested party but also kind of an objective party that they can look at it and say well here's what I'm seeing.

Is this what you're intending to do or you know, like what's going on here and you can kind of ask some more of those powerful questions to try to get out what's going on. So, I think that there's the question asking there's the holding up the mirror and then the other piece of that is really to try to get to the root of what someone is trying to say.

And I think especially when you first start working on a book proposal or an article, I see this a lot with people who are just getting started out with academic writing, but I also see it. With people who are more experienced as well. I guess I see it across the Spectrum and that is that people have to write through an idea to really understand what they're trying to say.

And so this is when you start to see like at the end of an article, they bury the thesis in like the conclusion. It's like the first sentence of the conclusion and I'll take it out of there and I'll say what if you took it out of the conclusion and you plopped it right into the introduction. How does that change the structure of how you would be presenting these ideas?

And that happens I think for a lot of writers who have to process ideas and they use writing as a form of thinking and as a form of processing and it can be really frustrating for you as a writer. If you don't know that you're doing that because you're just you you realize that you're having to like structurally overhaul everything that you write and you're not sure why and a big reason why you're doing that is because you are processing your thoughts through the writing, which is a really important tool.

That writing can be but if you don't know that you're doing that you're not going to know to kind of go into the conclusion pull out the thesis and move it to the front of your paper. So, I think that that's something that an editor can tell you as well. They can notice kind of structural patterns in what you're doing and they can start to pull out some of those pieces that are really important.

Now another example of this kind of from the structural piece is I was working on kind of editing and giving feedback on a dissertation proposal for one of my clients. And one of the things I realized was she was making kind of logic leaps throughout that dissertation proposal because she knows so much about the topic from her research.

That she just kind of assumes the reader knows that too. And so she would have a paragraph that was made up of like maybe four sentences but that paragraph actually needed to be four paragraphs and each one of those sentences needed its own paragraph and I think. There's definitely a sense in a proposal in particular that you need to kind of cut corners and not kind of go into depth because it's just a proposal and you know, you're going to kind of go into it more later on, but it can cause you to make some of those logic leaps where your reader really can't follow along.

And so I think an editor can kind of pull some of those things out. Now the challenge of this though from an editor perspective is you have to have kindness in that feedback. And so with both of these examples that I recently gave about the book proposal and the dissertation proposal when these documents are handed off to me.

I know that that author in their heart of hearts really wants me to say this looks good. And to mean it to genuinely look at it and say this is excellent work. You don't have to do anything else. Like I really feel like it's explaining what you want to explain its communicating what you want to communicate in our heart of hearts as writers.

We don't want to revise we want whatever came out in that first round to be enough and it's so rarely is and so the job of an editor is to be kind and offering that feedback. And this is when you get into things like the compliment sandwich of saying what is good about something and then slipping in here are the things that need to be changed and then returning back to what is good and strong and I think that there is this mix of kindness and honesty that helps to build trust between a writer and an editor and that the writer knows the editor is trying to help the author to do their best work, but also that they don't want to.

Provide feedback in such a way that is going to make the author feel bad or make the writer lose confidence in their sense of how they can write or how they can communicate ideas. And so I feel like when it comes to what editors do. At least in my experience. I feel like half my time is spent actually doing the editing work of like reading the stuff figuring out what's going on with it.

And what I think I need to communicate to the author in terms of just the content of my feedback and then the other half of the time is spent. Trying to figure out the strategy of how best to give that feedback to that person so that they don't feel deflated or that they don't they feel motivated to keep going.

They don't feel like they are stuck or that this is an obstacle to them moving forward. And here's the really tricky thing is every writer is different in how they need to receive feedback. So talking with writers explicitly about what that is going to mean for them and what they need in that moment has been a really important part of my editing work as well.

So I also just want to say a quick word about things like copy-editing because I focused a lot of this episode on developmental editing. And of course there is the kind of editing that is really about writing conventions about writing tone about pulling out distractions and thinking about things like word choice, and I definitely do a lot of that editing as well and I've certainly found ways.

When I'm editing my own work little tricks that I need to do like printing out the manuscripts. I'm working on. I really need to edit by hand and not on a screen. But I also think that when you're copy-editing someone else's work in some ways. It's a lot easier because you're going to be able to see things.

That are just way more glaring because you haven't been the one writing the work itself. And so this is something that we obviously go through a lot of copy editing in my work with eCampus and the Research Unit there at Oregon State because when we're putting out reports that are not peer-reviewed, for example, we need to make sure that we're going through that copy editing process and checking all of our work.

But I've also really enjoyed working with writers on this copy-editing piece because there are just little things you pick up over time as an academic writer about writing conventions that I wish that someone had told me explicitly and so I always try to give away, you know, these kinds of little nuggets when I can and I definitely don't.

Specialized and copy editing. So like let me be clear. This is not an area of my work. Please don't send me your work to copy edit it. Like this is not an area of my business or practice that I've I'm trying to grow but I also think that it's one of those things that if you enjoy language and you enjoy writing you're just going to pick up stuff that's kind of fun to share with people and little tips and tricks about how to make their writing better and turns of phrase to use and certainly.

Things that you're never going to want to include in terms of writing and grammar in those kinds of things. So hopefully this episode has been a little bit of a window into what editors do and how I approach my own editing work if you're an editor or if you've worked with good editors. I'd love to hear more about what your experience has been like you can always tweet to me at Katie double underscore lender.

You can email me at contact at Katie Leonard artwork. You can connect with me on Instagram KD underscore lender, or you can always write me a letter addressed to Katie Linder PO Box 1621 in Albany, Oregon nine seven, three, two one. I hope to hear from you. Thanks for listening to this episode of think right revised show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Katie lender.

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