Get the Most Editing Bang for Your Buck

Following a few simple Do's and Don'ts when submitting your manuscript will make your publishing experience more pleasant, faster and give you the most for your money.

Let's start with the things you can do.

1. Clean up obvious errors in spelling or grammar. Running spell check or grammar check functions doesn't take long, and means your editor's time, and your money, can be spent fixing more complex issues.

2. Make sure you respect copyright. When referring to others' work, don't stray into plagiarism. Not sure what constitutes plagiarism? Ask!

3. Verify you have quoted correctly, including spelling names right. Be ready to supply complete references on each direct quote if needed. You wouldn't want to mislay the quote on which your main argument centres, would you?

4. Verify your references, too. If you find something on the Internet, provide an URL so your readers—including the editor—can find it. Even if the URL is no longer correct, Internet databases may include the content.

5. Organize your references, bibliographies, etc. consistently throughout the manuscript. Even if they have to be changed by the editor to conform to a specific style, they will take less time (and money) to change.

Now a few things you should avoid.

While you may have a vision of what you want your book to look like in its final form, approximating that appearance at the unedited manuscript stage is not a good idea.

Why not?

1. If you use programs like Microsoft Word for more than basic formatting, you introduce unseen codes into the file that can interfere with editorial tools.

2. Images you place in a word processing document are not saved as separate files. This means that the images cannot be removed from the document without deleting them—an unpleasant prospect if you haven't saved those images elsewhere.

3. Then there's the amazing changing document. Depending on the operating system or software your editor uses, your carefully formatted document could look like a total mishmash.

4. Editors often begin work on a file by stripping out all but the text and applying a style that allows them to concentrate on your content. That's the end of all the painstaking formatting work you may have done.

Following these guidelines will not only endear you to your editor, but will ensure you get the most for your editing dollar. It's a win-win situation, and so easy to do!