

A BSB Interview With Consulting Editor: Stacia Seaman

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Publicist/Author Liaison

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1. What is your background as an editor?

I started at an academic publishing house, working on manuscripts about Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. My job there at first was research and fact checking, but I moved into proofreading, then got into copy editing and after a while, more in-depth editing. I started editing fiction (mainly romance novels and mysteries) about ten years ago, and then got into editing lesbian fiction.

2. Describe an ideal manuscript.

For me, the ideal manuscript is a blend of action and emotion, a well-paced story that keeps me interested without becoming bogged down in description or minutiae.

3. Describe how the author-editor relationship at BSB works for you.

I've always thought of publishing as a collaborative endeavor. The author creates the story, and the editors work with the author to tease out the story the author wants to tell and to present it in a way that readers will get the most impact out of it.

4. How do you try to insure that you respect the unique voice of the author whose work you are editing?

We have a wonderful variety of authors at BSB, and a corresponding variety of writing styles. My role is not to change the manuscript, but to polish it up and make it easier to read by streamlining language and style. One of the things I like about working with Bold Strokes is the commitment to author voice over strict adherence to rules of grammar and syntax. For me, it's a balancing act to help the author create real characters/narrators, but at the same time make sure the manuscripts are clean enough that readers will accept the use of language as character quirks and not editing mistakes. Copy editing is a lot like camping out in the wilderness: if I've done my job properly, nobody will know I've been there. The readers will get pulled into the story and won't be distracted by how the story is presented.

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5. What working tools are essential to you when you edit? (Include reference books and remarks on style guide.)

First are the obvious: my computer and printer, and plenty of red pencils, because I almost always edit hard copy rather than working directly on the computer. I have a small library of reference books, mostly dictionaries. In addition to my trusty Merriam-Webster's, I have a number of English-language dictionaries, including an American Heritage, slang dictionaries, and my beloved OED, and some dictionaries and grammars for other languages as well. The shelf right beside my desk holds the *Chicago Manual of Style*, which I refer to often, *Elements of Style*, a basic English grammar, and two or three usage guides.

Part of my role at BSB is to ensure that the books are consistent not just internally, but also across the booklist, so a style guide and dictionary are a big part of what I do.

6. What process do you use when you edit a manuscript?

As I mentioned above, a big one for me is to print out a copy so I can work on paper. I need to be able to flip back through the pages, and I find that I see things better on paper than I do on a computer screen. I do about four complete read-throughs of each manuscript. The first is primarily to acquaint myself with the story, and as I do the first read-through I create a timeline and list of characters, including their descriptions, histories, and relationships. The second pass is the one where I do most of my work. I focus on the sentence and word level, making corrections to grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and also making style changes so the book is consistent with other Bold Strokes titles. The third pass is to catch what I missed on the previous read-throughs, and also to look at the big picture. By this time I know the story and the characters, and I can focus on continuity and consistency of story, timeline, and characterization. I usually do the final read-through after the author has reviewed the edited manuscript. This one is to polish things up and fix what I can before the file goes to the proofreaders, who do an amazing job of catching the things I miss.

7. In your spare time, what do you like to do?

I do a lot of reading, and I like to watch movies. Also, I like needlework and the occasional sudoku puzzle (I really like samurai sudoku). I'm a huge football fan, especially when my teams are winning.

To see more about Stacia, go to her bio on the About page on the Bold Strokes Books Web site at:

www.boldstrokesbooks.com/about.html.



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