

ACES Value of Editing Report

Study Findings and
Recommendations for Industry

August 2026



Developed for ACES by
Writing System Institute (WSI)

Rachael Graham Tin
Madeline Shaughnessy
Lourdes Fernandez





About ACES

ACES: The Society for Editing is the nation's leading organization of editing professionals, educators, and students. Founded in 1997 by copy editors, ACES is dedicated to improving the quality of the written word and the working lives of editors. It sets standards of excellence and gives a voice to editors in journalism, government, business, publishing, and beyond through top-notch training, networking, and career opportunities. ACES hosts an annual in-person conference and, since 2022, an annual virtual conference. ACES Academy hosts monthly webinars. ACES also offers certificates in editing, which it co-hosts with The Poynter Institute, a global leader in journalism.

About WSI

Writing System Institute (WSI) is a woman-owned small business dedicated to helping professionals write better, faster. Founded as Graham Associates Consulting in 1985, WSI has trained over 100,000 professionals on our 12-step Writing System for writing effective materials 20% to 40% faster. Our specialty is helping subject matter experts in science, health, engineering, policy, and business communicate with executive and lay audiences. Through our writing courses, one-on-one writing coaching, and writing consulting services, we serve organizations throughout the federal government; private sector companies focused on medicine, technology, and business management; and nonprofits in education and research.

Contents

Introduction	6
Study Goals	7
Methods	9
Survey Design and Analysis.....	9
Guiding Definitions	9
Preparing the Materials.....	10
Preparing the Survey Questions.....	12
Collecting Survey Responses.....	13
Analyzing Survey Responses	13
Interview Design and Analysis	14
Preparing Interview Questions.....	14
Collecting Interview Responses	15
Analyzing Interview Responses	15
Results: Survey Data	17
Demographics and Reading Habits.....	17
Statistical Results by Editing Level and Material “Temperature”	23
Developmental+	25
Stylistic+	26
Copy	26
Subgroups	26
Results: Interview Data	27
Demographics and Reading Habits.....	27
Themes in Interview Responses.....	31
Developmental Concerns	31
Stylistic Concerns.....	32
Copy Concerns.....	34
Awareness of Audience	35
Whether Editing Is Worth the ROI	36
AI Use in Writing	37
Findings.....	38
Finding #1: An edit that involves a combined developmental, stylistic, and copy edit is the most valued.....	38

Finding #2: Stylistic editing holds value for making cold materials easier to read.....	38
Finding #3: Copy editing alone is not enough to improve the average reader's opinion about the quality of written material.	39
Finding #4: Readers value different qualities in warm and cold materials based on the experience they want when they read them.....	39
Finding #5: No level of editing significantly affects how the average reader perceives a source's credibility or the material's accuracy.....	41
Finding #6: Readers are aware of their position as an audience and want their materials tailored to them as such.....	41
Finding #7: Readers can value the <i>effects</i> of editing while also devaluing the <i>work</i> of the editing itself.....	41
Finding #8: AI writing presents problems that developmental and stylistic editing can solve.	43
Recommendations for the Editing Industry	44
Recommendation #1: Make the case for involving editors early in a material's development.	44
Recommendation #2: Empower editors to differentiate their uniquely human skills...44	
Recommendation #3: Emphasize the checking of accuracy as a marketable skill, an ethical standard, or both.	45
Recommendation #4: Publicize what editors <i>really</i> do.....	45
Conclusion.....	47
Limitations.....	47
Suggestions for Future Research.....	48
Looking Forward.....	49
References.....	50
Appendices.....	51
Appendix A: Control and Experiment Version of Each Surveyed Material.....	52
Material 1: Control (Unedited) Version: Executive Producer's LinkedIn Post (Warm) ..52	
Material 1: Experiment (Copy Edited) Version: Executive Producer's LinkedIn Post (Warm)	53
Material 2: Control (Unedited) Version: Federal Agency's Animal Conservation Blog Post (Warm)	54
Material 2: Experiment (Stylistic+ Edited) Version: Federal Agency's Animal Conservation Blog Post (Warm).....	55
Material 3: Control (Unedited) Version: Company's Cybersecurity Blog Post (Warm)56	

Material 3: Experiment (Developmental+ Edited) Version: Company's Cybersecurity Blog Post (Warm)	58
Material 4: Control (Unedited) Version: Nonprofit's Financial Review Instructions (Cold)	60
Material 4: Experiment (Copy Edited) Version: Nonprofit's Financial Review Instructions (Cold)	62
Material 5: Control (Unedited) Version: Company's Software Use Instructions (Cold)	64
Material 5: Experiment (Stylistic+ Edited) Version: Company's Software Use Instructions (Cold)	65
Material 6: Control (Unedited) Version: Federal Agency's Healthcare Enrollment Reporting (Cold)	66
Material 6: Experiment (Developmental+ Edited) Version: Federal Agency's Healthcare Enrollment Reporting (Cold)	68
Appendix B: Likert-Scale Survey Questions	70
Appendix C: Multiple-Choice Survey Questions.....	71
Appendix D: Semistructured Interview Guide	73
Appendix E: Mean Differences and <i>P</i> Values Per Question, Per Material	76
Appendix F: Interview Transcript Coding Guide for References to Editing Level.....	83

Introduction

This report describes for the consideration of ACES leadership four recommendations for the editing industry based on the findings of the Value of Editing study. Led by Dr. Rachael Tin and Ms. Madeline Shaughnessy of Writing System Institute (WSI), with consulting methodologist Dr. Lourdes Fernandez, this ACES-funded study examined the extent to which readers—the editor’s “ultimate boss” (Saller 2016, 5)—notice or care whether the materials they read undergo a professional edit. This study ran from October 2025 to August 2026.

We begin this report with a brief literature review to provide context for the study goals. Next, we describe our mixed-methods approach for achieving those study goals, detailing both the survey and interview portions of the study. We report on the study results in terms of both trends in the survey data and themes in the interview responses. We discuss eight findings based on our analysis of the survey and interview results, and then we discuss our four recommendations for the editing industry based on those findings. We conclude with a brief discussion of the study limitations and suggestions for future research.

In addition, to provide additional context for this study and inform similar research, we provide a series of appendices containing study protocol materials and additional survey data points.

This report does not detail recommendations for individual editors, which appear in a separate companion document: *Recommendations for Editors from the ACES Value of Editing Study*.

We did not use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to develop study materials, analyze study results, or write or edit this report. As we discuss in the Methods section, we hired a transcription service that transcribed interview audio files first with AI and then with a human transcriber for quality assurance.

Study Goals

Our main goal for this study was to expand industry knowledge about the value of editing for readers. Previous studies, including one funded by ACES (Vultee 2015), found that readers generally prefer edited materials over their unedited versions (Appelman and Schmierbach 2018; Boland and Queen 2016; Lacroux and Matin-Lacroux 2019; Stiff 2012; Van der Zanden et al. 2020). These studies primarily focused on errors related to grammar, spelling, and typing. Also, each study focused on one type of media, including news articles (Appelman and Schmierbach 2018; Vultee 2015); online seller reviews (Stiff 2012); job applications (Lacroux and Matin-Lacroux 2019), online dating profiles (Van der Zanden et al. 2020); and email responses to a roommate ad (Boland and Queen 2016).

Some findings from these studies complicate the claim that your average reader prefers edited materials. Appelman and Schmierbach (2018) found that grammar errors had a significant effect on readers' perceptions of news articles but only when the number of errors was relatively large: 30 errors in a 450-word article. Furthermore, they found that the effect was greater for people who self-reported caring about grammar or scored well on a grammar quiz. Meanwhile, people who self-reported little concern for grammar "perceived stories with more errors as equal to or even more positive than the stories without errors" (942).

Similar to Appelman and Schmierbach (2018), two other studies found that the reader's knowledge or skill for identifying an error affected their perception of the material. Lacroux and Matin-Lacroux (2019) found that participants with the highest spelling test scores were most likely to reject a job application with spelling errors, whereas participants with the lowest spelling test scores "did not identify—or did not pay attention to—these errors" (195). Van der Zanden et al. (2020) found that errors had a significant effect on participants' perceptions of online dating ads only when the participants reported having noticed the errors.

These studies suggest that editing for what we categorize as "copy concerns" (see our definition for "copy editing" in the Guiding Definitions subsection below) is most valuable for a specific type of reader: one who already cares about or is likely to notice the presence of copy errors. By limiting their assessment to copy concerns, these studies potentially limit the type of reader that we can confidently say finds editing valuable.

Therefore, our study sought to address this gap by expanding our definition of "editing" to include stylistic editing and developmental editing in addition to copy editing. By expanding the range of concerns that editors can address, we potentially expand the range of readers who show a preference for edited material.

Another gap our study addressed was the range of media examined. We know that ACES members edit a wide range of materials. In the 2026 ACES conference agenda, for example, we see sessions focused on materials related to horror, romance, medicine, corporate communications, engineering, and global news (ACES 2026). Because this study is first and foremost a resource for ACES members, we wanted to expand on

previous studies by examining whether the type of media also made a difference for how readers value editing.

To guide our study, we asked one primary research question: **to what extent do readers prefer to read edited materials?**

Similar to previous research (Appelman and Schmierbach 2018; Vultee 2015), we also asked the following secondary questions¹ to identify specific qualities that readers might perceive differently in edited materials: that is, are readers of edited materials significantly more likely to:

- choose to read more material from the same source?
- consider the source of the material to be credible?
- trust that the material's content is accurate?
- consider the material easy to read?
- consider the material easy to understand?
- perceive the material as keeping their attention?

Our goal in asking about these different writing qualities was to help ACES members communicate the value of editing to clients or employers who are interested in achieving a particular quality in their written materials. Studying the effect of editing on these different qualities was another reason we expanded the range of media examined: we assumed that some qualities, such as readability, might be of greater interest to some clients or employers depending on the type of media they produced.

¹ We finalized the phrasing of these research questions in collaboration with members of ACES leadership at the project kickoff meeting for the study in October 2025.

Methods

We chose a mixed-methods approach for this study. For our quantitative method, we ran statistical analysis of survey responses, similar to the previous ACES-funded study on this topic (Vultee 2015). Using a quantitative method helped us identify general trends, which ACES members can then cite in conversations with their clients and employers. To explore the “why?” behind these trends, we added a qualitative method: semistructured interviews, which we manually coded for recurring themes. Using a qualitative method also helped us address a limitation in the quantitative method. Whereas the survey collects participants’ opinions about materials that we chose for them, the interviews collect opinions about the materials that participants already have to or choose to read.

To enhance the rigor of the study and protection of participants, we worked with an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to refine and approve our protocol as presenting little to no risk to our participants. As part of receiving IRB approval, each member of our team was re-certified for human subjects research. The study’s IRB number is 09122025EXP001.

Survey Design and Analysis

For our survey, we imitated three elements of previous studies in this area:

- We selected pieces of written material for participants to read, and we prepared two versions of each piece: an unedited version containing errors and an edited version.
- Participants read either the unedited or edited version and then answered a set of Likert-scale questions about their experience reading the material.
- We analyzed differences in how participants answered the Likert-scale questions about the unedited version and how participants answered the Likert-scale questions about the edited version.

As mentioned in the Study Goals section above, we also expanded on previous studies in different ways, including expanding the definition of “editing” and examining more than one type of media.

The following subsections detail our guiding definitions and describe how we designed, conducted, and analyzed responses from the survey.

Guiding Definitions

To guide our work throughout the study, we used the following three definitions for “editing”:

- Copy editing: Changes to ensure the material complies with relevant standards. Copy edits can include 1) word choice changes to comply with dictionary definitions; 2) grammar changes to comply with acceptable language standards; 3) punctuation changes to comply with style guide standards; and 4) mechanics

changes to comply with the standards set within the material itself to maintain consistency.

- Stylistic editing: Changes to stylistic writing choices. Stylistic edits include changes to word choice or sentence structure to 1) clarify the author's tone or meaning or 2) make sentences easier to read or more aesthetically pleasing for the intended audience.
- Developmental editing: Changes to the content or organization of the material. Developmental edits can include moving, removing, or adding sections, paragraphs, and sentences to ensure 1) the content is relevant to the intended audience; 2) all necessary content is included and accurate; and 3) the organization helps the intended audience understand the point of the content for them as they read.

In the Preparing the Materials subsection below, we discuss how and why we used the terms “Developmental+” and “Stylistic+” in our survey design and analysis.

Importantly, these three definitions limit “editing” to the editing of written materials. While editing written materials includes some visual concerns, such as using bulleted lists and consistent spacing, we did not treat image-based or video-based editing as “editing” for this study.

In addition to defining the three levels of editing, we also defined two broad categories of the media we intended to compare. We decided to categorize different types of media by their intended purpose: whether their intended audience 1) “chose to” read the material, to overcome boredom or satisfy curiosity, or 2) “had to” read the material, as part of performing some form of paid or unpaid labor. We referred to this difference in purpose as the material’s “temperature,” with “warm” materials being materials that audiences “choose to” read and “cold” materials being materials that audiences “have to” read. For example, a fantasy novel is generally a warm material, and a user manual is generally a cold material.

Preparing the Materials

We chose six materials for participants to read in our survey. We needed a minimum of six materials, so we could compare differences in responses to the three levels of editing *and* by each of the two types of material “temperature.” Like Vultee’s (2015) study, we used actually published materials rather than create our own. We identified materials that met the following three criteria:

- publicly available online
- about 400 to 600 words, short enough to be read in about two to three minutes
- containing at least two developmental concerns, six stylistic concerns, and four copy errors

In addition to these criteria, half the materials needed to represent our definitions of “warm” materials and half needed to be “cold.”² Finally, we wanted the collection of materials to represent a variety of industries.

Our final selection included the following six materials:

1. An executive producer’s LinkedIn post offering advice to professionals (warm)
2. A federal agency’s blog post about a successful animal conservation effort (warm)
3. A professional services company’s blog post about cybersecurity recommendations for businesses (warm)
4. A state-level nonprofit’s financial review instructions (cold)
5. A technology company’s instructions for using an education platform (cold)
6. A section from a federal agency’s annual performance report on healthcare enrollment (cold)

See Appendix A for the original version of each of these materials. In this study, we refer to these original versions as the “unedited” materials.

Next, we prepared the edited version of each material. We assigned one of the three levels of editing to each of the six materials, ensuring that we applied each level of editing to both a warm material and a cold material. Table 1 shows our assignment for each of the six materials.

Editing Level	Warm	Cold
Copy	1. Executive producer’s LinkedIn post	4. Nonprofit’s financial review instructions
Stylistic+	2. Federal agency’s animal conservation blog post	5. Company’s software use instructions
Developmental+	3. Company’s cybersecurity blog post	6. Federal agency’s healthcare enrollment reporting

Table 1: The six materials span each of the three levels of editing and two material temperatures.

When we edited these six materials, we included copy editing in our stylistic edit (called “stylistic+”) and included both copy editing and stylistic editing in our developmental edit (called “developmental+”). We did this combination editing for two reasons:

² As we discuss in the Limitations subsection of the Conclusion, ultimately what defines a material as “warm” or “cold” depends on each individual reader’s use for the material. Therefore, when selecting materials for the survey, we cannot guarantee that every reader would in fact read one sample for fun and another for work, but we did limit our selection to samples that were most likely to fit one of the two definitions. For example, we assume that readers of the LinkedIn post are more likely to “choose to” read it than “have to” read it, whereas readers are unlikely to read software application instructions for fun.

1. Throughout this study, we wanted to imitate the reality of reading, writing, and editing as much as possible. We know that some materials undergo a copy edit only, usually because the editor's client or employer does not have the time or budget for anything more and wants to simply remove any surface-level embarrassing errors. However, materials that undergo a stylistic edit very rarely do not also undergo a copy edit. Likewise, materials that undergo a developmental edit very rarely do not also undergo an edit for style and copy afterward. Therefore, rather than edit for developmental concerns only or stylistic concerns only, we did these combination edits to reflect the reality of editing assignments.
2. As a practical concern, we found that we could not do a stylistic or developmental edit and not risk removing the copy errors that previously existed in the material. Again, in an attempt to reflect reality as much as possible, we chose not to add in new copy errors once the previous copy errors were edited out.

Our interview portion of this study helped address some of these limitations. Because we asked participants to describe the characteristics of positive and negative reading experiences, we were able to select which of those characteristics related to our study's definitions of developmental editing only, stylistic editing only, and copy editing only. (See "Guiding Definitions" above to recall each of the three definitions.) For example, if a participant mentioned confusing jargon as a characteristic of a negative reading experience, we identified that characteristic as relating to a stylistic concern only, rather than "stylistic+." (See "Analyzing Interview Responses" below for details on coding the interview data.)

We edited the six materials collaboratively. First, Dr. Tin and Ms. Shaughnessy edited each of the six materials individually. Then, Dr. Fernandez compared the two edited versions of each material and provided feedback on which edits seemed to best align with the study's definitions of the three levels of editing. Using this feedback, Dr. Tin and Ms. Shaughnessy then discussed which edits to keep or change in the final version of each material. See Appendix A for the edited version of each of these materials, which we provided to the survey participants in our experiment group.

Preparing the Survey Questions

We wrote 18 Likert-scale questions. (See Appendix B for the 18 questions.) Specifically, we wrote three questions focused on each of the six writing qualities captured in our secondary research questions. We included a mix of positive and negative statements for each of the six writing qualities. For example, for the quality of readability, we included the positive statement "I was able to finish reading the written material as fast or faster than I anticipated" and the negative statement "I had to reread parts of the written material because the sentences were difficult to read." We then provided a five-point Likert scale for participants to select from: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. We also provided a sixth "Prefer not to answer" option.

After the Likert-scale questions, we added multiple-choice questions about participants' reading habits, including:

- media types they read in an average month
- subjects they read about in an average month
- number of hours they read in an average week for work
- number of hours they read in an average week for fun
- number of U.S. dollars they spend in an average year to access written materials, including books and news subscriptions

Because we wanted to differentiate between participants who might have a bias toward error-free materials, we also asked participants if they had ever been paid to edit someone else's writing. Finally, we added a question asking participants if they wanted to receive an invitation to a follow-up interview about their reading habits and experiences. See Appendix C for the complete list of multiple-choice questions.

We launched the survey in Google Forms and tested it on four volunteers. The survey functioned well for all four volunteers.

Collecting Survey Responses

We used the Prolific platform to ensure a nationally representative sample of participants. Prolific provides access to over 300,000 verified human participants, limiting participation to fit each researcher's selection criteria (Prolific, n.d.). Prolific also provides safeguards to ensure data quality, including verification and timing policies to remove automated responses from bots. Per Prolific's suggestion, we included two attention check questions at different points in our survey, such as "Select Strongly Agree to pass this attention check." Per Prolific's policy, we paid participants for their time.

We recruited 300 participants for each of the two surveys: control (unedited) and experiment (edited). We closed the surveys after we reached 294 valid responses for the control group and 295 for the experiment group. After we removed two responses that failed both attention checks and three responses that were incomplete, we had 291 control responses and 293 experiment responses.

Analyzing Survey Responses

We analyzed the survey responses using post-hoc comparison analysis. We assigned each of the Likert-scale responses a number score: 5 for Strongly Agree and 1 for Strongly Disagree. For negatively phrased questions, we then inverted the scores. Next, we determined the mean (average) response of each of the two groups—control and experiment—for each of the 18 questions, over each of the six materials. We then used post-hoc comparison analysis to determine whether the control group's mean response to each question was significantly different from the experiment group's response to each question. We analyzed differences between the three editing levels and the two

material “temperatures.” Finally, we analyzed these differences within the following subgroups:

- Reads 20 hours or more per week for work vs. reads less than 20 hours per week for work
- Reads 10 hours or more per week for fun vs. reads less than 10 hours per week for fun
- Pays \$100 or more annually to access written materials vs. pays less than \$100 annually to access written materials
- Has prior paid editing experience vs. has no prior paid editing experience

We decided on these four subgroups based on comparable proportions in the reading habits data (detailed in the Results: Survey Data section).

Because analyzing multiple comparisons on one dataset can increase the chance of false positives (Amplitude, n.d.), we used the Bonferroni test to lower the threshold for significance. Therefore, ACES can consider the significant differences we report in the Results: Survey Data section below to be relatively conservative.

Interview Design and Analysis

As mentioned previously, conducting interviews helped us address the main limitation in our survey design: whereas the survey responses show readers’ perceptions of materials that we chose for them, the interview responses focus on readers’ perceptions of the materials they already “have to” read for work or “choose to” read for fun.

The following subsections describe how we designed, conducted, and analyzed responses from the interviews. We used the same definitions for levels of editing and material temperature as in the Guiding Definitions subsection above.

Preparing Interview Questions

We wrote the interview questions to learn about readers’ preferences for the qualities of the cold and warm materials they read. We asked for examples of the cold and warm materials they read now, and then we asked for examples of positive and negative experiences they have had with those materials. We also asked for examples of feedback to share with the people who write those cold and warm materials. By focusing on their experiences as readers, our goal was to invite participants to share their thoughts on preferred writing qualities without prompting them to think of the presence or absence of editing specifically.

We closed our interview questions with the only question of the study that specifically asked for participants’ opinions about editing. Using estimates from the Editorial Freelancers’ Association (EFA) (EFA 2026), we gave participants an example of the cost of editing, in terms of both time and money. (We used the example of a 200-page novel, which we assumed was the type of media participants were most likely to be familiar

with.) We asked participants how they might help someone weigh the value of editing against the cost.

We tested the interview questions on one volunteer. The questions performed well, with one adjustment: to better understand the nature of the cold materials that participants read, we added an optional prompt asking for additional context about the participant's paid or unpaid work. See Appendix D for the complete set of interview questions and prompts.

Collecting Interview Responses

One week after we launched and closed the survey, we used Prolific's messaging tool to send recruitment invitations to survey participants who met two criteria:

1. Selected "yes" in response to the survey question asking if they wanted an invitation to a follow-up interview
2. Selected "no" in response to the survey question: "Have you ever been paid to edit someone else's writing, as part of your job or as a service you offered?"

Because previous studies found that people with a bias toward error-free writing were more likely to care about or notice errors, we added the second criterion to exclude participants who were more likely to have this bias. We invited 151 participants, and 22 participants accepted the invitation.

We assigned each of the 22 interviews to different members of our three-person team based on scheduling availability. We conducted the interviews using Zoom; to protect participants' privacy, we turned cameras off and removed identifying information from participants' Zoom names. After each interview, we noted our immediate impression of the interview in a shared document and recommended tips for conducting future interviews. For example, we learned that for participants who respond that they do not read for work, we could prompt them to think of the materials they read as part of their participation in Prolific studies as "for work." Each interview lasted 15 to 30 minutes, and participants received a link to a digital \$20 gift card afterward.

Analyzing Interview Responses

We used a transcription service to transcribe the audio from the Zoom recordings of the interviews. The transcription service first used AI to automatically generate a transcript and then used a human transcriber to finalize the transcript and provide quality assurance.

We manually coded each of the transcripts for references to preferred (or not preferred) qualities of written materials. We categorized each of the references according to the following themes drawn from the research questions:

- the editing level the reference relates to: copy concerns, stylistic concerns, or developmental concerns³
- the material temperature the participant was referring to: warm, cold, or both warm and cold
- whether the participant valued this writing quality as something that 1) improved a material or 2) made a material worse or no different

We also coded the transcripts for three recurring themes that emerged from the interviews:

- whether the participant considered editing to be worth the return on investment (ROI)
- whether the participant expressed an awareness of “audience”—specifically, the idea that the preferred qualities of a written material depend in part on its intended audience
- whether the participant expressed an opinion about the use of AI in writing and if that opinion was positive, negative, or both positive and negative

Finally, we captured a list of the cold and warm materials that each participant gave as examples of their average monthly reading.

We coded the interview transcripts collaboratively. Dr. Tin and Dr. Fernandez each coded 11 of the transcripts. Ms. Shaughnessy reviewed each of the coding decisions and suggested changes when applicable, which we communicated and resolved as a team.

³ For more detail on how we distinguished between the three editing concerns, see Appendix F. This appendix provides the coding guide we created to help us code the interview transcripts consistently. In addition to our previously established definitions for each editing level, we list key words and phrases related to each level and summarize guidance on how to think about each level differently.

Results: Survey Data

This section highlights the most meaningful results from the survey data, in addition to summarizing the demographics and reading habits of the survey participants. In addition, Appendix E lists the mean difference—the difference between the mean of responses from the edited (experiment) and unedited (control) groups—for each of the 18 Likert-scale questions for each of the six materials. This appendix also lists the Bonferroni-adjusted p value for each mean difference, which we use to determine if the difference in the two groups' responses to each question was significant (with significance defined as $p < .05$).

Demographics and Reading Habits

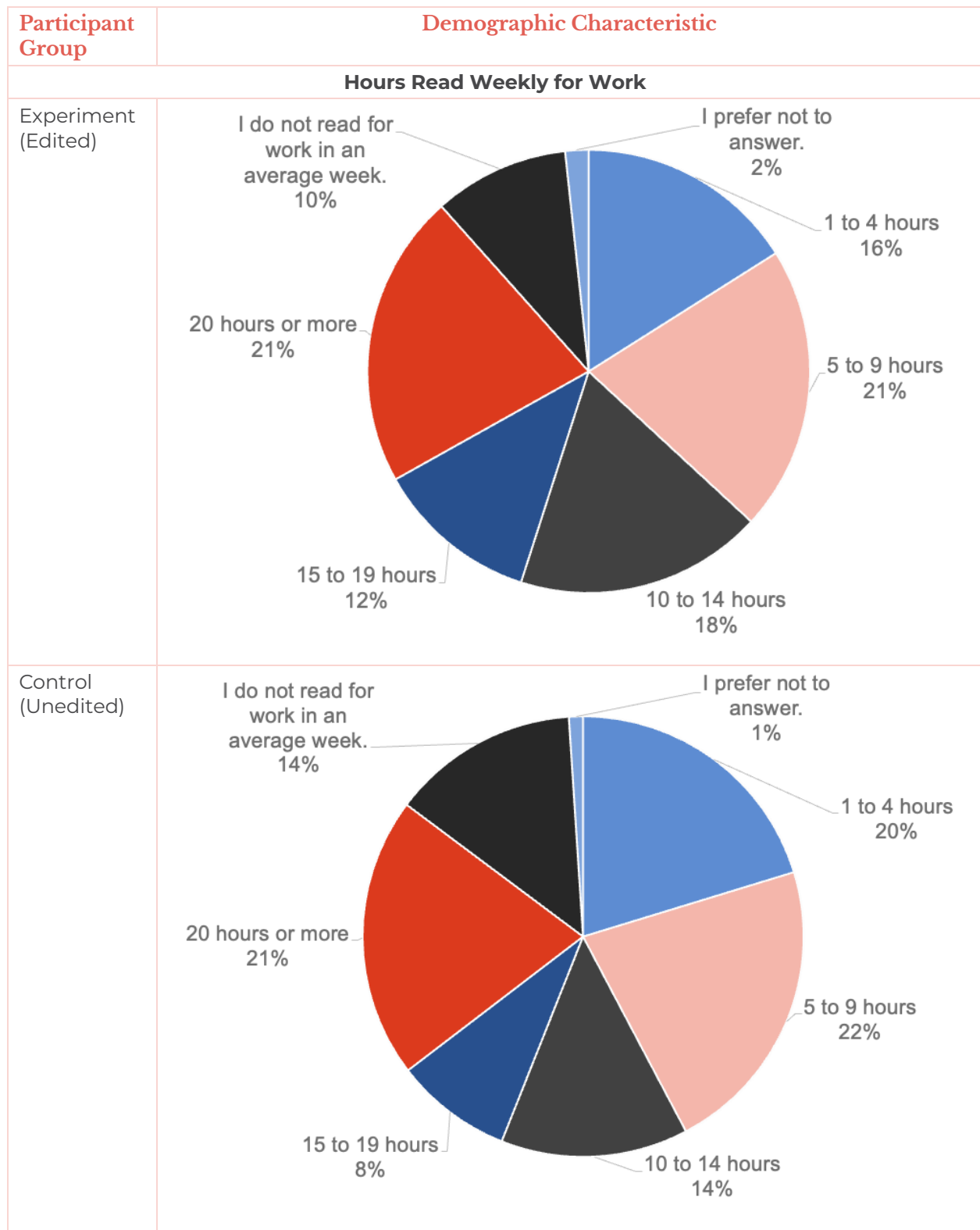
The demographic data we received from Prolific confirmed that we surveyed a nationally representative sample in terms of age, sex, and ethnicity (Table 2). The data also showed a similar range of employment status across both the control and experiment groups.

Demographic Characteristic	Control Group	Experiment Group
Total Participants	291	293
Age		
Range	18 to 85	19 to 81
Median Age	46	48
Sex		
Female	51%	50%
Male	49%	50%
Ethnicity		
White	64%	63%
Black	12%	12%
Mixed	10%	11%
Asian	6%	7%
Other	7%	8%
Employment Status		
Full-Time	41%	34%
Part-Time	11%	18%
Not in Paid Work (homemaker, retired, disabled)	13%	13%
Unemployed and Job-Seeking	12%	9%
Other	2%	5%
(No employment data)	(21%)	(20%)

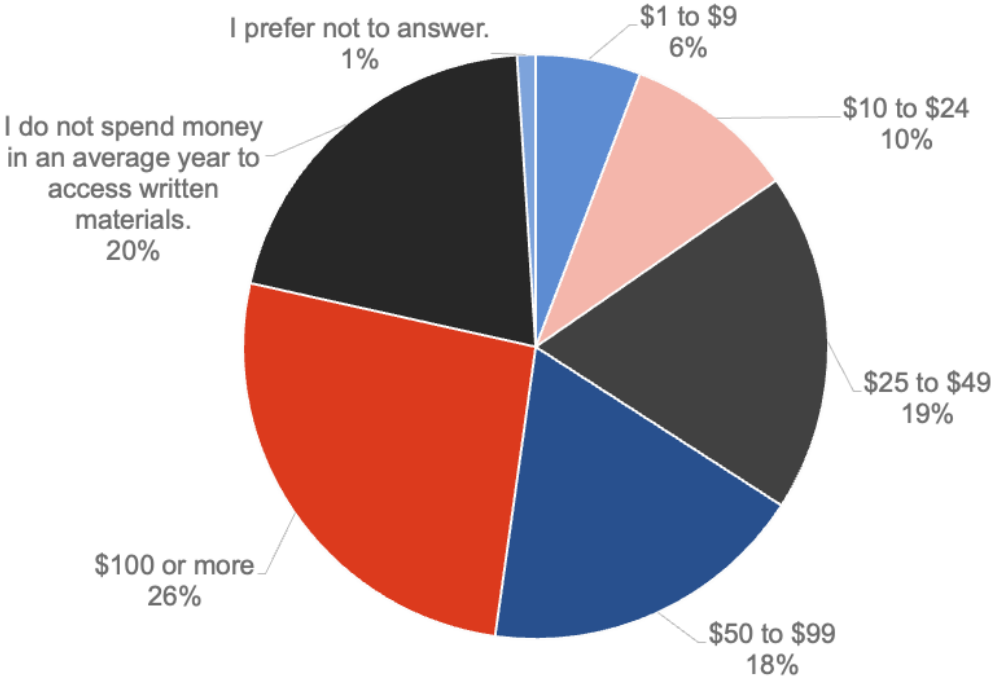
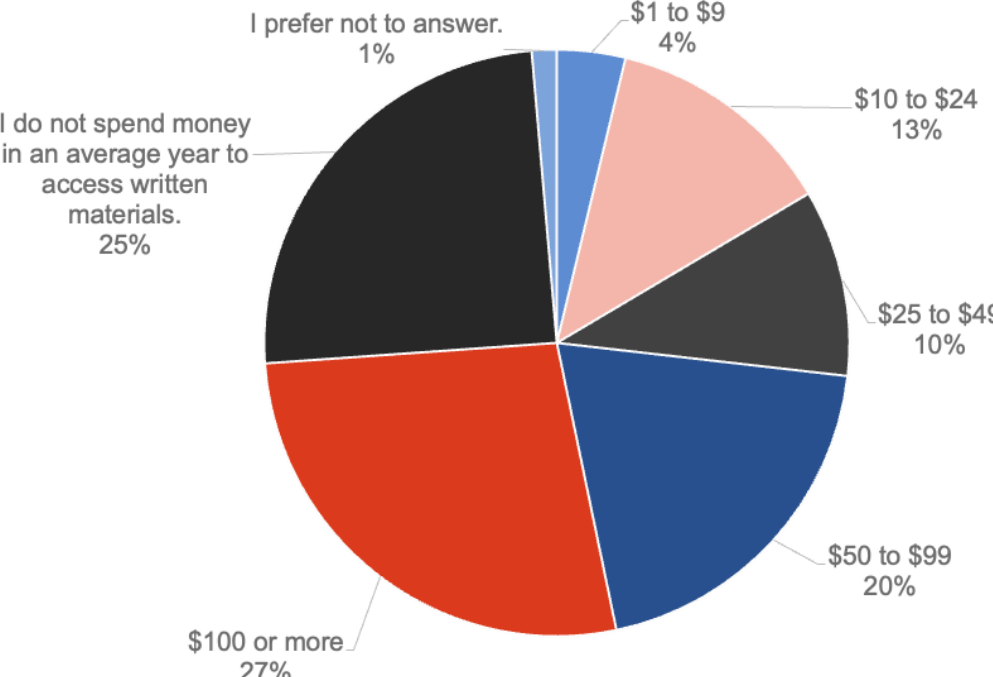
Table 2: Demographic characteristics were spread evenly across both survey groups.

The “reading habits” data also varied within each group, and this variety appeared at similar levels across both the experiment and control groups (Table 3). We also found

that each group had similar shares of participants with and without prior paid editing experience.



Participant Group	Demographic Characteristic																
	Hours Read Weekly for Fun <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Hours Read Weekly for Fun</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 to 4 hours</td> <td>32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 to 9 hours</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10 to 14 hours</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15 to 19 hours</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 hours or more</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I do not read for fun in an average week</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I prefer not to answer</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Hours Read Weekly for Fun	Percentage	1 to 4 hours	32%	5 to 9 hours	30%	10 to 14 hours	17%	15 to 19 hours	8%	20 hours or more	11%	I do not read for fun in an average week	1%	I prefer not to answer	1%
Hours Read Weekly for Fun	Percentage																
1 to 4 hours	32%																
5 to 9 hours	30%																
10 to 14 hours	17%																
15 to 19 hours	8%																
20 hours or more	11%																
I do not read for fun in an average week	1%																
I prefer not to answer	1%																
	Hours Read Weekly for Fun <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Hours Read Weekly for Fun</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 to 4 hours</td> <td>34%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 to 9 hours</td> <td>31%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10 to 14 hours</td> <td>16%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15 to 19 hours</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 hours or more</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I do not read for fun in an average week</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I prefer not to answer</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Hours Read Weekly for Fun	Percentage	1 to 4 hours	34%	5 to 9 hours	31%	10 to 14 hours	16%	15 to 19 hours	5%	20 hours or more	12%	I do not read for fun in an average week	1%	I prefer not to answer	1%
Hours Read Weekly for Fun	Percentage																
1 to 4 hours	34%																
5 to 9 hours	31%																
10 to 14 hours	16%																
15 to 19 hours	5%																
20 hours or more	12%																
I do not read for fun in an average week	1%																
I prefer not to answer	1%																

Participant Group	Demographic Characteristic																
Experiment (Edited)	Money Spent Yearly to Access Reading Materials  <table border="1" data-bbox="410 352 1398 1024"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>\$100 or more</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$50 to \$99</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$25 to \$49</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$10 to \$24</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$1 to \$9</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I prefer not to answer.</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I do not spend money in an average year to access written materials.</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	\$100 or more	26%	\$50 to \$99	18%	\$25 to \$49	19%	\$10 to \$24	10%	\$1 to \$9	6%	I prefer not to answer.	1%	I do not spend money in an average year to access written materials.	20%
Category	Percentage																
\$100 or more	26%																
\$50 to \$99	18%																
\$25 to \$49	19%																
\$10 to \$24	10%																
\$1 to \$9	6%																
I prefer not to answer.	1%																
I do not spend money in an average year to access written materials.	20%																
Control (Unedited)	 <table border="1" data-bbox="410 1129 1398 1801"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>\$100 or more</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$50 to \$99</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$25 to \$49</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$10 to \$24</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$1 to \$9</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I prefer not to answer.</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I do not spend money in an average year to access written materials.</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	\$100 or more	27%	\$50 to \$99	20%	\$25 to \$49	10%	\$10 to \$24	13%	\$1 to \$9	4%	I prefer not to answer.	1%	I do not spend money in an average year to access written materials.	25%
Category	Percentage																
\$100 or more	27%																
\$50 to \$99	20%																
\$25 to \$49	10%																
\$10 to \$24	13%																
\$1 to \$9	4%																
I prefer not to answer.	1%																
I do not spend money in an average year to access written materials.	25%																

Participant Group	Demographic Characteristic								
Prior Paid Editing Experience									
Experiment (Edited)	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>yes</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>no</td> <td>69%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I prefer not to answer.</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	yes	30%	no	69%	I prefer not to answer.	1%
Response	Percentage								
yes	30%								
no	69%								
I prefer not to answer.	1%								
Control (Unedited)	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>yes</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>no</td> <td>73%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I prefer not to answer.</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	yes	26%	no	73%	I prefer not to answer.	1%
Response	Percentage								
yes	26%								
no	73%								
I prefer not to answer.	1%								

Table 3: The experiment and control groups reported similar rates of reading habits and prior editing experience.

Both groups were also similar in the types of media (Table 4) and subject areas (Table 5) they read in an average month. The most noticeable differences were that experiment group participants read more magazines and more entertainment (such as movie reviews and celebrity fashion) than control group participants.

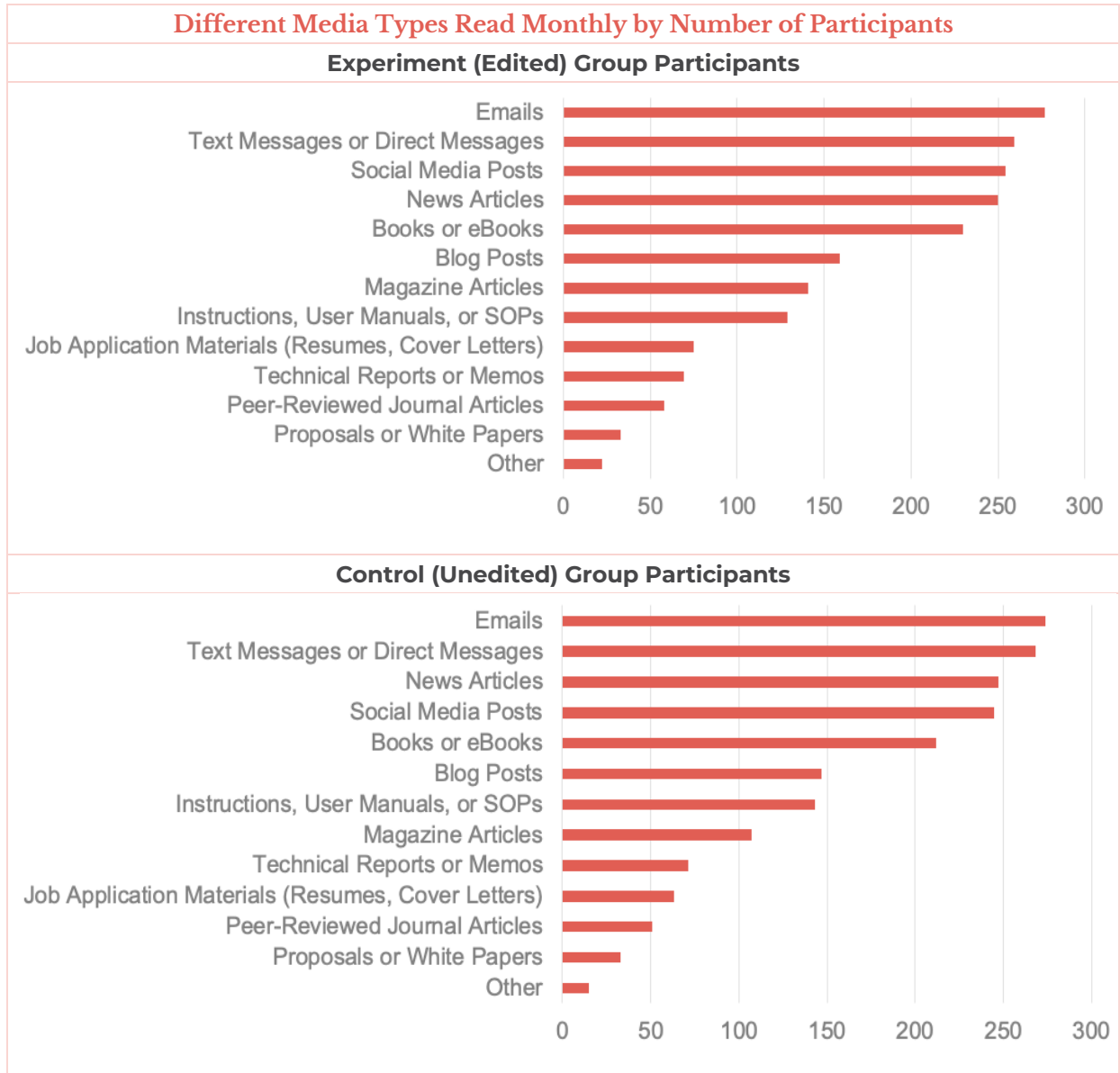


Table 4: The experiment and control groups read different media types at similar rates.

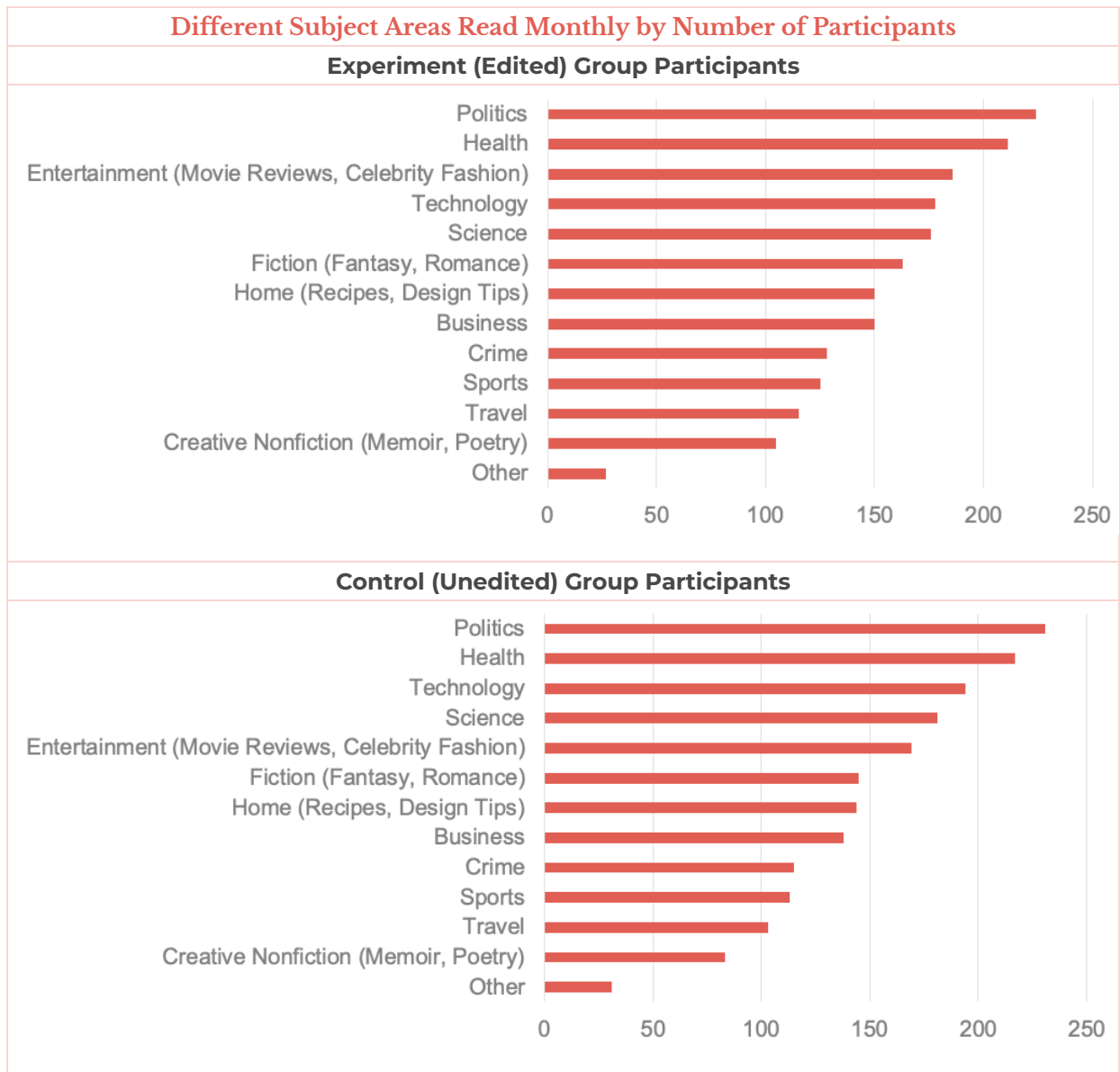


Table 5: The experiment and control groups read different subject areas at nearly identical rates, with the subject of entertainment as the main exception.

Statistical Results by Editing Level and Material “Temperature”

Table 6 summarizes which of the six materials saw a significant mean difference in responses between the edited (experiment) and unedited (control) versions. An “X” indicates that the mean difference was not significant, and a checkmark (✓) indicates that the mean difference was significant. To compare exact mean differences and p values, see the tables in Appendix E.

Writing Quality Category	Question	Warm			Cold		
		Copy	Styl+	Dev+	Copy	Styl+	Dev+
Interest in Source	If I needed more information about this topic, I would be willing to read more written materials from this source.	X	X	X	X	X	✓
Interest in Source	If I wanted more information about this topic, I would try to find more written materials from this source.	X	X	X	X	X	✓
Interest in Source	I would recommend this source to someone interested in reading about this topic.	X	X	✓	X	X	✓
Credibility of Source	I believe this source is an expert on this topic.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Credibility of Source	I would feel comfortable citing this source if I were to write about this topic.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Credibility of Source	I feel like this source might be misrepresenting the information or leaving important information out.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Accuracy of Material	I trust that the information in the written material is accurate.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Accuracy of Material	If someone brought up this topic in a conversation, I would feel comfortable contributing to the conversation with what I learned in this written material.	X	X	✓	X	X	✓
Accuracy of Material	I have doubts about the accuracy of this written material.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Readability	I find the written material to be easy to read.	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Readability	I was able to finish reading the written material as fast or faster than I anticipated.	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Readability	I had to reread parts of the written material because the sentences were difficult to read.	X	X	X	X	✓	✓
Comprehension	I had to reread parts of the written material because the topic was difficult to understand.	X	X	X	X	✓	✓

Writing Quality Category	Question	Warm			Cold		
		Copy	Styl+	Dev+	Copy	Styl+	Dev+
Comprehension	If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could summarize the written material's main point.	X	X	X	X	X	✓
Comprehension	If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could share at least one detail I learned from the written material.	X	X	X	X	X	✓
Attention	I read each word of the written material from beginning to end without stopping.	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Attention	I read each word of the written material but stopped at least once because I found the written material boring or frustrating.	X	X	X	X	✓	✓
Attention	I read enough of the written material to answer the survey questions but did not read each word.	X	X	X	X	X	✓

Table 6: For some aspects of certain materials, participants who read the edited version perceived the material significantly differently (noted with a checkmark [✓]) from the participants who read the unedited version.

Developmental+

As shown in Table 6, Developmental+ editing had the greatest effect on the average reader's perception of the written materials. Specifically, Development+ editing made a significant difference in how readers perceived four qualities of the cold material: interest in the source, readability, comprehension, and ability to hold attention. Developmental+ editing also made a significant difference for one of the three questions related to the accuracy of the material, for both the cold and warm material.

When comparing all three warm materials, Developmental+ editing was the only level of editing that made a significant difference in how participants perceived the material. Developmental+ editing did not make a significant difference for any one quality of the warm material, but responses to 5 of the 18 survey questions were significantly different.

Stylistic+

Stylistic+ editing did not make a significant difference for how readers perceived the quality of the warm material but did make a significant difference for how readers perceived one quality in the cold material: readability. Although readability was the only quality where a significant difference appeared across all three questions for that category, responses to an additional three of the remaining 15 survey questions were also significantly different.

Copy

Copy editing alone did not make a significant difference for how readers perceived any of the six qualities of writing that we evaluated, for either the warm or cold material. Beyond demonstrating significance for one quality, the statistical analysis showed no significant difference in responses to *any* of the 18 questions for either the warm or cold material.

Subgroups

These patterns remained consistent across subgroup analysis. As previously described in the Analyzing Survey Responses subsection, we tested for significant differences in mean responses based on participants' reading habits (time spent reading for work, time spent reading for fun, money spent to access reading materials) and on whether they had any paid editing experience. The results reported for the whole group remained the same across each of these four subgroups. That is, differences in reading habits or having paid editing experience did not make a difference for how these readers valued the different levels of editing for the different material temperatures.

Results: Interview Data

This section highlights the most salient themes from the interview data, after summarizing the demographics and reading habits of the interview participants.

Demographics and Reading Habits

Interview participants' demographic data from Prolific showed a relatively diverse pool in terms of age, sex, and employment status. Ages ranged from 22 to 85, with a median age of 56. Nine participants (40%) were female, and 13 (60%) were male. Four (18%) participant records lacked employment data, but five (23%) indicated that they worked full-time, five (23%) worked part-time, four (18%) were not in paid work, three (13.5%) were unemployed and job-seeking, and one (4.5%) identified as "other." Ethnicity was less diverse, with 82% white, 9% Mixed, 4.5% Asian, and 4.5% Other. See Table 7 for the demographic details of each interview participant, organized by the "Interviewee #" label we assigned.

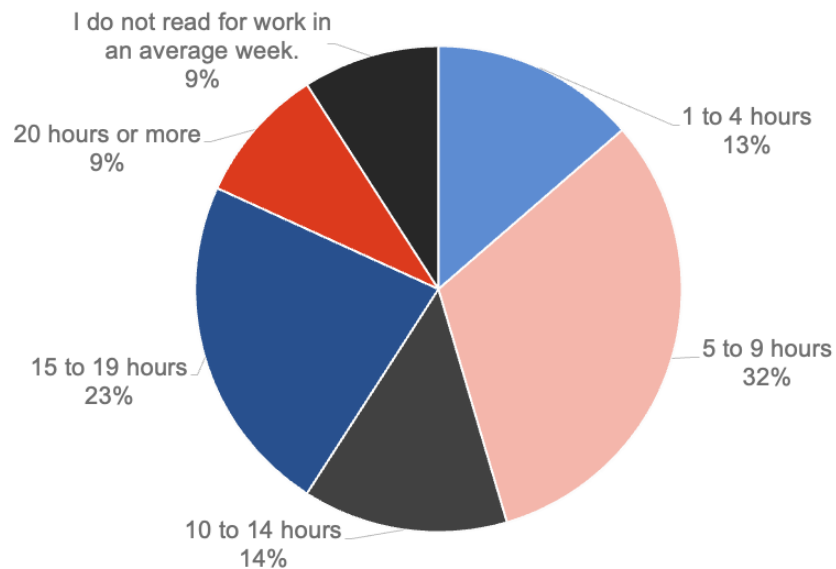
Interview Participant Label	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Employment
Interviewee #1	49	Male	Asian	(no data)
Interviewee #2	70	Male	White	Not in Paid Work
Interviewee #3	85	Male	White	Not in Paid Work
Interviewee #4	62	Male	White	Other
Interviewee #5	73	Female	White	Not in Paid Work
Interviewee #6	68	Female	White	Part-Time
Interviewee #7	58	Male	White	(no data)
Interviewee #8	41	Male	White	Full-Time
Interviewee #9	69	Female	White	Part-Time
Interviewee #10	69	Female	Mixed	Not in Paid Work
Interviewee #11	61	Male	White	(no data)
Interviewee #12	22	Female	Mixed	Part-Time
Interviewee #13	47	Female	White	Part-Time
Interviewee #14	35	Male	Other	(no data)
Interviewee #15	50	Male	White	Full-Time
Interviewee #16	50	Female	White	Part-Time
Interviewee #17	65	Male	White	Full-Time
Interviewee #18	47	Female	White	Full-Time
Interviewee #19	38	Male	White	Unemployed and Job-Seeking
Interviewee #20	37	Male	White	Full-Time
Interviewee #21	56	Female	White	Unemployed and Job-Seeking
Interviewee #22	57	Male	White	Unemployed and Job-Seeking

Table 7: Interview participants showed similar rates of diversity as the whole survey participant group, with the exception of ethnicity.

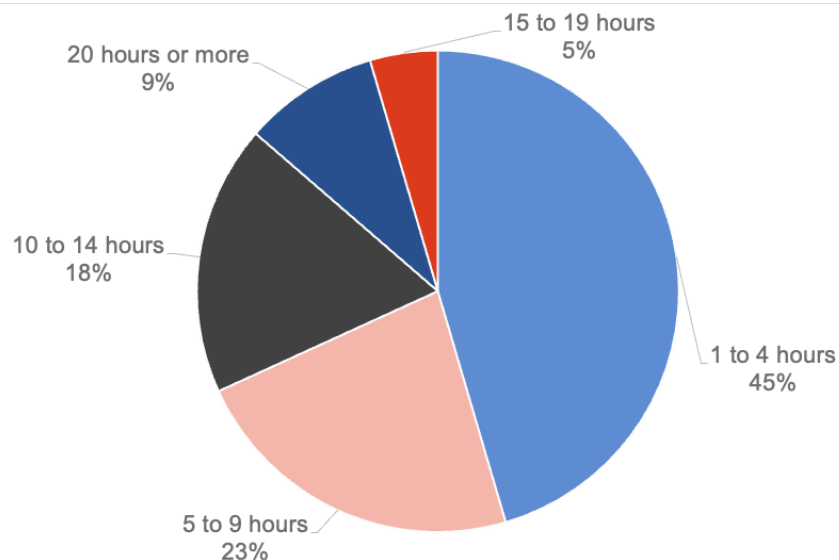
In addition, interview participants' reported reading habits (Table 8) were similar to the overall trends from all survey participants (Table 3). Due to the inclusion criteria for participating in interviews, the largest difference between the subset of 22 interview participants and the entirety of 584 survey participants was that 100% of the interview participants had no prior paid editing experience. (See the Collecting Interview Responses subsection above for a discussion of the interview inclusion criteria.)

Demographic Characteristic

Hours Read Weekly for Work



Hours Read Weekly for Fun



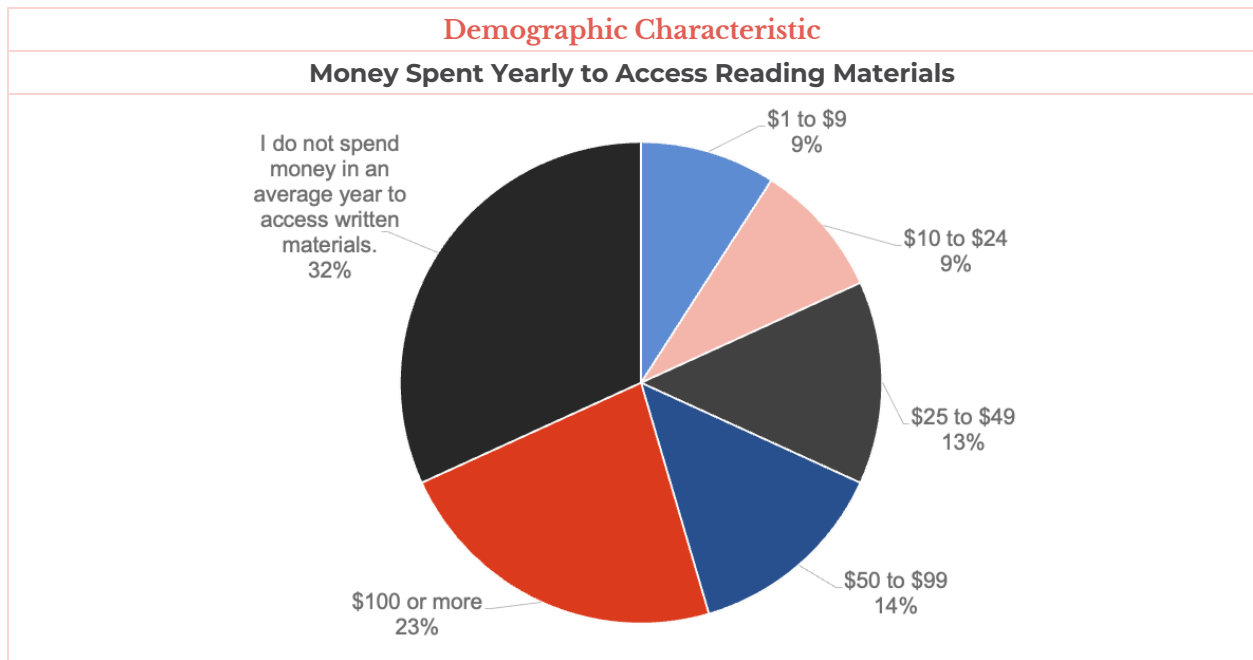


Table 8: Interview participants' reading habits shared a similar rate of variety in responses as the reading habits of the whole survey participant group.

Building on the reading habits reported in the surveys, each interview participant gave specific examples of the materials they read for work or for fun (Table 9). In addition to showing the wide range of work- and fun-related interests of our 22 interview participants, their responses show that what one person reads for work, another person might read for fun. The following material types were mentioned as being read for work by some participants and read for fun by others: news articles, websites, blogs, social media, Reddit forums, emails, recipes, and even technical documentation. For example, one participant said he reads news articles as part of his work teaching English as a Second Language, whereas most participants described reading news articles for fun, on topics ranging from NASCAR to red carpet fashion.

Materials Interview Participants Read in an Average Month	
For Work	For Fun
• news articles* • scientific journal articles • science textbooks • websites* • blogs* • social media* • Reddit forums* • emails* • text messages • Slack and Teams messages • AI chats • instructions • operating manuals • handbooks • reports • budgets • invoices • order forms • contracts • interdepartmental memos • safety memos • debriefings • technical documentation* • regulatory documentation • patents • warranties • online product reviews • telecom outage reports • transcripts • job applications • college application essays • household bills • recipes* • Prolific content: instructions, surveys	• news articles* • websites* • blogs* • fanfiction • social media* • Reddit forums* • newsletters • emails* • fiction books: classics, fantasy, science fiction, romance, historical fiction, mystery, crime thrillers, psychological thrillers, horror, comedy • nonfiction books: popular science, how-to, religious, historical nonfiction • poetry • Japanese manga • technical documentation* • recipes*
*Material read both for work and for fun by different participants	

Table 9: Interview participants shared a wide variety of types of materials they read for work or for fun, with some types appearing in both categories.

Themes in Interview Responses

Developmental Concerns

Of the 17 interview participants who shared an opinion about writing quality related to developmental concerns, all 17 discussed developmental improvements as important. Of these, 11 interview participants focused on developmental concerns in both warm and cold materials, and the remaining six interview participants were evenly split in their focus on developmental concerns for cold materials only (3) and warm materials only (3).

The main developmental concern raised by participants was limiting content to what's necessary to understand and stay engaged in the material, for both warm and cold materials. One participant described a positive experience reading a fictional thriller: "I actually stayed up way past my bedtime last night reading the book....It doesn't go too deep into details of what something looks like, or it doesn't have dialogue that lasts for an entire chapter. It's just short, and it moves very quickly....It keeps it exciting with what's going on" (Interviewee #16). Meanwhile, another participant described a negative experience reading a classic novel: "I dislike when things are so descriptive that it takes me out of the flow of reading" (Interviewee #14). Another participant specifically compared her experience reading news articles against what she might tolerate from a novel: "There's just too much in terms of irrelevant details sometimes in those kinds of articles. Not everybody has that much time, too. I mean, you're just flipping through your phone. You're not trying to read *The Great American Novel* or something" (Interviewee #6).

In addition to preferences for reducing unnecessary content, participants also noted a preference for including all the *necessary* relevant content. One participant described the importance of having enough detail, while also emphasizing the importance of pacing that information well: "Every paragraph should be contained and...keep you engaged, basically. You want to read the first paragraph and want to suddenly read the next paragraph. And...you want to be detailed. You want to make sure you don't have any missing elements to this whole story" (Interviewee #19). Developmental concerns are not simply focused on conciseness but on including the content the audience needs and that content only.

As an issue related to both relevant content and the organization of that content, some participants specifically mentioned a preference for warm and cold materials that get to the point upfront. One participant explained how he routinely skips the beginnings of news articles for this reason: "I read a lot of news stuff and other things, and the first paragraph usually has an anecdote. And to me, it's irrelevant. So I automatically scan the first paragraph, sometimes the second, to find that the meat of the article is three paragraphs down" (Interviewee #3). Another participant explained how a Prolific survey that's supposed to be "a four-minute survey" might actually "take you 10 minutes" because the survey's introduction does not "keep just the main idea at the forefront" (Interviewee #21).

Another commonly cited developmental concern related to how content and organization contribute to storytelling, again with the goal of being able to understand and stay engaged in the material. One participant noted that regardless of the material—“novel, blog post, email”—he wants “a good hook to capture my attention and to pull me in” and then for the material to “continue to tell the story with enough detail to keep me interested and hold my attention and to make me want to read the entire thing, but not so much that I lose my focus or get bored or feel like it’s too much to read” (Interviewee #7). Another participant described quitting a book because the disorganized story was too difficult to follow: “The plot, I’m not even sure there was a plot, [was] very disconnected....There was no continuity in the storyline” (Interviewee #21). Also focusing on books, another participant cited character development as a common content and organization issue. He explained his frustration reading about unnecessary characters—“The character doesn’t go anywhere. So why even introduce that character?”—and reading about characters too early or too late in the story to follow along—“Don’t assume that I can read a character name and description, and then you talk about that character 30 pages later, that I’m going to remember exactly what you told me” (Interviewee #22).

For two participants, the trustworthiness of the content was a relevant developmental concern. One asked “what’s the point of reading something if you don’t know if it’s true or not?” (Interviewee #6). Another participant emphasized the importance of distinguishing between facts and the author’s opinion: “I want to know the facts, and I want the facts to be direct. If you want to include your opinion, that’s fine, but I want the opinion to be obvious that it’s an opinion. ‘I think this.’ I’m not mad at that type of sentence....I know exactly what I’m getting at that point....I want to be transparent” (Interviewee #20). This same participant described how his favorite authors have opinions “woven in” their articles “in a way that it’s obvious” that the content is an opinion (Interviewee #20).

Stylistic Concerns

All (22) interview participants shared an opinion about writing quality related to stylistic concerns.

Of these, three participants mentioned cases where a stylistic edit might be unnecessary or even detrimental to the material, especially warm materials. One participant described the risk of removing an intentional stylistic choice: “I feel like they [authors] have an idea on their work and why they want it that way, and changing it would be just really bad” (Interviewee #14). The other two participants described the importance of having a unique writing style (Interviewee #7) and having a style that sounds like the reader is in a conversation with the author (Interviewee #1). All three participants shared their belief that hiring a professional editor risked losing these stylistic characteristics.

However, all 22 interview participants, including the three who expressed skepticism about the value of stylistic edits in some cases, expressed a preference for written materials with stylistic improvements. They cited improvements such as using short

sentences, paragraph breaks, bulleted lists, and unambiguous or direct language. By far, the most commonly cited stylistic improvement was simplifying word choice.

Participants described their appreciation for simple word choice or their frustration with difficult word choice in a variety of warm and cold materials:

- One participant described the benefit of simple word choice in a news article on a natural science topic: “I read an article about orcas just a few days ago with a student. And that was really easy to read and understand....They didn’t use difficult language. It wasn’t really big words, and they made it very simple for me to understand, even though I’m not a scientist or a marine biologist or anything like that” (Interviewee #19).
- This same participant also expressed frustration with unfamiliar word choice in news articles on political topics: “I’m not well-versed on politics so sometimes I get really frustrated. There’s a lot of terminology and a lot of word usage that just kind of confuses me and it gets really frustrating and I really want to try to understand” (Interviewee #19).
- One participant expressed a similar frustration when reading articles or websites to learn how to edit video for his job: “Sometimes when I deal with compression or just technical jargon of video stuff...it’s not always phrased in such a way that laymen or people that aren’t really involved in the mathematics behind it can pick it up” (Interviewee #14).
- Another participant mentioned the issue of jargon, in the context of documentation for a home equity loan: “Those materials are so difficult to get through. There’s so much jargon from the industry....It would have been easier...if they either explained terminology or made it more basic terminology that an average consumer would understand” (Interviewee #16).
- Another participant described difficult word choice in the materials he uses as a real estate agent: “My typical focus is residential, but sometimes we’ll get commercial deals, and that’s not something I do every day. So I have had times where the language on that can be confusing....If they would just write in lay terms instead of trying to make everything sound like a science equation, that would be great” (Interviewee #1).
- One participant commented on the issue of jargon in the survey instructions for studies on the Prolific platform: “Some of the language...can be a little obscure. I think sometimes researchers will use lingo from whatever subject matter they’re studying that is not always familiar to the average person” (Interviewee #21).

Finally, one participant, also commenting on difficult word choice in Prolific studies, noted how the issue of word choice is also an accessibility issue: “When I was rejected for certain studies on Prolific, I have mentioned that a lot of people are on the autism spectrum, or they’re neurodivergent. And if they could make their wording more autism- or neurodivergent-friendly, that it would help a lot” (Interviewee #18).

In addition to being able to easily understand the material, participants also described the importance of stylistic improvements for creating a conversational tone. One

participant praised her manager's weekly email updates for being easy to read "because he keeps them just light, down-to-earth, like he's just speaking conversationally instead of talking in a formal way" (Interviewee #16). Another participant described the importance of a conversational tone in books: "I always like a book that feels like it's talking to me, like it's a friend telling a story" (Interviewee #21). This same participant described the importance of a conversational tone in journalistic materials as well: "Whether it's a short piece on politics or a long-form article, the pieces that I find especially enjoyable are almost always written that way, as if you were just two people talking....You can definitely tell some people have figured out how to tell a story in words that can just envelop you...like I'm talking to another human being" (Interviewee #21).

Across the 22 interviews, stylistic improvements were a concern for cold materials especially. One participant commented on stylistic improvements to warm materials only, while nine participants commented on stylistic improvements to cold materials only, and the remaining 12 participants were concerned with stylistic improvements to both warm and cold materials.

Copy Concerns

More than two-thirds (15) of the interview participants shared an opinion about writing quality that relates to copy concerns.

Of these, three participants described editing for copy concerns as potentially negatively impacting the material. One participant said he enjoyed "finding typos in books" and appreciated "raw, I guess, art without overcorrection" (Interviewee #7). Similarly, when discussing the risks of editing a book's style, one participant added that the presence of "spelling mistakes and grammar mistakes" in a material is likely "done intentionally" and therefore should remain (Interviewee #14). Another participant simply stated that he does not "necessarily care about proper punctuation," in part because he does not like how "perfectly written" materials "sound" (Interviewee #1). For each of these participants, editing to remove copy errors is a risk to the authenticity of the material, by acting against the author's intention or creating an overly formal or predictable tone.

The remaining 12 participants expressed frustration or disgust with finding copy errors in materials or specifically stated that they valued edits to correct those errors. Over half (7) these participants referred to copy errors in either warm or cold texts, four referred to errors in cold texts only, and two referred to errors in warm texts only.

For some of these participants, copy errors are distracting, especially in warm materials. One participant described quitting a book that "sounded like it had a really good plot" but had too many distracting copy errors: "I saw spelling errors and grammar errors which stick out to you when you're trying to read and trying to be absorbed in a story. Those really catch your attention and pull you away from that" (Interviewee #16). Another participant specifically mentioned books when describing the effect of copy errors on his ability to pay attention: "Sometimes I'm reading books and you do notice some grammatical mistakes in there...and to me, it's somewhat distracting because it just

stands out. It just feels like it was poorly written or that not a lot of attention or not a lot of thought was put into it" (Interviewee #15).

For other participants, copy errors hurt the credibility of the source of the material, for both warm and cold materials. One participant described having a "negative feeling" about researchers whose survey materials have grammar or punctuation errors and about authors whose books have misspelled words (Interviewee #5). Another participant described the presence or absence of copy errors as a sign of the author's level of investment in their work: "If you care enough to write this and care enough to edit it so that it sounds good, it doesn't have any typos, then I think that goes a long way into demonstrating what you feel about your company or your novel or your book" (Interviewee #22). Another participant extended these opinions about the authoring source of the material to the credibility of the material itself: "If the grammar's totally whack, that kind of reflects on the writer, which makes you wonder if the material is sound. I think good grammar and good syntax and good spelling reflects on the author. And if those are bad, it makes you wonder about the material" (Interviewee #10).

For some participants, copy errors are simply unprofessional or annoying. Prefacing her comment with the note that she has "an English degree," one participant described how seeing "spelling and grammar errors" in either warm or cold materials "makes me want to quit reading....It makes me nuts" (Interviewee #13). One participant described spelling errors in books as "not professional" (Interviewee #9), and another described grammar errors in books as "a little bit irritating" (Interviewee #15).

Few participants described copy errors as affecting their comprehension of the material. One participant who had previously described copy errors as "distracting" and "irritating" then added that "once or twice" a misspelled word was confusing because it changed "the entire meaning of not just the word, but of the entire paragraph" (Interviewee #15). Other participants also described struggling with comprehension but only in the context of reading material written in English by an English language learner. These participants noted that the grammar issues they encountered were not so much errors as translation challenges.

Awareness of Audience

While describing what they look for in writing quality, nearly all (20) of the interview participants described an awareness of audience. Specifically, they expressed a preference for materials that account for the audience's level of knowledge or familiarity with the topic. Many participants described this preference when discussing the importance of simplifying word choice, like in the following passage:

"Whatever idea they [authors] are trying to get across, it should be clear and easy to understand. If they're talking to colleagues, to other physicists, to other cooks, or whatever, then that's natural that they're going to have some jargon in there that not everyone will understand. But if they don't need a jargon, if they don't

need a special word [for] a special subject, they should use a general term.”
(Interviewee #3)

Like this participant, many participants acknowledged that the material they find confusing might be appropriate for a different audience. Therefore, participants expressed a preference for materials “tailored” (Interviewee #14) to them or written with them “in mind” (Interviewee #15) as the intended audience.

Whether Editing Is Worth the ROI

Half (11) of the interview participants consider editing to be worth the ROI, and just under half (10) consider editing to be worth the ROI in certain circumstances only (7) or not at all (3). (One interview was not codable for this response.)

As previously discussed, for participants who consider editing worth the ROI, they find editing to help clarify the author’s meaning, ensure accuracy of the content, improve the organization or flow, communicate with the intended audience at their level, enhance accessibility, reduce distractions, show professionalism, avoid embarrassment, and maintain credibility. Some participants also specifically mentioned that authors can benefit simply from receiving someone else’s perspective of their work, “a second set of independent eyes” as one participant called it (Interviewee #8).

For the participants who questioned or rejected whether editing was worth the ROI, they cited two main reasons for their opinion:

1. **Editing was not worth the risk of tampering with the author’s voice.** For some participants, maintaining the author’s intention is paramount. For example, even after expressing his own frustration with overly wordy writing, one participant said that “if the goal is to be as descriptive and verbose as possible, then don’t edit at all” (Interviewee #14).
2. **The industry rate—\$2,000 to edit a 200-page novel—was too high relative to the potential benefit of editing.** One participant expressed doubts that “editing needs to be that profound where you have to pay all that money” (Interviewee #6). Another participant said editing is valuable to “get the story across without detracting from the story” but that the author in the scenario should “find a cheaper editor” (Interviewee #5).

In addition to these two reasons, many participants showed in their responses a limited understanding of what editing is and what editors do. In fact, after the first six interviews, we edited our prompt for the final interview question to specify that the \$2,000 worth of editing a 200-page novel included “content, structure, style, and grammar.” We made this change because participants’ responses suggested that they understood “editing” exclusively as addressing copy concerns: spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typos (see Appendix D for the interview questions and prompts). In the Findings section of this report, we discuss the implications of this limited understanding of editing.

AI Use in Writing

Nearly a third (7) of the interview participants volunteered an opinion about AI use in writing, even though we did not ask an interview question related to AI.⁴ Of these participants, they were split on whether their opinion of AI for writing was entirely negative (3) or both positive and negative (4). None of the participants who mentioned AI had an entirely positive opinion of using AI to produce written materials.

Some participants raised concerns with AI writing that relate to the developmental concerns discussed earlier. While appreciating that AI can answer questions and summarize information quickly, participants also described how AI outputs can have content errors, with one participant explaining that she “caught mistakes” (Interviewee #10), and another participant acknowledging “sometimes there’s some hallucinations” (Interviewee #22).

Participants also expressed frustration with AI outputs having too much unnecessary or irrelevant content. One participant described his frustration with using AI to generate documentation for his software engineering job: “It can be too long, and it can be repetitive, it can say some of the same things over and over in seemingly different ways, or it can add things maybe that are not necessarily related to the topic or the goal of the paper” (Interviewee #7). Another participant praised AI for being able to “glean the best information out in the internet” but complained that AI outputs can be so long that they “would fill the back of a car, like the back end of an SUV” (Interviewee #11).

Participants also expressed concerns with AI writing that recall some of the preferences for stylistic and copy concerns discussed earlier. Just as stylistic improvements can enhance a conversational tone, while copy *errors* can actually make material sound more “human,” AI writing can be error-free and yet have an off-putting tone. For example, one participant described AI writing as sounding “homogenized.” This participant went on to explain that even though the writing itself is “coherent...makes sense and all of that,” the “feel” of the writing is “less alive or something, I don’t know. Flat” (Interviewee #21). This participant claimed that she “can always tell when AI wrote something...and I almost immediately will feel disengaged.”

⁴ Although our participants almost exclusively used the catchall term “AI,” we understand from the context of these interviews that participants were referring to the use of generative AI tools, specifically large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini. We continue to use the term “AI” throughout this report to refer to the use of these tools.

Findings

Our main finding, in answer to our main research question, is that **readers significantly prefer edited materials depending on the level of editing and purpose of the material**. The following findings build on and support this idea.

Finding #1: An edit that involves a combined developmental, stylistic, and copy edit is the most valued.

This finding reflects both the survey data and the interview data. The statistical analysis showed that developmental+ had the greatest effect on readers' perceptions of written materials' different qualities. In the interview responses, some participants expressed doubts that copy editing or stylistic editing improved materials, but none of the participants expressed such doubt about the value of developmental editing.

The data also showed that developmental+ editing is valuable for both warm and cold materials. The statistical analysis showed that developmental+ editing made the biggest difference for the cold material, particularly for enhancing the qualities of interest in the source, readability, comprehension, and attention. The statistical analysis also showed some significant differences in the perceptions of the warm material that underwent developmental+ editing, although not for any one quality. Based on the interview responses, developmental concerns are key to how readers experience both warm and cold materials, discussed in more detail in Finding #4.

Finding #2: Stylistic editing holds value for making cold materials easier to read.

The statistical analysis showed that readers had a significantly different response to the stylistic+ edit of the cold material only. This significance appeared in the responses to all three of the survey questions demonstrating the writing quality of readability. That is, even without the benefit of a developmental edit, applying a stylistic and copy edit to the cold material made a significant difference for how readers perceived the ease of reading that material. This improvement in the perception of readability was limited to the cold material we surveyed. Readers showed no significant difference in their responses to any of the 18 survey questions about the warm materials that did or did not receive a stylistic and copy edit.

This finding mostly aligns with comments in the interviews about the value of stylistic editing. Stylistic concerns were the only category of editing concerns that came up in all 22 interviews, with 21 discussing cold materials specifically. However, warm materials were also relevant to just over half (13) of participants. In particular, concerns about simplifying word choice and using a conversational tone came up when discussing news and journalism, which participants read both for work and for fun.

Finding #3: Copy editing alone is not enough to improve the average reader's opinion about the quality of written material.

This finding showed the most noticeable difference between the survey and interview data. The statistical analysis showed that copy editing alone did not significantly affect how readers responded to any of the 18 survey questions for either the warm or cold material. However, half of the interview participants shared that copy concerns mattered to them.

One possible explanation for this discrepancy between the survey and interview results is that the materials we provided might not have had enough errors to be noticeable. Recall that Appelman and Schmierbach (2018) found that the presence of grammar errors had a significant effect on readers' perceptions of news articles only when the news articles included 30 errors per 450-word article. Appelman and Schmierbach then noted that having 30 errors in a 450-word article does not in fact "reflect a typical news story" (943). In limiting our survey materials to "real" publicly available, published materials, we provided materials that had a minimum of four copy errors, and we did not manipulate the materials to add more errors. Four errors in a 500-word passage might not be noticeable enough to elicit a strong negative response, even among people who say they care about copy errors. Yet, this smaller share of errors more accurately reflects the quality of published written materials that the average reader is likely to encounter.

A second possible explanation is that a reader's tolerance for errors might depend on the importance of the material for them. As we discuss further in Limitations below, the survey results reflect readers' perceptions of materials that they themselves are unlikely to be personally invested in: we did not ask them to follow the instructions they read or give them warm materials on topics they indicated an interest in. Meanwhile, the interview responses specifically focused on the materials that readers already read for work or fun. Potentially, the copy errors in the survey materials did not significantly affect readers' perceptions because readers were not invested enough in the quality of the materials to care about the errors. As we discuss in Suggestions for Future Research below, future research might explore this discrepancy on the value of editing for copy errors by surveying readers on materials that matter to them.

Finding #4: Readers value different qualities in warm and cold materials based on the experience they want when they read them.

The survey results showed that the average reader values different levels of editing for different types of materials. Specifically, developmental+ and stylistic+ editing made a significant difference for how readers perceived specific qualities of cold materials:

- Developmental+ editing made a difference for interest in the source, readability, comprehension, and attention.
- Stylistic+ editing made a difference for readability.

Meanwhile, for warm materials, the only level of editing that made a difference was developmental+, and this difference was not consistent for any one specific quality. Fortunately, the interview results expand on the survey results to offer a potential explanation.

Just as the quality of readability was where both developmental+ and stylistic+ editing made a difference for cold materials, interview participants described a preference for cold materials that they can easily read, understand, and ultimately use. Whether they need to follow a set of instructions, learn new subject matter, or answer a request in an email, participants prioritize the developmental and stylistic edits that make it easier for them to complete their work. Hence, they want only the content they actually need, written in words they can easily understand. This finding also helps explain why copy editing alone does not make a significant difference: interview participants described the benefits of copy editing for cold materials as enhancing professionalism and credibility rather than improving readability or comprehension, with the exception of correcting language translation issues.

For warm materials, interview participants described a preference for staying engaged in the material and not being “pulled out of” the story. Consequently, each of the three levels of editing were relevant to improving the experience of reading warm material. Developmental edits can organize content to grab readers’ attention and remove unnecessary content that would otherwise lose readers’ attention. Stylistic edits can simplify word choice to avoid confusing and distracting the reader and enhance a conversational or “human” tone to hold the readers’ attention. For readers who care about copy concerns, copy editing can help reduce the risk of distracting or annoying the reader, so the reader can remain engaged in the story instead.

However, recall that none of the three levels of editing made a significant difference for how survey participants perceived the ability of the warm materials for holding their attention, whereas developmental+ editing of the cold material did have a significant effect on attention. We interpret this discrepancy in the results as due in part to a difference in meaning between a material “holding attention” versus “engaging” or “pulling in.” The cold material that received the developmental+ edit (the health agency performance report excerpt) might not have “engaged” or “pulled in” any of the survey participants either. However, participants might have felt that the edited version held their attention well enough for them to fulfill their purpose for reading it: to be able to answer the survey questions that followed.

This discrepancy also recalls a limitation mentioned previously and detailed further in the Limitations subsection below: whereas the interview participants described their experiences with materials that they did in fact “choose to” read, the survey participants read materials that we chose for them. Future research might explore whether editing makes a significant difference for how warm materials engage readers by comparing perceptions of edited and unedited materials of the participants’ choosing.

Finding #5: No level of editing significantly affects how the average reader perceives a source's credibility or the material's accuracy.

Survey responses did not show a significant difference in perceptions of the credibility or accuracy of either warm or cold materials that received any of the three levels of editing. Interviews indicated that rather than question credibility or accuracy, readers are more inclined to question their ability to understand the topic. Even with minor errors, like a consistency error, readers question themselves rather than the accuracy of the material: "I've seen it where they mix up a person's name, and I have to read it like a bunch of times to make sure it wasn't me who was mixing it up" (Interviewee #5). One participant even described questioning his knowledge of spelling: "And then my first reaction is always to doubt myself, 'Well, maybe I'm wrong and the author is right in how they spell the word'" (Interviewee #15). Participants noted that knowing a material contains a factual error or copy error can hurt the credibility of its source, but overall, participants seem more likely to question themselves than the source.

This finding runs counter to one of the most often repeated assumptions about one of the values of editing: that low-quality writing can make readers question you and the quality of your information. Rather, readers must first have the knowledge and attention to notice potential errors, and then they also must overcome their own self-doubt. Both the survey and interview results suggest that no level of editing makes as much of a difference for credibility as having a reader with this perfect combination of knowledge, attention, *and* confidence.

Finding #6: Readers are aware of their position as an audience and want their materials tailored to them as such.

We did not use the term "audience" in any of our survey or interview questions, yet most interview participants expressed a preference for materials tailored to their intended audience. For both developmental and stylistic editing in particular, participants expressed a preference for materials that provide the right information, pacing, terminology, and tone based on the intended audience of the material. Combined with other findings, this finding suggests that rather than achieve some universal standard for "good" material, a better goal for editors is to help the source of the material connect with their intended audience. We explore this suggestion further in the Recommendations below.

Finding #7: Readers can value the *effects* of editing while also devaluing the *work* of the editing itself.

All of the interview participants described a preference for materials that had certain qualities, all of which editors are equipped to help authors provide. However, only half of the participants agreed that editing was worth a standard industry rate for the time or cost invested.

One participant (Interviewee #4) captured this apparent discrepancy well. When asked the first question, whether the survey materials seemed to have been edited, he answered:

"I probably wouldn't even have thought about it being edited. I think when I think about reading something, I don't think about the process of how it came to be. I just think about what I'm reading. And if it doesn't have like a good flow or whatever, I'll just say, 'Well, that's attributed to the writer.' And so I don't think about that secondary person coming in and looking. Although if I imagined myself writing a book, I would think about somebody coming behind me and correcting grammar and flow and all that."

However, when answering the final question, about whether editing was worth the ROI, the same participant answered:

"If I was thinking about writing my own book...the heck with an editor. I'm like, 'This is me, and this is how I want to present me....No, I'm not going to spend \$2,000 on that.'...I think you can do yourself justice by doing your own self-editing and going back and rereading your work and seeing what you did....And it's through your eyes. You're writing the book. If you give it to somebody else, they're like, 'Well, you know what? I think you should do this,' and now it's not yours. And so to me, it's like if you can write the words, you should be able to edit the words. And if you're not good at English...have a friend or whatever, just check the grammar on it or whatever or spelling errors."

For this participant, hiring an editor—"that secondary person"—meant giving up ownership of the material, unless the editing is reduced to correcting copy errors only, which does not require hiring a professional.

As demonstrated by this participant and others, one explanation for this discrepancy is that people who do not have prior editing experience do not always understand the scope of editing as a service. As mentioned previously, after six interviews, we had to revise the ROI question to define the scope of editing as including "content, structure, style, and grammar" to counter the assumption that "editing" was for copy concerns only. Even then, participants continued to demonstrate a limited understanding of "editing," potentially having never before considered "editing" as more than "correcting grammar" (Interviewee #4).

Another possible explanation, also demonstrated by this participant, is that popular culture romanticizes the idea of the genius writer working alone. This participant immediately observed that he attributes all developmental and stylistic choices to "the writer" and doesn't spare a thought for "that secondary person coming in and looking." (Also in this interview, the participant referred to readers "idolizing" authors.) Interview participants who were self-described avid readers—but not writers—seemed to share this perspective, even describing editing as undoing art.

Meanwhile, the few participants who described themselves as *writers* expressed an appreciation for what editors can do to help writers communicate with their intended audiences. One participant described how he thought the first three chapters of his novel “were really well-written,” but then feedback from a friend gave him an essential new perspective: “It’s good to have someone else kind of try to understand what you’re writing and give you tips and advice or constructive criticism on that. I think sending what I wrote to my friend was like one of the best decisions I ever made” (Interviewee #19). Although this participant had not yet experienced hiring an editor himself, when asked about the \$2,000 editing scenario, his response was “I think it’s absolutely worth it.”

Finding #8: AI writing presents problems that developmental and stylistic editing can solve.

The few interview participants who volunteered an opinion about AI writing described writing concerns that mirrored the developmental and stylistic concerns mentioned across the interview dataset. Participants expressed frustration with the wordiness and unnecessary length of AI outputs, similar to the primary developmental concern raised in interviews. Some participants also expressed the developmental concern of inaccurate content. Like the second most cited stylistic concern, participants also cited a lack of authentic or human tone as a concern.

Despite the relatively polished look of AI writing, this finding suggests that, just like human-generated writing, AI writing also presents a need for developmental and stylistic editing services and skills. We explore this finding more in the following section.

Recommendations for the Editing Industry

The following recommendations focus on how the editing industry, represented by organizations and communities like ACES, can use this study's findings to grow—grow the number of opportunities for editors and grow awareness of and appreciation for what editors do. A companion document, titled *Recommendations for Editors from the ACES Value of Editing Study*, provides recommendations for individual editors.

Recommendation #1: Make the case for involving editors early in a material's development.

We recommend that leaders of the editing industry develop resources to help editors negotiate for early involvement in a material's development. This study's findings show that editors offer the most value when they edit a material for the full range of developmental, stylistic, and copy concerns. However, too often, employers and clients want to limit editing to just copy editing or just stylistic and copy editing, forgoing the benefit of developmental editing. This limitation is sometimes an attempt to conserve resources: the time to make the material available to edit, the funds to compensate the editor for their additional hours of labor, or both. Sometimes this limitation results from a lack of awareness about what editors can contribute. As this study showed, people who are not themselves professional editors might not understand that editing can be more than making sentences sound good and catching typos. Therefore, the editing industry has two challenges: 1) communicate the ROI of developmental editing relative to the time and funding it requires; and 2) market “editing” as potentially including changes to improve content and organization, not just improving style or correcting errors.

Funding this study and sharing its findings are important first steps in helping editors overcome these challenges. The industry might also consider focusing future resources, such as conference presentations and training webinars, on topics related to both 1) honing editors' skills for developmental+ editing and 2) negotiating with clients and employers to get the time and funding approved for this expanded involvement in a material's development.

Recommendation #2: Empower editors to differentiate their uniquely human skills.

We recommend that the editing industry help editors promote and enhance the skills that set them apart from editing with AI alone. AI's predictable, pattern-based style of editing can produce fairly polished, relatively error-free writing almost instantaneously. Yet the survey results show that polished, error-free writing is not particularly valuable if the material is not also strong in terms of its content and organization. Furthermore, the interview responses show that readers explicitly prefer writing tailored to them as the intended audience. Good editors apply their knowledge of the audience when suggesting improvements to content, organization, style, and even copy. Editors might use AI tools to make certain edits more efficiently, but even this use of AI requires uniquely human skills: editors assess AI suggestions based on their knowledge of the

writer's needs, the audience's needs, and the best practices for bridging both sets of needs.

The industry can lead editors in differentiating their skills from AI editing in two ways, both of which are similar to the actions described in our first recommendation. Just as editors need to communicate to clients and employers that “editing” is more than just correcting errors, some editors also need to adjust their own mindset on how they understand what they do and why. Any human editor whose services primarily involve making predictable, pattern-based corrections needs to expand their role to include mediating between readers and writers. Good editors know when to break those predictable patterns based on what the writer wants to communicate and how the reader wants to receive it. Therefore, the two actions we recommend to industry are to 1) communicate to *editors* their uniquely human role as a mediator or bridge between the source of the material and its intended audience; and 2) provide resources to help editors strengthen their knowledge and skills for doing that mediating work.

Recommendation #3: Emphasize the checking of accuracy as a marketable skill, an ethical standard, or both.

We make this recommendation not in spite of but rather *because* readers seem inclined to assume sources are credible and material is accurate. If the average reader does not question the legitimacy of the information they read, doing that questioning on the reader's behalf might be a responsibility of the editor. This responsibility can become even more important as editors receive more AI-assisted writing, in which the risk of hallucinations is ever present. In fact, clients and employers might be more interested in working with editors on their materials if they know that editing services include a check for accuracy. Regardless, even if editors are not explicitly providing checks for accuracy as a service, the industry might consider promoting checks for accuracy as an ethical standard, to help fight the spread of misinformation.

Recommendation #4: Publicize what editors *really* do.

We recommend that the industry actively promote the accomplishments of real editors, to counter common assumptions holding editors back. We found readers assuming that the quality of a material's content, organization, and style was due entirely to the writer and the writer's choices. Meanwhile, readers assume that “editing” means checking for grammar and punctuation only—squarely fitting in the definition of our “copy editing alone” category. Given that copy editing alone is *not* a level of editing that readers generally value, we urge the editing industry to highlight examples of editors working with clients and employers to give readers what they want: enjoy stories without interruption and use work materials effortlessly.

As part of this recommendation, we ask the industry to frame the work of editors in positive terms. Another common assumption is that only bad writers need editors. To counter this assumption, the industry can promote the writer-editor relationship as

similar to a personal trainer and an athlete: focused on providing support to enhance results rather than highlighting flaws to evoke shame.

In addition, the industry needs to emphatically counter the assumption that editors are proud members of the “grammar police,” for two reasons. First, reducing our work to catching grammar errors furthers the previously mentioned assumption that all editing is copy editing alone. Second, “policing” someone’s grammar is not a helpful editing service but rather a rude gesture that falsely equates an ability to standardize language use with a sign of moral superiority.

Conclusion

We conclude this report with a discussion of three study limitations, suggestions for future research, and a look forward.

Limitations

We already referred to the main limitation of the survey design: how our definitions of “cold” and “warm” materials focus on the reader’s needs and choices, but we surveyed readers based on materials we chose for them. The interviews helped us account for this limitation because interview participants’ responses focused on the materials they already have to or choose to read, fitting our definitions of “cold” and “warm.”

Furthermore, when selecting which materials to include in the survey, we focused on materials whose authoring individual or organization likely intended to reach audiences reading for one of the two purposes. That is, readers are unlikely to “have to” read a LinkedIn post with career advice and are also unlikely to “choose to” read financial audit instructions. However, as the interview responses showed, what one reader reads for fun another reader might read for work and vice versa.

We discussed how this limitation can affect how we interpret the study findings, particularly where the interview results differed from the survey results. For example, interview participants described negative reactions to finding copy errors in materials, but survey results showed that copy editing alone made no significant difference in survey participants’ perceptions of the material. This limitation might explain this discrepancy, if readers are more likely to care about copy errors in materials that they themselves have to or choose to read. In Suggestions for Future Research below, we discuss how future research might overcome this study design limitation.

Another limitation of the survey design that we previously discussed concerns the “+” added to our definitions of the “developmental+” and “stylistic+” materials. As we explained in the Preparing the Materials subsection, we did not survey participants’ perceptions of materials edited with developmental editing alone or with stylistic editing alone. Therefore, we caution that interpretations of the survey results avoid generalizing the value of developmental editing relative to stylistic or copy editing. Rather, the survey results allow for comparison of the *combination* of developmental, stylistic, and copy editing against the *combination* of stylistic and copy editing and against copy editing *alone*. Our interpretation of the survey results does not devalue copy editing. Rather, our interpretation is that the most valuable level of editing requires a broad set of editing skills and techniques and that copy editing is an essential part of that set.

Finally, we caution against limiting the definition of “valuable editing” to what is *likely* to make a difference while ignoring the *impact* of that difference. Our third main study limitation is that we investigated the extent to which the average reader is likely to value material differently based on whether the material underwent editing. While useful for generalizing the value of editing, this information does not reflect the value of editing in specific contexts for specific readers. For example, for one appeals judge in Maine, a

missing comma in state law was enough to award a \$5 million settlement in a lawsuit brought by five dairy truck drivers against their employer (Gonzales 2018). While our study findings show that the average reader might not notice or care about one missing comma, for those dairy truck drivers and their employer, that missing comma is valued at \$5 million. Therefore, when discussing the “value” of editing, we caution that our study findings do not measure the value of avoiding any one particular risk, such as misinterpretation, distraction, confusion, or unprofessional appearance. For some readers and some contexts, avoiding such a risk might be more relevant to the decision to invest in editing than what we know to be valuable to readers in general.

Suggestions for Future Research

Our main suggestion for future research is to create conditions in which survey participants are invested in the edited or unedited materials they read. Neither this study nor previous research on the value of editing have examined readers’ perceptions of materials that they themselves want or need to read. As we discussed previously, the interview results suggest that the extent to which a reader cares about developmental, stylistic, or copy concerns might depend in part on the reader’s purpose for using that material. Therefore, we suggest that researchers examining the value of editing consider adding new mechanisms to at least simulate the experience of having to or choosing to read a material. For example, researchers might add the following steps to their survey:

- **Give participants a choice of two materials to read.** Give participants a one- to two-sentence description of what each material represents, such as a celebrity interview or a fantasy novel excerpt. Then, allow the participants to choose which of the two materials they want to read. Consider including a third option in which participants are not interested in either of the two materials, potentially as screening criteria to remove responses from participants who are not already inclined to choose to read such material.
- **Give participants a set of instructions to read and then execute.** Inform participants in advance that they will have to follow the instructions to complete a task, such as sorting a set of data points. Consider including an incentive for completing the task correctly, such as completing the survey early versus having to repeat the task to correct for mistakes.

Adding one or both of these steps would produce a group of participants who are more invested in the material and therefore might be more invested in whether the material has undergone editing.

Future research might also explore the relationship between editing and its effect on perceived credibility. As discussed previously, when readers encounter an error in a material, the readers seem more likely to question themselves than to question the source of the material. Therefore, future research might use a similar survey but limit participation to participants who pass a set of screening criteria to test their knowledge on a given topic. Only participants who demonstrate a certain level of knowledge then go on to read the edited or unedited material, which focuses on the topic in which these

participants have some demonstrated expertise. The survey results can then inform whether prior knowledge of a material's topic makes a difference for whether readers do or do not value editing. This research would help clients and employers prioritize editing for materials that have expert or non-expert audiences.

Finally, to explore the value of human editing relative to AI editing, we recommend that future research repeat this study with one key difference: rather than compare edited and unedited materials, the survey compares AI-edited and human-edited materials. Specifically, we recommend comparing material that received a holistic edit from an AI tool without a human editor providing quality assurance afterward—using AI as “the editor” rather than as a tool to help a human editor. This condition imitates instances in which clients or employers attempt to entirely remove human editors from a material's development and instead rely on AI tools as faster and cheaper alternatives. The results of such a survey can then inform whether human editing makes a significant difference in how readers perceive the quality of materials edited for developmental, stylistic, or copy concerns.

Looking Forward

This study expanded on a previous ACES-funded study conducted over 10 years ago. Vultee's (2015) insights helped editors, especially those working in newsrooms, communicate the value of their work to skeptical clients and employers. In the past 10 years, the focus of ACES has expanded far beyond copy editing news articles to include all levels of editing on every type of written material. And just as the editing industry transformed in the past 10 years, we currently see the editing industry undergoing new transformations now, especially with the integration of AI tools in the writing and editing processes of our clients and employers. Therefore, if ACES members find this study's findings helpful for communicating the value of their work, we ask that ACES leadership continue to contribute to this area of research into the near future.

References

ACES. 2026. Event Agenda: ACES 2026 Atlanta. ACES.

Amplitude. n.d. "Bonferroni Correction Explained: Managing Multiple Testing in Statistics." Accessed August 18, 2026. <https://amplitude.com/explore/experiment/what-is-bonferroni-correction>

Appelman, Alyssa, and Mike Schmierbach. 2018. "Make No Mistake? Exploring Cognitive and Perceptual Effects of Grammatical Errors in News Articles." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 95 (4): 930–947.

Boland, Julie E., and Robin Queen. 2016. "If You're House Is Still Available, Send Me an Email: Personality Influences Reactions to Written Errors in Email Messages." *PloS one* 11 (3).

EFA (Editorial Freelancers Association). 2026. "Editorial Rates." Accessed August 18, 2026. <https://www.the-efa.org/rates/>

Gonzales, Richard. 2018. "Maine Dairy Drivers Settle Overtime Case That Hinged on an Absent Comma." *NPR*. February 8. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/08/584391391/maine-dairy-drivers-settle-overtime-case-that-hinged-on-an-absent-comma>

Lacroux, Alain, and Christelle Matin-Lacroux. 2019. "Spelling Error Perception During Personnel Selection: A Mixed Methods Study of Recruiters' Judgments Using Lexicometric Analysis." *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* 11 (2): 183–202.

Prolific. n.d. "About Prolific." Accessed August 18, 2026. <https://www.prolific.com/about>

Saller, Carol Fisher. 2016. *The Subversive Copy Editor: Advice from Chicago (or, How to Negotiate Good Relationships with Your Writers, Your Colleagues, and Yourself)*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press.

Stiff, Chris. 2012. "Watch What You Write: How Errors in Feedback Influence Consumer Attitudes and Behavior." *Journal of Internet Commerce* 11 (1): 41–67.

Van der Zanden, Tess, Alexander P. Schouten, Maria B. J. Mos, and Emiel J. Krahmer. 2020. "Impression Formation on Online Dating Sites: Effects of Language Errors in Profile Texts on Perceptions of Profile Owners' Attractiveness." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 37 (3): 758–778.

Vultee, Fred. 2015. "Audience Perceptions of Editing Quality: Assessing Traditional News Routines in the Digital Age." *Digital Journalism* 3 (6): 832–849.

Appendices

To provide additional context for this study and inform similar research, we provide the following appendices:

- A. Control and Experiment Version of Each Surveyed Material
- B. Likert-Scale Survey Questions
- C. Multiple-Choice Survey Questions
- D. Semistructured Interview Guide
- E. Mean Differences and *P* Values Per Question, Per Material
- F. Interview Transcript Coding Guide for References to Level of Editing

Appendix A: Control and Experiment Version of Each Surveyed Material

Material 1: Control (Unedited) Version: Executive Producer's LinkedIn Post (Warm)

The biggest mistake I made years ago is the same mistake I see people making every day on LinkedIn.

Thinking you are less than qualified to live your best life. Or thinking you are not worthy of the the freedom to enjoy what you get to do each day, is not acceptable. Especially if you are a hard worker .

When you step out of your comfort zone, big growth begins.

Here are 3 practical steps:

▶ Expand your network:

Engage with professionals beyond your immediate circle. Attend industry events, participate in webinars, or join online communities to gain fresh perspectives and opportunities.

▶ Embrace learning from people (especially from people who have done things you have not yet achieved):

Invest in personal development by acquiring new skills or enhancing existing ones. This commitment to growth keeps you adaptable and competitive.

▶ Seek feedback, advice, or mentorship:

Connect with people who can provide guidance and constructive feedback. Their insights can help you navigate challenges and identify areas for improvement.

Surround yourself with people who see your value and remind you of it.

Life gets better.

I must agree I was caught in that trap years ago. Today, it is my pleasure to see good people in our network sharing this message and living by it.

Material 1: Experiment (Copy Edited) Version: Executive Producer's LinkedIn Post (Warm)

The biggest mistake I made years ago is the same mistake I see people making every day on LinkedIn: thinking you are less than qualified to live your best life or that you are not worthy of the freedom to enjoy what you get to do each day.

That mindset is not acceptable—especially if you are a hard worker.

When you step out of your comfort zone, big growth begins. Here are three practical steps:

▶ Expand your network:

Engage with professionals beyond your immediate circle. Attend industry events, participate in webinars, or join online communities to gain fresh perspectives and opportunities.

▶ Embrace learning from people (especially from people who have done things you have not yet achieved):

Invest in your personal development by acquiring new skills or enhancing existing ones. This commitment to growth keeps you adaptable and competitive.

▶ Seek feedback, advice, or mentorship:

Connect with people who can provide guidance and constructive feedback. Their insights can help you navigate challenges and identify areas for improvement.

Surround yourself with people who see your value and remind you of it.

Life gets better.

I must agree I was caught in that trap years ago. Today, it is my pleasure to see good people in our network sharing this message and living by it.

*Material 2: Control (Unedited) Version: Federal Agency's Animal Conservation
Blog Post (Warm)*

USDA Scientists Collaborate to Protect Endangered Species for Extinction

As the majestic California Condor soars high in the western skies, the largest bird in North America inspires those who know its near-tragic history. On the verge of extinction in the 1980s, this resilient avian managed to survive. However, it recently faced a new threat to its existence – highly pathogenic avian influenza. The USDA recently took steps to save this beautiful creature, ensuring Americans will have the opportunity to witness the glory of the California Condor, hopefully inspiring future generations to recognize their unlimited potential to overcome adversity.

Collaboration within and outside of the USDA is one of the many ways we provide leadership on food, agriculture, and natural resources. Two USDA agencies, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Research Service (ARS), recently partnered with other Federal agencies to protect the endangered California Condor from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

HPAI is an extremely contagious disease that is deadly to domestic poultry. It affects many different species of birds and spreads quickly in wild bird populations. Condors are particularly at risk for HPAI because they eat the decaying flesh of dead animals. As part of our vision to preserve our Nation's natural resources, the USDA identified ways to address the risk HPAI presented to the endangered California Condor.

APHIS and ARS partnered together in The California Condor Vaccination Project, a collaborative effort across the government and private organizations to protect the condors. The Federal Laboratory Consortium (FLC) will present awards to employees from both agencies in April.

California Condors are the largest bird in North America. In the 1980s, their population was almost extinct with only 22 birds remaining. Even after the recovery effort, there are fewer than 500 California Condors in North America.

Within APHIS, veterinarians and scientists utilized their experience combatting HPAI to collaborate with ARS scientists who work with HPAI vaccines as part of their research projects. These USDA agencies worked together with additional partners to conduct vaccine trials and, once it was determined to be safe, began vaccinating the endangered condors.

Protecting the endangered California Condor is one of the countless ways the "People's Department" works tirelessly to serve Americans throughout the nation. The FLC Interagency Partnership Award recognizes the outstanding work of Drs. David White, Shanna Siegel, and Mary Donahue in applying modern vaccine technology to protect the endangered California Condors from a devastating disease.

Material 2: Experiment (Stylistic+ Edited) Version: Federal Agency's Animal Conservation Blog Post (Warm)

USDA Scientists Collaborate to Protect Endangered Bird from Extinction

The California Condor looms over the western skies, the largest bird in North America. With its nine-foot wingspan, the enormous bird can glide for hours, casting shadows across the rocky landscape. The California Condor survived near-extinction in the 1980s, proving a resilience to match its size. However, it now faces a new threat to its existence: highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). The USDA took steps to protect the California Condor from this deadly disease, ensuring future Americans can continue to marvel at the near other-worldly scale of this endangered bird.

Collaboration within and outside the USDA helps us preserve the nation's food, agriculture, and natural resources. Two USDA agencies, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), recently partnered with other federal agencies to protect the endangered California Condor from HPAI.

HPAI is extremely contagious and deadly, having killed over 60 million domestic poultry since 2020. Other birds are in danger too: HPAI affects over 170 species and spreads quickly in wild bird populations. Condors are at especially high risk for HPAI because they eat decaying flesh. As part of our vision to preserve our nation's natural resources, the USDA found ways to protect the California Condor from HPAI.

APHIS and ARS partnered on The California Condor Vaccination Project, a collaborative effort with government and private organizations to protect the California Condors. The Federal Laboratory Consortium (FLC) presents awards to employees from both agencies in April.

In the 1980s, the California Condor was almost extinct, with only 22 birds left. Even after recovery efforts in the 1990s, fewer than 500 California Condors remain.

Veterinarians and scientists within APHIS combined their experience combatting HPAI with ARS scientists' research on HPAI vaccines. These USDA agencies worked together with external partners to conduct vaccine trials. Once the trials assured safety, the agencies began vaccinating the birds.

Protecting the endangered California Condor is one of the countless ways the "People's Department" works to serve Americans throughout the nation. The FLC Interagency Partnership Award recognizes the outstanding work of Dr. David White, Dr. Shanna Siegel, and Dr. Mary Donahue in applying modern vaccine technology to protect the endangered California Condors from a devastating disease.

Material 3: Control (Unedited) Version: Company's Cybersecurity Blog Post (Warm)

Making the top concern a priority – right from the outset

Cyber as the DNA of a Cloud-Enabled Enterprise

Cybersecurity remains a top priority in every industry—and it's a priority that is growing as cloud technologies become more essential to driving business operations, innovation, and value. Cloud technologies can come with inherent complexity. Increasingly, cyber must become a core component of a cloud migration to reliably support business value and give organizations the confidence to evolve as their needs change.

A panel of cloud transformation specialists from Deloitte and HPE share insights on how to enable a “cyber first” approach that embeds security into an ongoing journey of digital transformation—while positioning enterprises to evolve amid constant disruption.

Start with the business case

Though cybersecurity is a top concern for companies moving to the cloud, there is a lag in how it is actioned as part of a transformation program, which is exacerbated by outdated assumptions that previous approaches to securing assets will work. Often, however, it never works that way. Cloud presents its own inherent risk and complexities. The solution, offers Meer Hussain, managing director, Deloitte Consulting LLP, is to include cybersecurity in the business case for the migration. That way, he says “they can build in the security and regulatory elements as they go through the transformation.”

Privacy is another reason companies on a cloud journey should think about cybersecurity early in the process. Venky Rangachari, vice president global IT, HPE, offers as an example GDPR, General Data Protection Regulation and the core of Europe's digital privacy legislation. “When enterprises are acquiring cloud products, they need to be aware of the privacy terms and regulations that come with them.” Complicating matters is the hair-split of the cloud platform being complaint to GDPR, and a company being compliant. Says Hussain, “An enterprise should always take additional measures to enable configurations that will ensure compliance.”

Talent, cloud migrations and increased risk

Moving through a transformation initiative, there are two areas where talent unknowingly increases risk, says Elvia Novak, managing director, Deloitte Consulting LLP. First, cloud migrations are often run in parallel with ERP projects and service providers, which increases the risk that key details will be missed as the teams attempts to learn and adjust to the new system.

Second, a lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the cloud service provider versus the organization can lead to frustration within the team, and a resistance to the change in general. “We must not lose sight of the fact that it's the team – people – who will be responsible for the transition and the eventual new way of doing things.”

As Hussain sees it, a successful cloud migration will include core functions that are best delivered by the cloud service instead of the company's own team. It also includes automation. "There will never be enough people. Organizations must ask how they can leverage RPA and AI technology to automate some of the routine tasks." Once that is sorted, talent can focus on essential tactics like threat hunting – an area he recommends investing in training.

Cyber warfare

For Rangachari, because of the far-reaching and sometimes devastating impact, cyber-attacks – which he calls 'cyber warfare' – should be treated with the same level of criticality and import as a military attack, from funding, preparedness, and proactive response, to the time spent gleaning an in-depth understanding of the enemy. "In cyber war, we are dealing with a sophisticated actor – it's a machine. That requires a different type of response in terms of policies, proactivity, automation, artificial intelligence and even funding."

Novak calls for enterprises to recognize the downstream impact they have on society as they contemplate their level of investment in and commitment to cybersecurity. As an example, she points to a May 2021 ransomware attack that took a major US fuel pipeline offline, ultimately driving fuel prices to highs not seen in years. A month later, consumers were still feeling the impact. "I think everybody needs to recognize the downstream effect an enterprise can have on the overall population, and make the right investment in cybersecurity a priority."

Choosing the right solution

The Achilles Heel in the fight against cyber-attacks is the reaction time it takes to notice something is happening. "One of the problems we have as security professionals," says Hussain, "is there are so many tools and so many point-in-time solutions." He recommends companies start relying on smarter tools and processes, like AI and ML, to build in proactive and predictive capabilities.

No one tool is going to capture all the potential risks or threats, Novak notes, and though we may apply machines (AI and ML) to fight machines and the known knowns, "the problem is the unknown ... it is vital we invest to try and stay ahead of the curve and in front of the attacks."

On what solutions – whether best-in-class or end-to-end – Rangachari advises companies to pick the right paradigm that fits your enterprise. "If you pick a tool set that's totally disparate that the tools can't talk to each other or your operations, your security operations teams can't stitch these logs or evidences together, then you're not achieving your end goal of protecting yourself."

Material 3: Experiment (Developmental+ Edited) Version: Company's Cybersecurity Blog Post (Warm)

Make cybersecurity a priority in your cloud migration

If your organization is planning a migration to a cloud-enabled enterprise, this blog post provides four recommendations to help you embed cybersecurity in your plan.

Cybersecurity must be a core component of any organization's cloud migration. Cloud technologies increasingly drive business operations, innovation, and value but are also inherently complex. Organizations need to prioritize cybersecurity from the outset of a cloud migration, so the cloud-enabled enterprise can evolve with confidence as the organization's needs change.

The recommendations in this blog post come from insights shared by a panel of cloud migration specialists: Meer Hussain and Elvia Novak, both managing directors at Deloitte Consulting LLP, and Venky Rangachari, vice president of global IT at Hewlett Packard Enterprise. This panel focused on how organizations can embed security into cloud migration with a "cyber first" approach.

1. Start with the business case.

Cloud migration has its own inherent risks that are too complex to resolve with an organization's existing approaches to securing assets. The solution, offers Hussain, is to include cybersecurity in the business case for the cloud migration. He recommends that organizations "build in the security and regulatory elements as they go through" the cloud migration.

Planning cybersecurity early in the cloud migration process is also important for complying with privacy regulation. Rangachari cites Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), noting a legal distinction between a cloud platform being compliant with GDPR and the organization *using* the platform being compliant. He suggests that organizations "acquiring cloud products ... need to be aware of the privacy terms and regulations that come with them." Hussain echoes Rangachari's recommendation, adding that organizations "should always take additional measures to enable configurations that will ensure compliance."

2. Define and redefine your team's role.

Specify the role of your team in the cloud migration, to mitigate two risks that Novak says teams can unknowingly increase. First, cloud migrations often run parallel with other enterprise resource planning projects and service providers, which increases the risk that teams will miss key details as they try to learn the new cloud platform. Second, a lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the cloud service provider versus the organization can lead to frustration within the team, which can then lead to resistance to the change itself. "We must not lose sight of the fact that it's the team—

people—who will be responsible for the transition and the eventual new way of doing things.”

Hussain recommends automating core functions best delivered by the cloud service and training the organization’s team for new functions. “There will never be enough people. Organizations must ask how they can leverage [robotic process automation] and AI technology to automate some of the routine tasks.” He recommends investing in training teams on essential tasks such as threat hunting.

3. Prepare for cyber warfare.

Given the far-reaching and devastating effects of cyber attacks, Rangachari recommends treating “cyber warfare” with the same criticality as military attacks. “In cyber war, we are dealing with a sophisticated actor—it’s a machine. That requires a different type of response in terms of policies, proactivity, automation, artificial intelligence, and even funding.”

Novak points to a May 2021 ransomware attack as an example of the far-reaching effects of cyber attacks. After the ransomware attack took a major US fuel pipeline offline, fuel prices reached highs not seen in years, and consumers still felt the impact a month later. She calls for organizations to “recognize the downstream effect an enterprise can have on the overall population, and make the right investment in cybersecurity a priority.”

4. Invest in smart tools that fit.

Hussain recommends organizations prioritize tools that can identify cyber attacks early. The Achilles’ heel in the fight against cyber attacks is the reaction time to even notice something is happening. “One of the problems we have as security professionals,” says Hussain, “is there are so many tools and so many point-in-time solutions.” He recommends companies start relying on smarter tools, like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), to build in proactive and predictive capabilities.

Meanwhile, Novak cautions against relying on one tool to capture all the potential risks or threats. Whereas using AI and ML tools can help organizations fight the known knowns, “the problem is the unknown ... it is vital we invest to try and stay ahead of the curve and in front of the attacks.”

Finally, Rangachari recommends organizations invest in the technology solution that fits your enterprise best. Whether best-in-class or end-to-end, if an organization uses a technology that is so “totally disparate that the tools can’t talk to each other or your operations, [and] your security operations teams can’t stitch these logs or evidences together, then you’re not achieving your end goal of protecting yourself.”

Material 4: Control (Unedited) Version: Nonprofit's Financial Review Instructions (Cold)

Local PTA Financial Review Instructions

Preparation Instructions for the PTA Treasurer and President:

Our “audit” process is actually a financial review – and it is not a “pass or fail” process. The purpose is to ensure that your PTA is following proper financial procedures and is practicing financial responsibility; if not, this process helps you get back on track.

PTA treasurer records should be reviewed every year at the end of your fiscal year, which ends on June 30.

Your treasurer books should be reviewed by a committee of 3 current PTA members who were not authorized to sign checks during financial period being reviewed. The current president or treasurer of your PTA may be on the financial review committee if they were not authorized to sign checks during the period being reviewed. (It is a great training opportunity to have your incoming president and treasurer serve on your financial review committee so they may become familiar with your financial procedures and see what needs to be improved.

Prepare your treasurer book to include all of your financial records for the year:

Treasurer Records:

- The contact information for the board of directors in office during the period the financial review will cover.
- A copy of your:
 - last financial review (formerly called an audit)
 - bylaws and standing rules
 - membership roster
 - current adopted budget
 - IRS 990 (copy of the confirmation email if you file the 990N postcard or a copy of your 990EZ or 990) for the financial review period
 - insurance policy
- Checkbook, check register, all canceled checks (if your bank returns them), and all unused checks.
- Your treasurer records by month, in this order:
 - PTA minutes for all board of directors and general membership meetings
 - Treasurer Report with Budget Report
 - Bank Statement

- Deposit records and expense records in the order they appear in your bank statement.
- The annual year-end financial report

Once your financial review process is complete for the year, add the financial review to those records and store them. They are a great resource for your incoming officers to help them understand the history of your PTA, and your officers should know how to access them when needed. Do not forget to upload your financial review to MemberHub so it will always be available there as well. As you set up your books for the new fiscal year, keep a copy of the prior year's financial review with them, so it is easily accessible for next year's financial review committee.

Complete the financial management checklist:

Review together every question. These questions allow your unit to completely review your financial management procedures and implement any necessary changes moving forward. If you cannot answer a question, please include an explanation.

Questions? Contact your StatePTA Field Service Contact, the StatePTA treasurer, or the StatePTA office. You may also email statepta@statepta.org or call the StatePTA office 123-456-7890.

Material 4: Experiment (Copy Edited) Version: Nonprofit's Financial Review Instructions (Cold)

Local PTA Financial Review Instructions

Preparation Instructions for the PTA Treasurer and President

Our audit process is actually a financial review—and it is not a “pass or fail” process. The purpose is to ensure that your Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is following proper financial procedures and is practicing financial responsibility; if not, this process helps you get back on track.

PTA treasurer records should be reviewed *every year* at the end of your fiscal year, which ends on June 30.

Your treasurer books should be reviewed by a committee of three current PTA members who were not authorized to sign checks during the financial period being reviewed. The current president or treasurer of your PTA may be on the financial review committee if they were not authorized to sign checks during the period being reviewed. (It is a great training opportunity to have your incoming president and treasurer serve on your financial review committee, so they may become familiar with your financial procedures and see what needs to be improved.)

Prepare your treasurer book to include all of your financial records for the year:

- the contact information for the board of directors in office during the period the financial review will cover
- a *copy* of your:
 - last financial review (formerly called an audit)
 - bylaws and standing rules
 - membership roster
 - current adopted budget
 - IRS 990 (copy of the confirmation email if you file the 990N postcard or a copy of your 990EZ or 990) for the financial review period
 - insurance policy
- checkbook, check register, all canceled checks (if your bank returns them), and all unused checks
- your treasurer records by month, *in this order*:
 - PTA minutes for all board of directors and general membership meetings
 - treasurer report with budget report
 - bank statement

- deposit records and expense records in the order they appear in your bank statement
- the annual year-end financial report

Once your financial review process is complete for the year, add the financial review to those records and store them. They are a great resource for your incoming officers to help them understand the history of your PTA, and your officers should know how to access them when needed. Do not forget to upload your financial review to MemberHub, so it will always be available there as well. As you set up your books for the new fiscal year, keep a *copy* of the prior year's financial review with them, so it is easily accessible for next year's financial review committee.

Complete the financial management checklist. Review together every question. These questions allow your unit to completely review your financial management procedures and implement any necessary changes moving forward. If you cannot answer a question, please include an explanation.

Questions? Contact your StatePTA Field Service Contact, the StatePTA treasurer, or the StatePTA office. You may also email statepta@statepta.org or call the StatePTA office at 123-456-7890.

Material 5: Control (Unedited) Version: Company's Software Use Instructions (Cold)

Getting Started Developing for Ally as a Service

Ally as a Service provides separately licensed, stand-alone API access to allow an application to process files for accessibility. Many of you are using this power in your LMS to help instructors improve the accessibility of their content, and to give students, regardless of ability, access to the content that meets their needs and learning style the best.

To get started, the first thing you need is a client ID, key, and secret. At this time, the best way to obtain this information is to engage your Account Executive to discuss pricing and request credentials. As the API continues to grow, this process may change, so be sure to check back here often.

Once you have your key and secret, the first step in any REST integration framework is typically to learn how to authenticate and authorize your application. Ally as a Service uses JSON Web Tokens (JWT) in order to generate a token, which is then used as a Bearer token in the Authorization header of each request.

[Click here](#) to learn more about authorization and authentication for Ally as a Service.

There are a number of ways to test out the API. The easiest is to use the Ally API. You can enter your client ID and your secret, and then interact with the available API directly from the documentation.

[Click here](#) to learn more about using the API documentation in this way.

Here are the operations currently available in the API (each page has a sample cURL command at the bottom):

- Upload a file to Ally
- Check the processing status for a file
- Retrieve the feedback for the file

This list is ever growing, so be sure to check back often to get the latest list of functionality available.

Tutorials and Examples

As we create tutorials and sample code, we will list them here.

- Ally as a Service API documentation - Includes sample cURL Commands
- Postman Collection
- Python

Material 5: Experiment (Stylistic+ Edited) Version: Company's Software Use Instructions (Cold)

Ally as a Service: Getting Started

Ally as a Service is a separately licensed, stand-alone application programming interface (API) that allows instructors to check different file formats for accessibility. With Ally added to your institution's learning management system, students, regardless of ability, can access course material that best meets their needs and learning style.

Follow three steps to start using Ally:

1. **Obtain credentials.** Email your Account Executive to request three credentials: a client ID, key, and secret.
2. **Authenticate and authorize.** To authenticate Ally, you need a JSON Web Token (JWT), which then becomes a bearer token in the Authorization header of each request. Visit [Authenticate and Authorize in Ally as a Service](#) to learn more.
3. **Test.** We recommend using the Ally API document to test your functionality. Enter your client ID and secret, and then interact with the API directly. Visit [How to Use the Ally as a Service API Document to Test API](#) to learn more.

Currently, you can use Ally for three functions:

- [Upload a file to Ally](#)
- [Check the processing status for a file](#)
- [Retrieve the feedback for the file](#)

Visit the pages above to find sample cURL commands.

We continue to add new functionality, so please return to this page for updates.

Tutorials and Sample Code

Visit the links below for tutorials and sample code to help you get started.

- [Ally as a Service API documentation \(includes sample cURL Commands\)](#)
- [Postman Collection](#)
- [Python](#)

Material 6: Control (Unedited) Version: Federal Agency's Healthcare Enrollment Reporting (Cold)

Objective 1.1: Increase choice, affordability, and enrollment in high-quality healthcare coverage

HHS supports strategies to increase choice, affordability, and enrollment in high-quality healthcare coverage. HHS promotes available and affordable healthcare coverage to improve health outcomes in our communities and empowers consumers with high quality healthcare coverage choices. The Department also leverages knowledge and partnerships to increase enrollment in health insurance coverage.

The Office of the Secretary leads this objective. The following divisions are responsible for implementing programs under this strategic objective: ACL, AHRQ, ASPE, CMS, HRSA and OASH. In consultation with OMB, HHS has determined that performance toward this objective is progressing. The narrative below provides a brief summary of progress made and achievements or challenges, as well as plans to improve or maintain performance.

Objective 1.1 Table of Related Performance Measures

Improve availability and accessibility of health insurance coverage by increasing enrollment of eligible children in CHIP and Medicaid (Lead Agency - CMS; Measure ID - CHIP 3.3)

	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Target	46,062,581 children	46,440,401 children	46,556,502 children	46,672,893 children	46,672,893 children	44,650,216 children	44,538,869 children	44,538,869 children
Result	46,322,217 children	45,919,430 children	44,745,129 children	44,098,421 children	46,000,408 children	Mar 31, 2023	Mar 31, 2024	Mar 31, 2025
Status	Target Exceeded	Target Not Met	Target Not Met	Target Not Met	Target Not Met	Pending	Pending	Pending

The purpose of this measure is to increase enrollment in CHIP and Medicaid from 43,542,385 children in FY 2011 to 44,538,869 children by the end of FY 2024. Our enrollment target for FY 2024 takes into consideration that the prior FY enrollment targets have not been met since FY 2017, and that the majority of eligible children are enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP. Additionally, the FY 2024 Medicaid and CHIP enrollment target accounts for potential declines in Medicaid and CHIP child enrollment that may result from states resuming normal operations after the end of the continuous enrollment condition initially authorized in section 6008(b)(3) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which required states to maintain enrollment for most individuals enrolled in Medicaid since March 2020, as a condition of receiving a 6.2 percentage point increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). For example, state renewal processing after the end of the continuous enrollment condition will impact individuals that have retained their coverage during the COVID-19 PHE in Medicaid because of the FFCRA continuous coverage requirement and in CHIP for states that elect the optional flexibilities to temporarily delay acting on changes in circumstances that would impact eligibility, and delay timely processing of renewals in

CHIP. These changes will lead to terminations of coverage for children that are determined to be ineligible for Medicaid or CHIP at renewal during the eligibility period after the continuous enrollment condition ends. The FY 2024 enrollment target is set at the same enrollment projections for FY 2023. We anticipate this to be a reasonable goal for FY 2024 given that states will continue to process renewals from the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) at the start of FY 2024, which will result in terminations of enrollees that do not complete renewals or are otherwise no longer eligible for Medicaid and CHIP. These terminations will likely be reflected in the FY 2024 results as a decline in Medicaid and CHIP enrollment. After the continuous enrollment condition ends, there will be a great focus on retention of child enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP, however, we do not expect to see returns to pre-pandemic levels of Medicaid and CHIP child enrollment until FY 2025. Additionally, [a 2021 analysis](#) by the Urban Institute reveals that 91.9% of eligible children were enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP in 2019. The remaining 4 million, or 8.1% of uninsured children are the hardest to reach.

The data for this goal comes from state's submission of required quarterly and annual child enrollment data, which include the number of children who are enrolled in Medicaid, separate CHIP programs, and Medicaid expansion CHIP programs. The enrollment counts reflect an unduplicated number of children ever enrolled during each year and are not reflective of point-in-time enrollment.

Material 6: Experiment (Developmental+ Edited) Version: Federal Agency's Healthcare Enrollment Reporting (Cold)

Objective 1.1: Increase choice, affordability, and enrollment in high-quality healthcare coverage

Performance toward this objective is progressing. Led by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Secretary, this objective has programs in six HHS divisions: Administration for Community Living, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Health Resources and Services Administration, and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health.

We describe four performance measures for this objective below. For each measure, we summarize our progress to date and describe plans to maintain or improve performance.

Improve availability and accessibility of health insurance coverage by increasing enrollment of eligible children in CHIP and Medicaid (Measure ID: CHIP 3.3; Lead Agency: CMS).

HHS aims to maintain the level of child enrollment in Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid for FY 2024. Our target is 44,538,869 enrolled children by the end of FY 2024, the same as FY 2023. We consider this goal reasonable because of three factors:

1. Prior FY enrollment targets have not been met since FY 2017 (Figure 1). The data for this measure comes from states' submission of required quarterly and annual child enrollment data. This data includes the number of children enrolled in Medicaid, separate CHIP programs, and Medicaid expansion CHIP programs. The enrollment counts reflect an unduplicated number of children enrolled during each year and do not reflect point-in-time enrollment.

	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Target	46,062,581	46,440,401	46,556,50	46,672,893	46,672,893	44,650,216	44,538,869	44,538,869
Result	46,322,217	45,919,430	44,745,129	44,098,421	46,000,408	To Be Determined	To Be Determined	To Be Determined
Status	Target Exceeded	Target Not Met	Target Not Met	Target Not Met	Target Not Met	Pending	Pending	Pending

Figure 1: The number of children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP show unmet targets since 2017, despite an 4.3% increase in 2021 during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

2. Medicaid and CHIP child enrollment might decline after the conclusion of continuous enrollment. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) required states to maintain coverage for most individuals enrolled in Medicaid after March 2020. The continuous enrollment condition, authorized in section 6008(b)(3) of the FFCRA,

allowed states to continuously re-enroll children without redetermining eligibility. That condition ended in March 2023. In addition, many states chose to delay acting on changes in circumstances that impact eligibility, thereby delaying processing of CHIP renewals. As state renewal processing returns to normal operations at the start of FY 2024, children who are ineligible or do not complete renewals will no longer be enrolled. Therefore, we do not expect to see pre-pandemic levels of Medicaid and CHIP child enrollment until at least FY 2025.

3. Most eligible children are already enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP. A 2021 analysis by the Urban Institute shows that 91.9% of eligible children were enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP in 2019. The remaining 4 million, or 8.1%, of uninsured children are the hardest to reach.

Appendix B: Likert-Scale Survey Questions

Thinking about the written material you just read, how much do you agree with the following statements?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer not to answer

Remember that the “source” of the written material is its authoring organization or individual.

1. If I needed more information about this topic, I would be willing to read more written materials from this source.
2. If I wanted more information about this topic, I would try to find more written materials from this source.
3. I would recommend this source to someone interested in reading about this topic.
4. I believe this source is an expert on this topic.
5. I would feel comfortable citing this source if I were to write about this topic.
6. I feel like this source might be misrepresenting the information or leaving important information out.
7. I trust that the information in the written material is accurate.
8. If someone brought up this topic in a conversation, I would feel comfortable contributing to the conversation with what I learned in this written material.
9. I have doubts about the accuracy of this written material.
10. I find the written material to be easy to read.
11. I was able to finish reading the written material as fast or faster than I anticipated.
12. I had to reread parts of the written material because the sentences were difficult to read.
13. I had to reread parts of the written material because the topic was difficult to understand.
14. If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could summarize the written material's main point.
15. If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could share at least one detail I learned from the written material.
16. I read each word of the written material from beginning to end without stopping.
17. I read each word of the written material but stopped at least once because I found the written material boring or frustrating.
18. I read enough of the written material to answer the survey questions but did not read each word.

Appendix C: Multiple-Choice Survey Questions

Reading Habit Questions

1. In an average month, what kinds of written materials do you read? Select all that apply.
 1. News Articles
 2. Magazine Articles
 3. Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles
 4. Books or eBooks
 5. Proposals or White Papers
 6. Technical Reports or Memos
 7. Instructions, User Manuals, or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 8. Job Application Materials (Resumes, Cover Letters)
 9. Blog Posts
 10. Social Media Posts
 11. Emails
 12. Text Messages or Direct Messages
 13. Other
 14. I prefer not to answer.
2. In an average month, what percentage of the written materials you read are in English? Select one.
 1. 100%
 2. 75% to 99%
 3. 50% to 74%
 4. 25% to 49%
 5. 1% to 24%
 6. None of the written materials I read in an average month are in English.
 7. I prefer not to answer.
3. In an average month, what kinds of subjects do you read? Select all that apply.
 1. Science
 2. Technology
 3. Health
 4. Business
 5. Politics
 6. Crime
 7. Sports
 8. Travel
 9. Entertainment (Movie Reviews, Celebrity Fashion)
 10. Home (Recipes, Design Tips)
 11. Fiction (Fantasy, Romance)
 12. Creative Nonfiction (Memoir, Poetry)
 13. Other
 14. I prefer not to answer.

4. In an average week, how many hours do you read for work, including both paid work (like emails from a supervisor) and unpaid work (like recipes for home cooking)? Select one.
 1. 20 hours or more
 2. 15 to 19 hours
 3. 10 to 14 hours
 4. 5 to 9 hours
 5. 1 to 4 hours
 6. I do not read for work in an average week.
 7. I prefer not to answer.
5. In an average week, how many hours do you read for fun, including reading to satisfy your curiosity (like a celebrity interview) or overcome boredom (like a fantasy novel)? Select one.
 1. 20 hours or more
 2. 15 to 19 hours
 3. 10 to 14 hours
 4. 5 to 9 hours
 5. 1 to 4 hours
 6. I do not read for fun in an average week.
 7. I prefer not to answer.
6. In an average year, how much do you spend in U.S. dollars to access written materials, including buying books and subscribing to news sources? Select one.
 1. \$100 or more
 2. \$50 to \$99
 3. \$25 to \$49
 4. \$10 to \$24
 5. \$1 to \$9
 6. I do not spend money in an average year to access written materials.
 7. I prefer not to answer.
7. Have you ever been paid to edit someone else's writing, as part of your job or as a service you offered? Select one.
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. I prefer not to answer.

Interview Interest Question

1. Do you want the study team to invite you to a 30-minute virtual interview about your reading habits and experiences? Anyone who completes an interview receives a \$20 Amazon gift card.
 1. Yes, I want an invitation to an interview.
 2. No, do not invite me to an interview.

Appendix D: Semistructured Interview Guide

Reflection on Experience with Written Materials from Survey

1. Think back to your experience doing the survey. Do you think the written materials you read were edited by professional editors? Why or why not?

(If the respondent does not remember the written materials, follow up with: You read six things, including a blog post about saving an endangered bird and a report on enrolling children in Medicaid. Does that sound familiar? If not, that's okay; let's go to the next question.)

Reflection on Experience with Written Materials You “Have to” Read

2. In your own words, what kinds of written material do you read in an average month *for work*? This can be for paid work or unpaid work that you do. It can include things like emails, memos, reports, articles, and even recipes. Later, we'll ask about reading you do for fun.

(If the respondent needs additional prompting, follow up with: Do you ever find yourself having to follow written instructions, for example? On a website, in an email, or in a user manual? Any of those would count.)

Note: if the participant does not mention what kind of work they use the materials for, consider asking for some context, like “Can you tell me a little bit about how those materials fit into your work? What kind of work is it?”

- a. Think about a time one of these written materials was difficult to read—you had a hard time understanding the information or paying attention. What was it about the written material that made it difficult?

(If the respondent's answer focuses only on the difficulty of the topic being written about, follow up with: So what I'm hearing is that the topic made it difficult. Was it *just* the topic or was there anything else that you think the writer could have done differently to make the material less difficult to read?)

- b. Think about a time one of these written materials was easier to read. What was it about the written material that made it easier for you to use the information it provided?

(If the respondent's answer focuses on something other than writing quality, such as an easy topic or easy access to the material, follow up with: Was there anything about *how it was written* that stood out to you? In either a good or a bad way?)

Reflection on Experience with Written Materials You “Choose to” Read

3. In your own words, what kinds of written materials do you read in an average month *for fun*? This is anything you read to satisfy your curiosity or overcome boredom, whether it’s a celebrity interview or a fantasy novel.

(If the respondent needs additional prompting, follow up with: Do you ever find yourself scrolling online or checking your email and a news article headline or a social media caption quickly grabs your attention and makes you pause whatever you were doing? If after that pause, you decide to read more, that counts.)

- a. Think about a time you found yourself reading one of these written materials without stopping. What was it about the written material that made it easy to keep reading?

(If the respondent’s answer focuses only on their interest in the topic or the engaging nature of the story’s plot or characters, follow up with: How would you feel recommending that written material to someone who has never shown interest in [“that topic” or “that kind of story”]? Is there anything about *how it was written* that you think makes it easy for someone to read without wanting to stop?)

- b. Think about a time you found yourself resenting the amount of time or money you spent reading a piece of written material. What would need to be different for that written material to be worth your time or money to read?

(If the respondent’s answer focuses only on their disinterest in the topic or their disappointment with the story’s plot or characters, follow up with: In addition to changing the [“topic” or “story”] itself, is there anything about *how it was written* that you think needs to change to make it worth reading?)

Messages for Writers of the Materials

4. If you could speak directly to the people who write the materials that you *have to* read, what is one thing you would tell them?

(If the respondent’s answer focuses on issues other than writing quality, such as choice of topic or ease of access, follow up with: Do you have any final comment or suggestion about *how these materials are written*?)

5. If you could speak directly to the people who write the materials that you *choose* to read, what is one thing you would tell them?

(If the respondent's answer focuses on issues other than writing quality, such as choice of topic, ease of access, or plot or character development, follow up with: Do you have any final comment or suggestion about *how these materials are written?*)

Final Reflection on the Value of Editing

6. Is there anything else you want to share about your experience as a reader that might help someone weigh the value of editing against the cost?

(If the respondent asks for clarification, follow up with: For example, editing a 200-page novel *for content, structure, style, and grammar* costs about \$2,000 on average and takes about 40 hours. What would you say to an organization or an individual who is trying to decide if spending that time and money on editing is worth it?)

Note: Consider starting the question with the example in the prompt. You can phrase it: "Editing written material has a cost, in terms of time, money, or both. For example, editing a 200-page novel for content, structure, style, and grammar costs about \$2,000 on average and takes about 40 hours. Is there anything else you want to share about your experience as a reader that might help someone weigh the value of editing against the cost?"

Appendix E: Mean Differences and *P* Values Per Question, Per Material

The following three tables list the mean difference—the difference between the mean (average) of responses from the edited (experiment) and unedited (control) groups—for each of the 18 Likert-scale questions for each of the six materials. Beside each listed mean difference, find the Bonferroni-adjusted *p* value for that mean difference. When the *p* value is less than .05 ($p < .05$), the mean difference meets our definition of significant.

Each table focuses on one of the three levels of editing, so you can compare the extent to which editing made a significant difference in how participants perceived the edited and unedited versions of the warm materials with how participants perceived the edited and unedited versions of the cold materials.

Table E.1: Significance of the Mean Difference for Each of the Two Copy Materials

Likert-scale questions	Material 1: Executive producer's LinkedIn post (copy, warm)		Material 4: Nonprofit's financial review instructions (copy, cold)	
	Mean Difference	P value (adj)	Mean Difference	P value (adj)
If I needed more information about this topic, I would be willing to read more written materials from this source.	.00540	1.000	0.0763	1.000
If I wanted more information about this topic, I would try to find more written materials from this source.	0.0787	1.000	0.01623	1.000
I would recommend this source to someone interested in reading about this topic.	0.0984	1.000	0.0970	1.000
I believe this source is an expert on this topic.	0.1410	1.000	0.08398	1.000
I would feel comfortable citing this source if I were to write about this topic.	0.144	1.000	0.0670	1.000
I feel like this source might be misrepresenting the information or leaving important information out.	0.0920	1.000	0.06192	1.000
I trust that the information in the written material is accurate.	0.0132	1.000	0.04392	1.000
If someone brought up this topic in a conversation, I would feel comfortable contributing to the conversation with what I learned in this written material.	0.00997	1.000	0.14390	1.000
I have doubts about the accuracy of this written material.	0.0866	1.000	0.0378	1.000
I find the written material to be easy to read.	0.117	1.000	0.0412	1.000
I was able to finish reading the written material as fast or faster than I anticipated.	0.0181	1.000	0.0814	1.000

Likert-scale questions	Material 1: Executive producer's LinkedIn post (copy, warm)		Material 4: Nonprofit's financial review instructions (copy, cold)	
	Mean Difference	P value (adj)	Mean Difference	P value (adj)
I had to reread parts of the written material because the sentences were difficult to read.	0.150	1.000	0.01636	1.000
I had to reread parts of the written material because the topic was difficult to understand.	0.00467	1.000	0.1074	1.000
If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could summarize the written material's main point.	0.06655	1.000	0.00651	1.000
If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could share at least one detail I learned from the written material.	0.1261	1.000	0.0801	1.000
I read each word of the written material from beginning to end without stopping.	0.1105	1.000	0.1168	1.000
I read each word of the written material but stopped at least once because I found the written material boring or frustrating.	0.0294	1.000	0.00473	1.000
I read enough of the written material to answer the survey questions but did not read each word.	0.0576	1.000	0.1084	1.000

Table E.2: Significance of the Mean Difference for Each of the Two Stylistic+ Materials

Likert-scale questions	Material 2: Federal agency's animal conservation blog post (stylistic+, warm)		Material 5: Company's software use instructions (stylistic+, cold)	
	Mean Difference	P value (adj)	Mean Difference	P value (adj)
If I needed more information about this topic, I would be willing to read more written materials from this source.	0.0784	1.000	0.1874	0.602
If I wanted more information about this topic, I would try to find more written materials from this source.	0.1027	1.000	0.21818	0.288
I would recommend this source to someone interested in reading about this topic.	0.0986	1.000	0.1918	0.531
I believe this source is an expert on this topic.	0.0381	1.000	0.12960	1.000
I would feel comfortable citing this source if I were to write about this topic.	0.136	1.000	0.1365	1.000
I feel like this source might be misrepresenting the information or leaving important information out.	0.0009	1.000	0.06776	1.000
I trust that the information in the written material is accurate.	0.0555	1.000	0.15677	0.553
If someone brought up this topic in a conversation, I would feel comfortable contributing to the conversation with what I learned in this written material.	0.09318	1.000	0.28279	0.069
I have doubts about the accuracy of this written material.	0.0339	1.000	0.1086	1.000
I find the written material to be easy to read.	0.108	1.000	0.4587	<.001
I was able to finish reading the written material as fast or faster than I anticipated.	0.1356	1.000	0.3278	0.015

Likert-scale questions	Material 2: Federal agency's animal conservation blog post (stylistic+, warm)		Material 5: Company's software use instructions (stylistic+, cold)	
	Mean Difference	P value (adj)	Mean Difference	P value (adj)
I had to reread parts of the written material because the sentences were difficult to read.	0.101	1.000	0.39524	0.003
I had to reread parts of the written material because the topic was difficult to understand.	0.07957	1.000	0.3795	0.007
If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could summarize the written material's main point.	0.04512	1.000	0.25408	0.193
If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could share at least one detail I learned from the written material.	0.0160	1.000	0.2505	0.193
I read each word of the written material from beginning to end without stopping.	0.0633	1.000	0.4244	0.001
I read each word of the written material but stopped at least once because I found the written material boring or frustrating.	0.1173	1.000	0.43955	0.002
I read enough of the written material to answer the survey questions but did not read each word.	0.1586	1.000	0.1342	1.000

Table E.3: Significance of the Mean Difference for Each of the Two Developmental+ Materials

Likert-scale questions	Material 3: Company's cybersecurity blog post (developmental+, warm)		Material 6: Federal agency's healthcare enrollment reporting (developmental+, cold)	
	Mean Difference	P value (adj)	Mean Difference	P value (adj)
If I needed more information about this topic, I would be willing to read more written materials from this source.	0.2502	0.097	0.2753	0.039
If I wanted more information about this topic, I would try to find more written materials from this source.	0.2404	0.159	0.33502	0.005
I would recommend this source to someone interested in reading about this topic.	0.3082	0.015	0.3740	<.001
I believe this source is an expert on this topic.	0.0889	1.000	0.00392	1.000
I would feel comfortable citing this source if I were to write about this topic.	0.246	0.143	0.2299	0.234
I feel like this source might be misrepresenting the information or leaving important information out.	0.2493	0.123	0.00972	1.000
I trust that the information in the written material is accurate.	0.2131	0.057	0.05260	1.000
If someone brought up this topic in a conversation, I would feel comfortable contributing to the conversation with what I learned in this written material.	0.30641	0.013	0.44376	<.001
I have doubts about the accuracy of this written material.	0.1590	1.000	0.0439	1.000
I find the written material to be easy to read.	0.338	0.004	0.5568	<.001
I was able to finish reading the written material as fast or faster than I anticipated.	0.3291	0.005	0.4741	<.001

Likert-scale questions	Material 3: Company's cybersecurity blog post (developmental+, warm)		Material 6: Federal agency's healthcare enrollment reporting (developmental+, cold)	
	Mean Difference	P value (adj)	Mean Difference	P value (adj)
I had to reread parts of the written material because the sentences were difficult to read.	0.191	0.890	0.56456	<.001
I had to reread parts of the written material because the topic was difficult to understand.	0.11618	1.000	0.4455	<.001
If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could summarize the written material's main point.	0.19837	0.424	0.45611	<.001
If someone asked me tomorrow what I remembered reading about in this written material, I am confident that I could share at least one detail I learned from the written material.	0.1346	1.000	0.3605	0.005
I read each word of the written material from beginning to end without stopping.	0.3372	0.013	0.5117	<.001
I read each word of the written material but stopped at least once because I found the written material boring or frustrating.	0.3023	0.085	0.39650	0.008
I read enough of the written material to answer the survey questions but did not read each word.	0.1656	1.000	0.5223	<.001

Appendix F: Interview Transcript Coding Guide for References to Editing Level

Editing Level	Definition for This Study	Related Key Words and Phrases	Other Tips for Distinguishing Editing Level
Developmental	Changes to the content or organization of the text. Developmental edits can include moving, removing, or adding sections, paragraphs, and sentences. The goal of developmental editing is to ensure the content is relevant to the intended audience, all necessary content is included and accurate, and the organization helps the intended audience understand the point of the content for them as they read.	• structure • flow • storytelling • irrelevant information • unnecessary information • repetitive information • missing information • messaging • what the audience needs to know	Think of developmental editing as “big changes,” quite literally in terms of scale: reordering content for logical structure and flow; adding missing content that the audience might find necessary; removing content wholesale when unnecessary for the audience. “Content” here can be sections, paragraphs, or sentences. Developmental edits rarely involve changing <i>individual words</i>.
Stylistic	Changes to stylistic writing choices. Stylistic edits include changing word choice or sentence structure to clarify the author’s tone or meaning and to make sentences easier to read or more aesthetically pleasing for the intended audience.	• jargon • easy to read • “say what you mean” • “dumb down” • meaning (but <i>not</i> “message”) • tone • sound relatable • sound authentic • sound human • sound professional • appropriate style for the audience	This category involves making changes that are more granular than developmental edits: changing individual words or the structure of a sentence (like going from passive voice to active voice to minimize the risk of ambiguity.) These changes are also more subjective than copy edits. Whereas copy edits focus on finding “errors,” stylistic edits focus on areas for improvement, with the definition of “improvement” being whatever is most likely to help <i>this</i> intended audience interpret the author’s intended meaning correctly.

Editing Level	Definition for This Study	Related Key Words and Phrases	Other Tips for Distinguishing Editing Level
Copy	Changes to ensure the text complies with relevant standards. Copy edits can include word choice changes to comply with dictionary definitions, grammar changes to comply with acceptable language standards, punctuation changes to comply with style guide standards, and mechanics changes to comply with the standards set within the text itself to maintain consistency.	• grammar • punctuation • spelling • typos • English language challenge • consistency in appearance, like fonts or spaces, or minor details, like a character's eye color (but <i>not</i> consistency in "message" or "tone")	This category is the easiest to distinguish. Think of copy edits as the classic "right or wrong" issues we are trained to look for in school. For something to be "wrong," it needs to go against the standards: either standards set in a style guide or standards set within the material itself. That's why getting a main character's eye color wrong in a novel is a copy edit—it doesn't affect the message or tone; it's a distraction because of how it breaks an established pattern.