

Debbie Emmitt

www.debbie-emmitt.com

Editor, proofreader, author



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16 July 2025*

**WHY YOU NEED A
PROFESSIONAL EDITOR
OR PROOFREADER**
(THEY JUST SPOT TYPOS, DON'T THEY?)

MY CREDENTIALS



7 years as a freelance editor and proofreader of fiction and non-fiction



Mentor for freelance editors, offering business advice



Advanced Professional Member of the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP)



TODAY'S AGENDA

- 1 The difference between editing and proofreading
- 2 Who needs editors and proofreaders?
- 3 The value of a human editor
- 4 The big question: cost
- 5 How to find the right editor



WHAT'S UP FIRST?

- 1 The difference between editing and proofreading
- 2 Who needs editors and proofreaders?
- 3 The value of a human editor
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- 5 How to find the right editor



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Most editors and proofreaders will have been asked one or more of the following questions at some point:

Editing. That's
proofreading,
isn't it?

So, you read books
all day and get paid
for it?

You just spot typos,
don't you?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **EDITING AND PROOFREADING**

Editing

- Carried out on draft text
- Different levels of editing check for different issues at different stages (developmental, line, copy)
- Different editors may label and define the levels slightly differently (helpful!)

Proofreading

- Occurs after design and formatting stages
- The content is 'as the reader will see it'
- A final check before the book, website or other content is officially launched to the target audience

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **EDITING AND PROOFREADING**

Dev edit

Line edit

Copyedit

Proofread

Structure

Plot

Genre

Characters

Point of view

Word choice

Clarity

Flow

Conciseness

Author voice

Gramm/sp/punc

Consistency

Doc clean-up

Basic fact-check

Styles/markup

Gramm/sp/punc

Layout

Formatting

Consistency

Headers/footers

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **EDITING AND PROOFREADING**



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Edit what's
proofing,
isn't it?

NO!

So, you look
all day at
it? paid
for it?

NO!

You just
d typos,
d!

NO!

NEXT ON THE **AGENDA**

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WHO NEEDS EDITORS AND PROOFREADERS?



Producers of any
kind of content

Authors (indie and trad)

Publishers

Entrepreneurs

Charities

Companies

Academics

Freelancers

Composers

Website owners

Film producers (subtitles)

Editors and proofreaders

WHO NEEDS EDITORS AND PROOFREADERS?

Content is
everywhere,
with the
potential to go
very wrong.

Captions and subtitles



WHO NEEDS EDITORS AND PROOFREADERS?

Kozhi Ishtu: Kerala Chicken Stew 🍲

A rich coconut milk chicken stew with flavours of cinnamon, cloves, cardamom. The addition of vegetables along with chicken gives it a different texture. Can be served with rice or bread to tickle your taste buds.

Menus and recipes

WHO NEEDS EDITORS AND PROOFREADERS?



Signage and billboards

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THE VALUE OF **A HUMAN EDITOR**

Self-editing and traditional spelling/grammar tools can tidy up your writing to a certain degree but have never been reliable alternatives to a trained, experienced editor.

However, there is a new kid on the block.



Is it any better?

THE VALUE OF **A HUMAN EDITOR**

Popular AI writing and editing tools include:

- Grammarly
- ProWriting Aid
- Hemingway

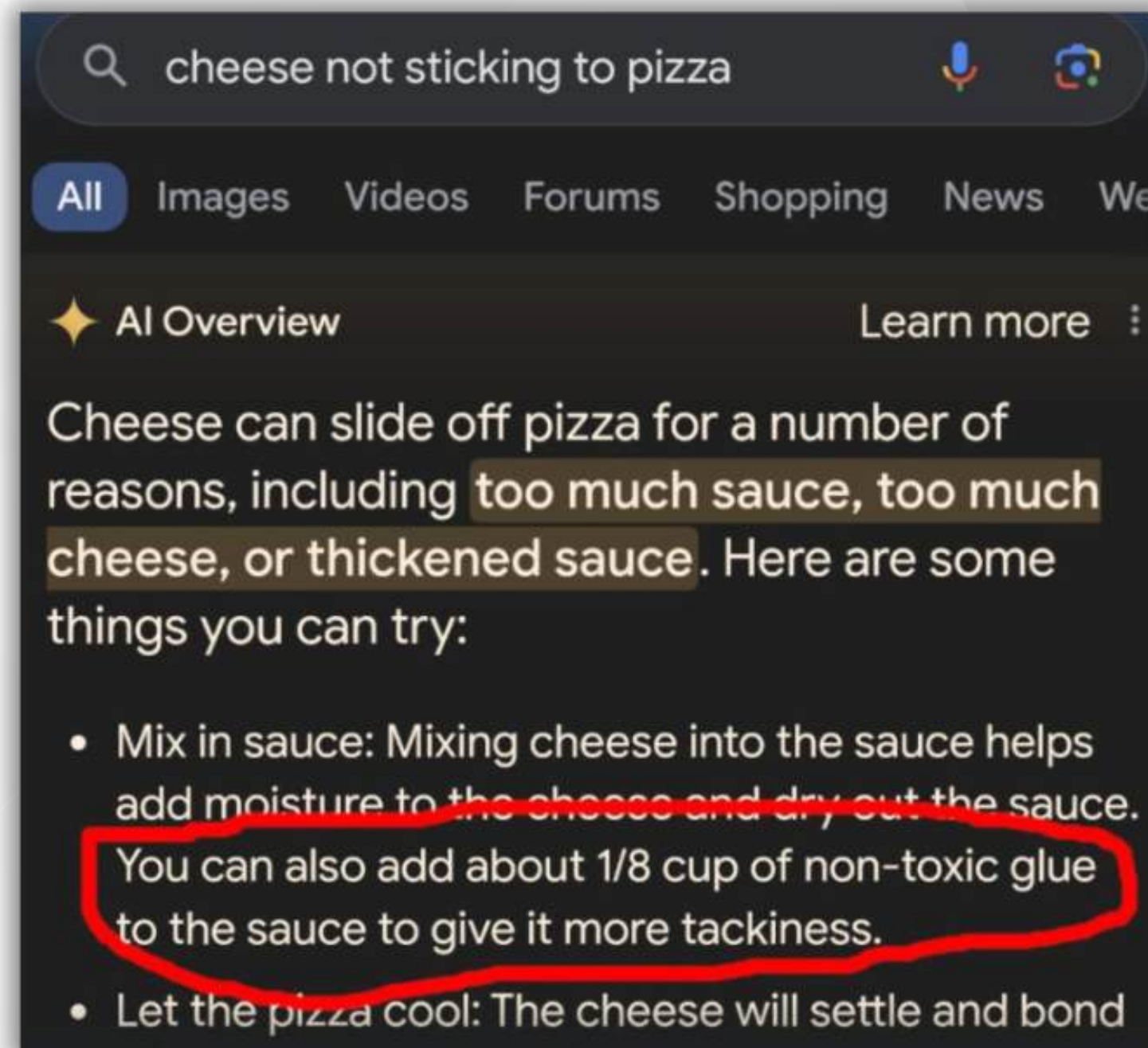
AI can be a safety net but is not a substitute for a human editor. Why not?



THE VALUE OF A HUMAN EDITOR

AI tools don't understand the information they're processing or the difference between facts and incorrect information.

Glue Pizza, anyone?



THE VALUE OF A HUMAN EDITOR

Generative AI is 'fed' with existing information which isn't necessarily correct and increasingly AI generated.

This can be, at best, embarrassing and, at worst, expensive and/or litigious.



Brief for MyPillow's defamation case, written with the help of AI, contained many citation errors and factual inaccuracies

THE VALUE OF A HUMAN EDITOR

AI has no moral compass and doesn't understand sensitivity.

Elon Musk's Grok AI chatbot on X attempts to explain why it became obsessed with "white genocide" in May 2025.



THE VALUE OF A HUMAN EDITOR

AI is not aware of nuances of meaning or nonstandard expressions, including dialects and patterns of speech.

He flopped into the passenger seat, slid it back and clicked his belt. 'Why you bundled up? It's not cold. And there's loads of time. Chill.'

'Loads of time? You promised you'd be ready at six if we could before the lights. Didn't Jan stay over? She'd have made sure you...'
Austen swept a hand through his tousled red-brick hair and the road.

She exhaled loudly and started the engine.

'Your finger's bleeding,' he said, pointing at her hand.

'It's fine.' She pulled a tissue from her pocket and dabbed at it. 'Some blood wipes off easily.'

Verb problem

did you

 Dismiss

 See more in Grammarly

THE VALUE OF A HUMAN EDITOR

AI has poor detection skills when it comes to contextual spelling or grammar, subtlety of meaning, author voice and more.

Copyedit this sentence: Being dead did not stop Beethoven from composing music.

Here's a copyedited version of the sentence:

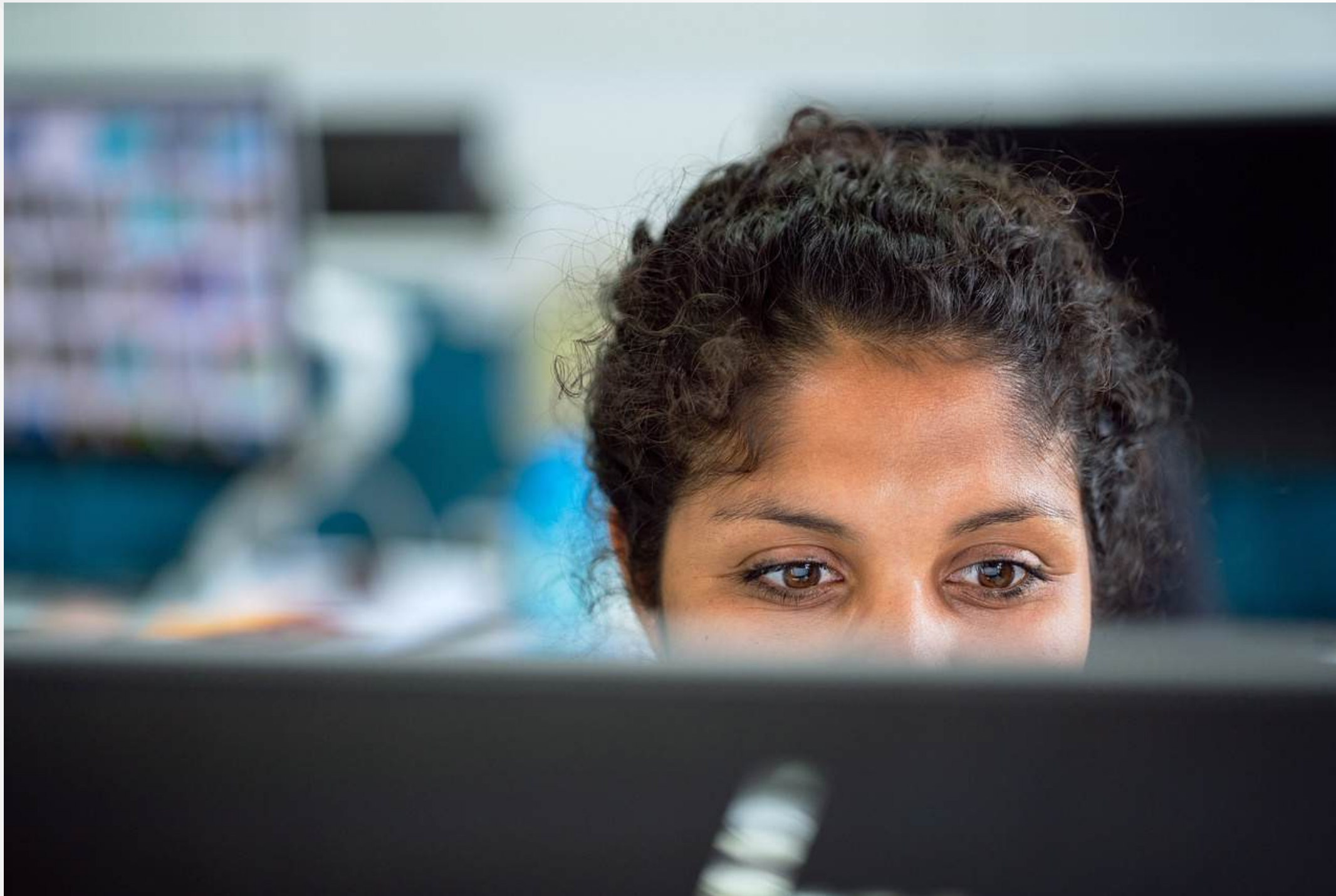
"Being dead didn't stop Beethoven from composing music."

This version maintains the original tone and structure but uses the contraction **"didn't"** for a more natural and conversational flow. If you'd prefer a more formal version, here's an alternative:

"Beethoven continued to compose music, even after his death."

Let me know the tone you're aiming for—serious, humorous, formal, etc.—and I can tailor it further.

THE VALUE OF **A HUMAN EDITOR**

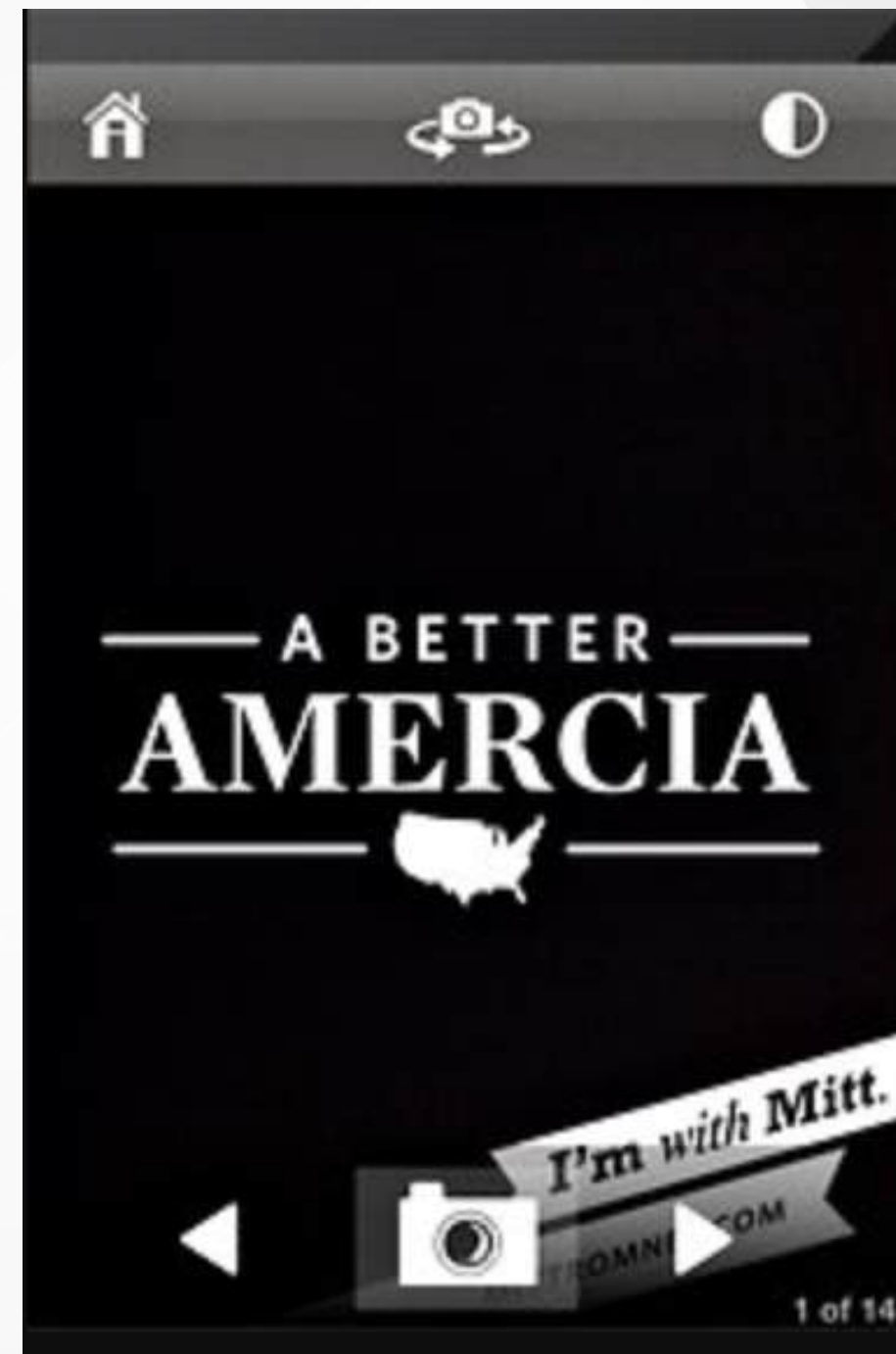


If AI editing tools get it so wrong, how do human editors and proofreaders get it right?

THE VALUE OF **A HUMAN EDITOR**

We protect the credibility of authors, organisations, businesses, academics and other content creators.

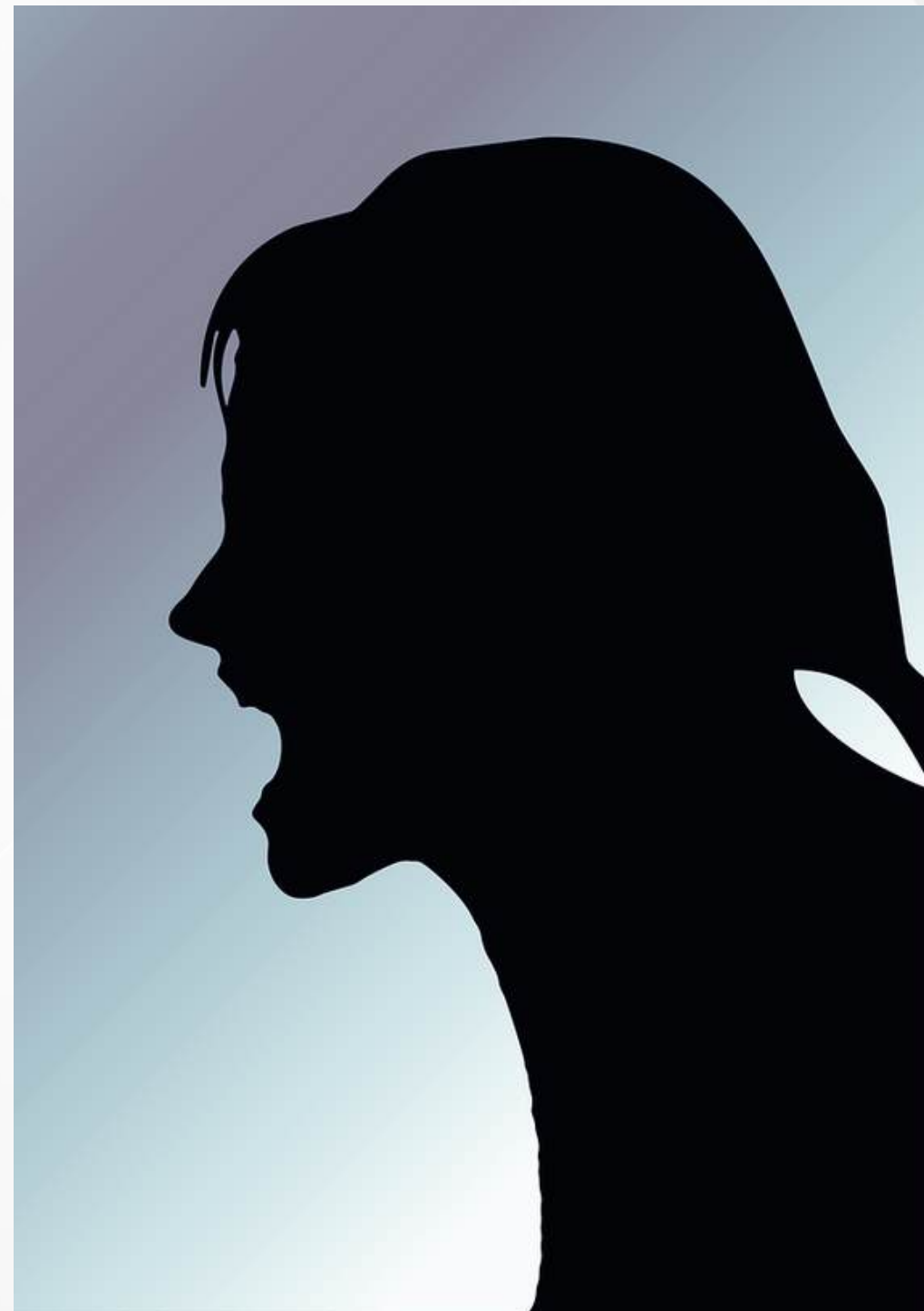
Republican candidate Mitt Romney's app for his 2012 campaign for office



THE VALUE OF **A HUMAN EDITOR**

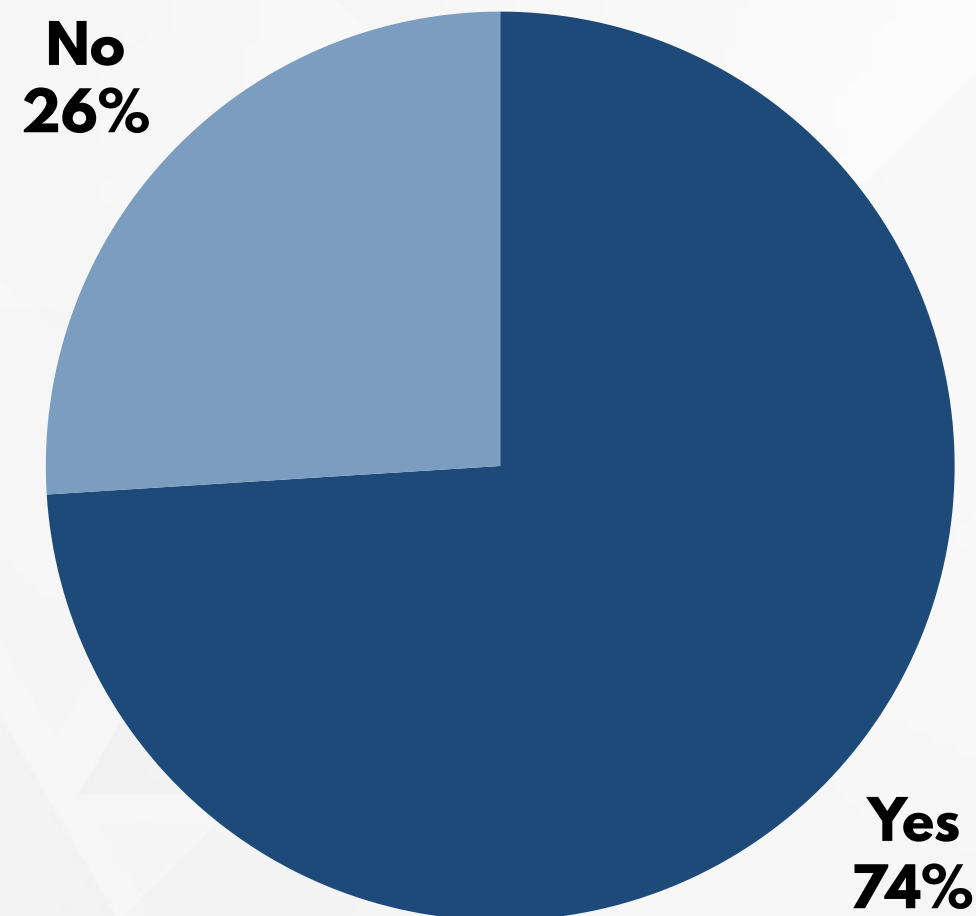
We preserve the author's voice.

We make careful decisions to ensure that the integrity and uniqueness of the author's voice remain intact.

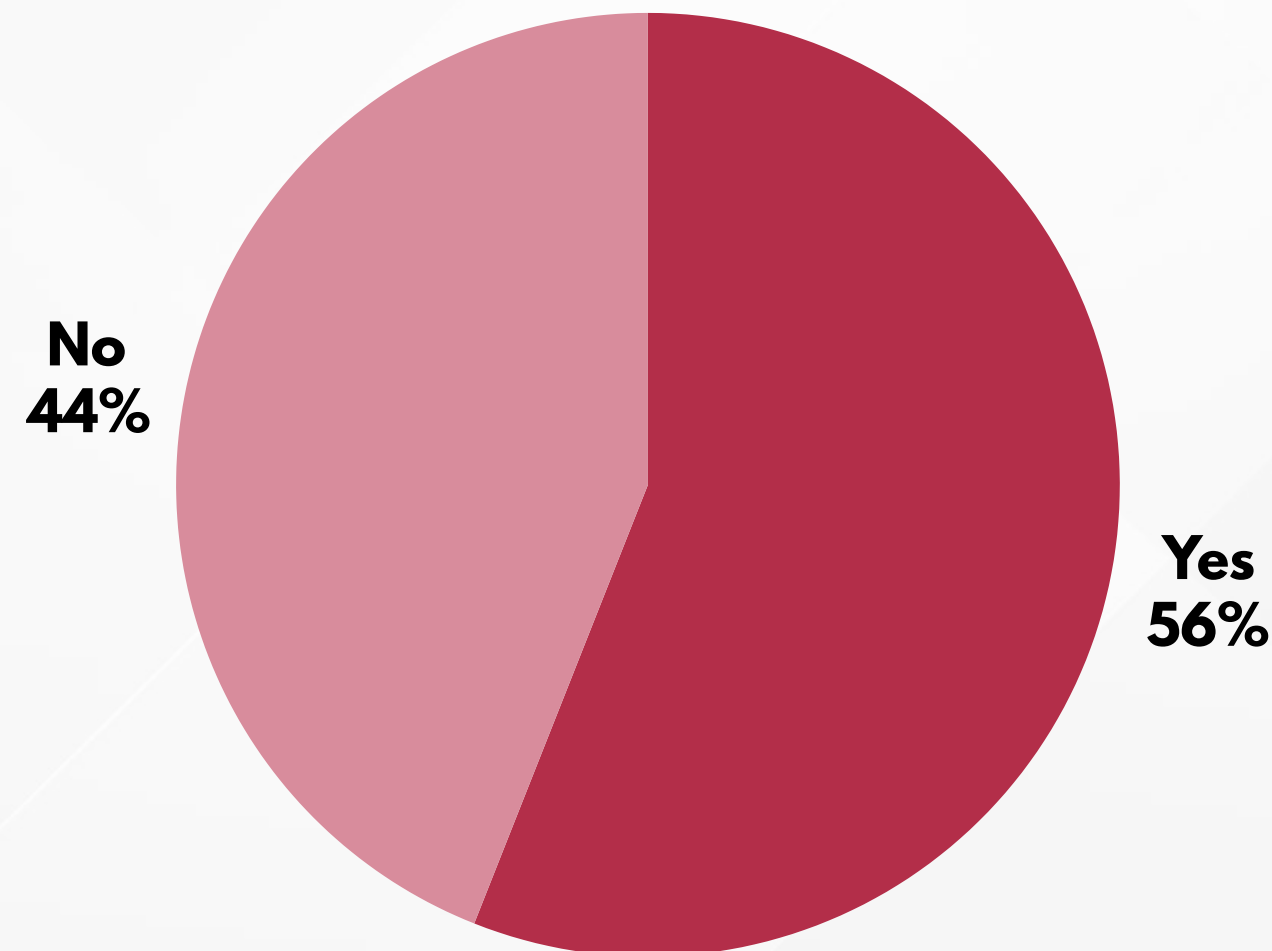


THE VALUE OF A HUMAN EDITOR

We save clients money (sometimes thousands or even millions of pounds/dollars) by preventing lost sales, lawsuits and other major issues.



Do you notice the quality of spelling and grammar on a company's website?



Would this stop you buying from this company?

Research
by Global
Lingo,
2013

THE VALUE OF A HUMAN EDITOR

Our work can reduce negative book reviews for indie and traditionally published authors (which impacts sales).

★☆☆☆☆ Where do I start? Yawn 🙄😴

Reviewed in the United Kingdom on 9 January 2020

This story has incomprehensible and confusing narrative which at times I found difficult to grasp. There were so many plot holes I think I actually fell down one out of sheer boredom. Is this down to poor writing or me? I suspect both and as much as I love a sex scene, it went on for pages and thus became exceedingly snooze worthy and boring. I love a good erotic novel as the next person but I was

**42% 1-star
reviews**

★★★★★ So bad that it's brilliant.

Reviewed in the United Kingdom on 4 July 2020

Format: Paperback | **Verified Purchase**

Honestly if you want a laugh a minute, then buy this book to read on a plane or a long journey. Absolutely dire writing, but this is not the fault of the authors. This book needs professional structure edits, and line edits. It reads like a first draft with lots of promise.

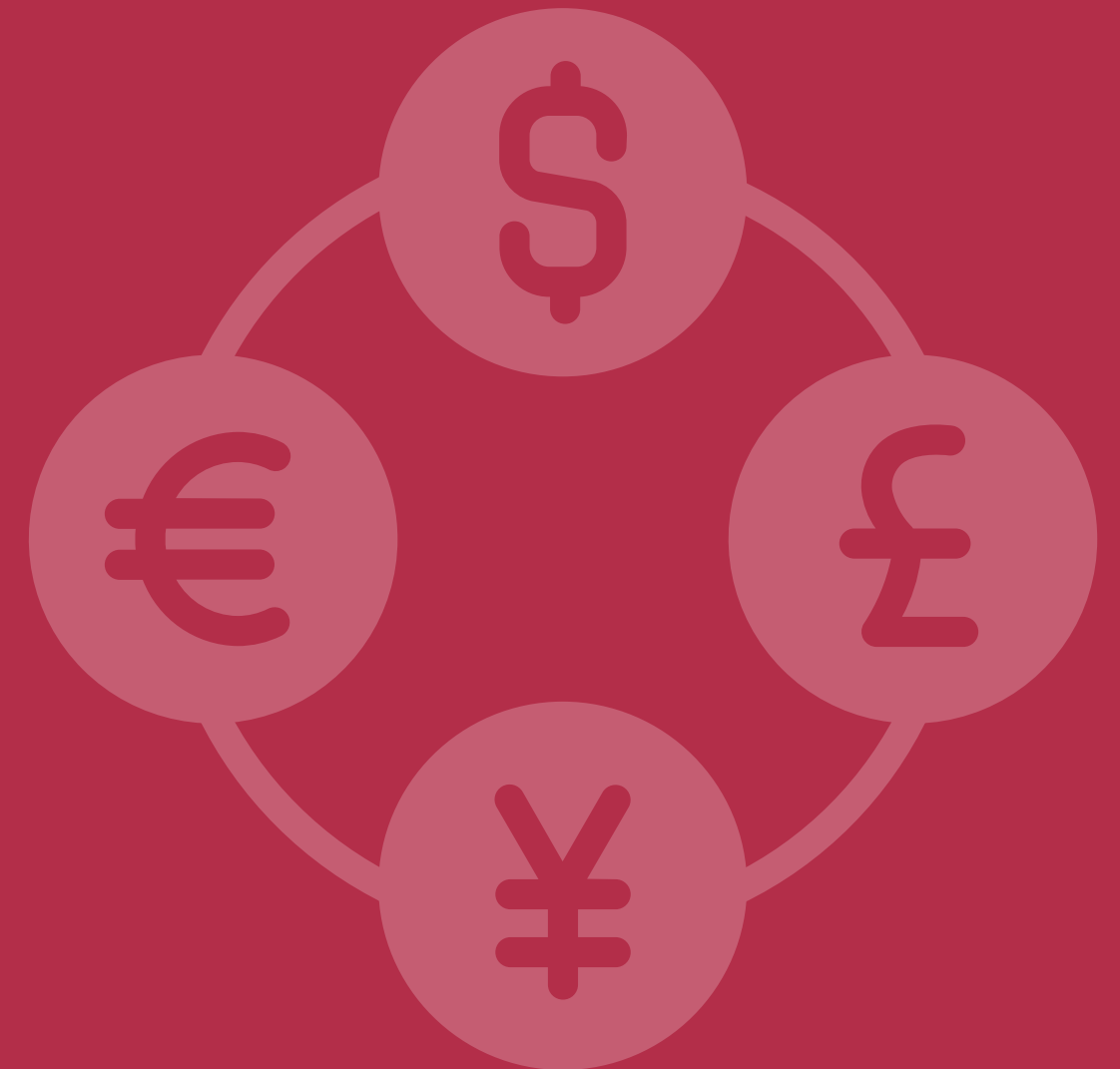
THE VALUE OF **A HUMAN EDITOR**

We can prevent you inadvertently causing offence and embarrassment (yours and that of your readers) by carrying out sensitivity and authenticity editing from lived experience.



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THE BIG QUESTION: **COST**

How long is a piece of string?

Each project is unique in terms of:

- content type and genre
- word count
- level of editing/proofreading
- how 'clean' the original text is
- editor's experience and specialism
- turnaround time
- author's specific requirements

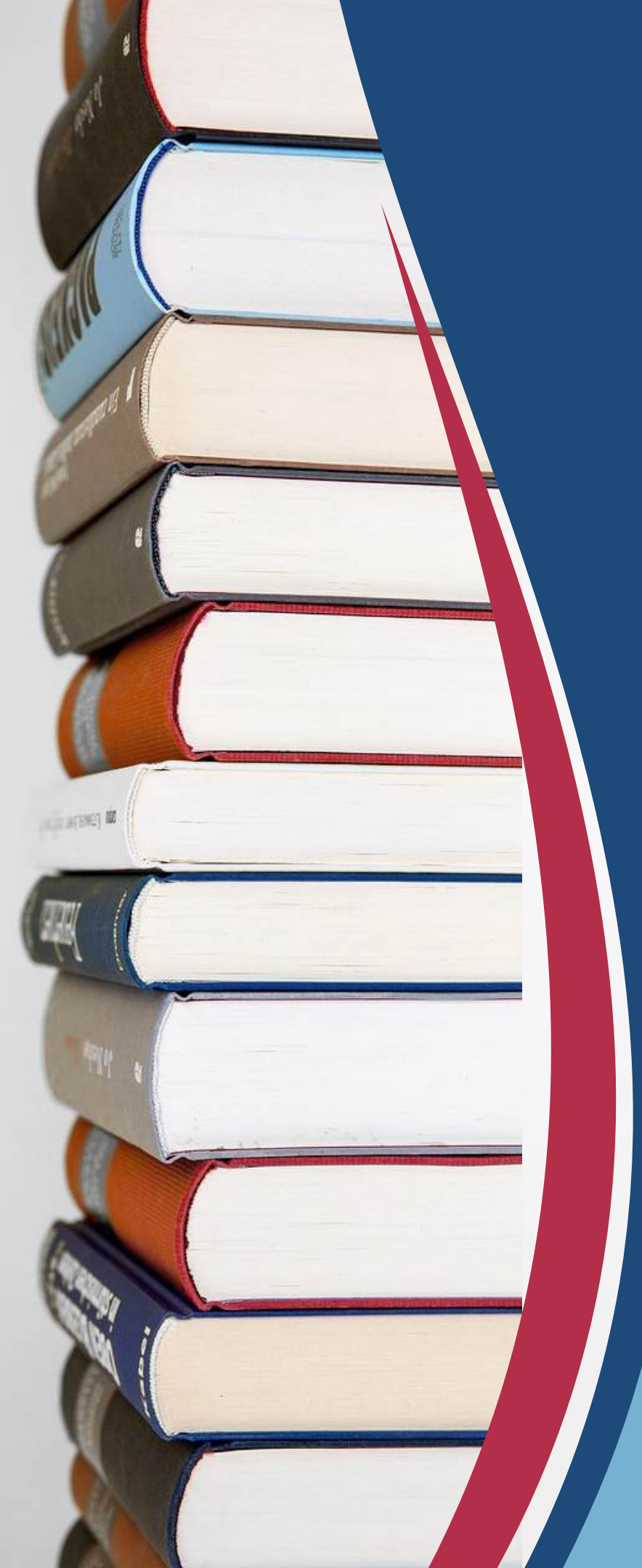


THE BIG QUESTION: **COST**

Some sources for indicative rates:

- www.ciep.uk/knowledge-hub/suggested-minimum-rates.html
- www.the-efa.org/rates

Best to shortlist some editors and ask them for a quote. They are likely to request an extract first.



THE BIG QUESTION: **COST**

If a quote seems expensive, consider what it includes, apart from the many hours of editing, research and admin.

Experience
and
training

Professional
memberships

Pension
and
healthcare

Tax and
insurance

Value
for a
lifetime

Equipment,
software,
books

Bills,
life in
general!

Holiday
pay

Savings of
time,
money,
reputation

THE BIG QUESTION: **COST**

Tips on getting the best value from an editor or proofreader:



Don't compare rates at face value, as you may not be comparing like with like.



Self-edit before seeking a quote.



Seek a professional in a directory such as CIEP's: *ciep.uk/directory*. It's a false economy to hire a cheap editor who is untrained and inexperienced.

THE BIG QUESTION: **COST**

Tips on getting the best value from an editor or proofreader:



Enquire about staggered payments.



Hire an editor just starting out.



Explore service-swapping.

Editor's discretion

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HOW TO FIND THE **RIGHT EDITOR**

How will you know when you've found the 'right' editor?



They will be skilled and experienced in your type of content (whether historical fiction, recipes, legal, academic ...).



You'll feel comfortable working with them and will trust them with your content.



They will make suggestions rather than dictate changes, leaving you fully in control of your writing.

HOW TO FIND THE **RIGHT EDITOR**

Where to look:







Recommendations from
colleagues, peers or fellow authors



Reputable directories (such as CIEP,
ALLi, Reedsy, EFA, PEG and IPEd)

HOW TO FIND THE **RIGHT EDITOR**

What to look for:

-  services offered (developmental, line, copy, proofreading)
-  genre or content expertise
-  previous experience/portfolio
-  training and qualifications
-  professional affiliations (CIEP, EFA, ACES, ALLi etc)
-  testimonials/references

HOW TO FIND THE **RIGHT EDITOR**

What to ask for:

- ① information about their process
- ② what is included in the project (e.g. number of rounds, style sheet, editorial report)
- ③ rates and availability
- ④ sample edit or proofread (send same piece of text to a shortlist of 3–5 editors)

HOW TO FIND THE **RIGHT EDITOR**

How to select an editor from your shortlist:



Study the sample edit/proofread: number/type of issues caught, quality of comments, ‘feel’ of the feedback.



Consider their availability and rates.



Ask for a brief video call to cover off any final queries.



If you’re absolutely torn between two people after doing all your due diligence, go with your gut!

KEY TAKEAWAYS



There are major differences between editing and proofreading.



AI is no substitute for a human editor or proofreader.



Hiring an editor or proofreader can save you money, time and embarrassment.

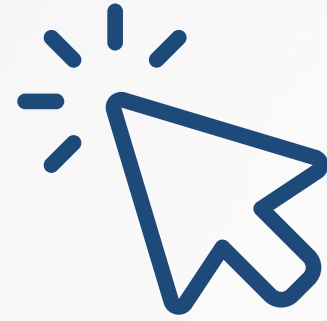


Carry out due diligence to find the right editor for your content.



ANY QUESTIONS?

ciep.uk/directory



debbie-emmitt.com

