

## From “By Hand” to “Binary”

The Web sites described here address a wide variety of topics likely to interest science editors—from characterizing what editors do to understanding the language of electronic publishing. Two of the sites link directly to file downloads; if these files become unavailable online, please feel free to write to me at [gabewaggoner@earthlink.net](mailto:gabewaggoner@earthlink.net), and I'll be happy to send you a copy from my archives.

### Readying Publications for the Web

**[www.eeicommunications.com/eye/links.html](http://www.eeicommunications.com/eye/links.html)**

This is the age of digital technology, and the Web will play an ever-greater role in our jobs. Mindy McAdams, a copyeditor who works as an Internet consultant, has compiled tips for making Web copy as precise, readable, and visually appealing as possible. McAdams notes that the first requirement for editors wanting to work with Web documents is learning HTML (Hypertext Markup Language). Motivated editors could learn HTML in just a few days, she says—“it’s no more complex than the editing codes that most newspaper copyeditors are required to learn.” In this helpful primer, she shows how readability can be built in, how link text can be strengthened, and how large articles can be broken up. Above all, she says, editors should keep in mind that “the online reader is a moving target” and that readers will quickly lose interest if confronted with huge blocks of plain text.

### Ask the Editor: What Editors Do

**[www.queryletters.com/seidman.htm](http://www.queryletters.com/seidman.htm)**

Michael Seidman, author of *Fiction: The Art and Craft of Writing and Getting Published* and *The Complete Guide to Editing Your Fiction*, edits fiction, but many of his points about what editors do translate well to science editing. Seidman defines the editor’s job as “[helping] the writer produce the best book she is capable of at the moment.” Clearly, science editors do not deal with plot and character, but Seidman also addresses subjects common to science editing, such as structure, continuity, and

line-by-line copyediting. Seidman warns that some editors make drastic changes to bring submissions into line with what they envision rather than what the author chooses to do—a problem whether the text is a short story or a scientific paper.

### Readability

**[www.med.mun.ca/hic/Readability.htm](http://www.med.mun.ca/hic/Readability.htm)**

This site’s headline asks whether your medical treatment consent form is “understandable to people who don’t have a PhD from MIT”. The tools outlined on this site enable editors to quantify the readability of text. As noted on the site, Microsoft Word and WordPerfect will do some analysis for you. Both programs have options in their “Tools” menus to carry out the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test. The site recommends “a grade of less than 10 to ensure maximum comprehension”. The SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledegook) formula is also outlined here, but it requires a fair amount of do-it-by-hand work. Editors might find that performing one or more of these tests on copy can show authors how editorial changes have improved its readability.

### Glossary of Commonly Used Internet and Publishing Terms

**[www.aip.org/pubservs/glossary.pdf](http://www.aip.org/pubservs/glossary.pdf)**

The American Institute of Physics (AIP) Web site includes the second edition of its glossary of Internet and publishing terms as a complimentary service to potential physics authors. Science editors, regardless of field, will also find it a useful tool. This link is from the Publishing Services section of AIP’s Web site and points directly to an Adobe Acrobat PDF (portable document format) download. Consisting of 16 pages, the glossary is advanced enough to give Web-savvy editors some new insights but basic enough to serve as an introduction to electronic publishing. Regardless of your level of experience in this realm, AIP’s glossary can help you speak the language knowledgeably and with confidence. In the 3 years since the glossary’s publication, some new terms have undoubtedly entered

the lingo. Nevertheless, AIP's glossary remains a valuable resource.

**Making Your Web Site Senior Friendly: A Checklist**  
**[www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/checklist.pdf](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/checklist.pdf)**

"The goal of this Checklist is to provide research-based guidelines for Web site design that, when implemented, will make web sites more accessible to all adults." From applying principles of typography and design to integrating multimedia to aiming for crisp style and phrasing, this direct-download link shows how to make important information readily available to more people. Examples of the site's advice are the following: Choose 12- or 14-point sans serif fonts to help compensate for diminished eyesight. Adapt to lower-capacity computers by limiting file sizes. Use positive statements, active voice, and simple language to ensure ease of understanding. This guide exemplifies the designer's credo: Form follows function.

**The United States Government Printing Office Style Manual 2000**  
**[www.access.gpo.gov/styleman/2000/browse-sm-00.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/styleman/2000/browse-sm-00.html)**

Versatility within versatility is the rule on this Web site. Not only is the GPO Style Manual conveniently divided into useful sections, but said sections are also viewable as HTML files within the browser or as PDF files in Adobe Acrobat Reader. Furthermore, each section begins by presenting rules and then provides a set of examples to illustrate them. The style manual also includes useful tables, such as tables of geology terms, physiography data, and foreign currency. Sections detailing common Latin abbreviations, Système Internationale (SI) metric units, and academic degree titles could be of particular interest to science editors.

GABE WAGGONER *was an intern with Science Editor and a graduate student in science and technology journalism at Texas A&M University when he wrote this column.*

**CSE Annual Meeting**  
**4-7 May 2002**  
**San Diego, CA**

*For more information, please see [www.councilscienceeditors.org/events\\_02annualMtg.shtml](http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/events_02annualMtg.shtml)*