Word Tips for Editors

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The computer age has provided writers and editors with many tools and utilities never even dreamed of back in the days of typewriters. Microsoft Word was designed as an author tool, and most writers today write in Word. Consequently, editors are often forced to edit in Word. Thorough understanding and customization of its nuances can change Word from an editor's foe to a friend. This highly interactive session provided attendees with a number of tips to accomplish that.

The Tools menus provide several opportunities to personalize and customize features of Word. Take some time to explore these features, to maximize Word's functionality and minimize your frustration. Several choices are available on the Tools/Options/Edit tab to customize your cutting-and-pasting options, such as "Typing replaces selection", "Drag-and-drop text editing", and "Use smart cut and paste", which can be turned on or off depending on your editorial needs and preferences. Further explanation of each feature can be accessed by right-clicking on the feature and then left-clicking on the "What's This?" button. (See illustration.)
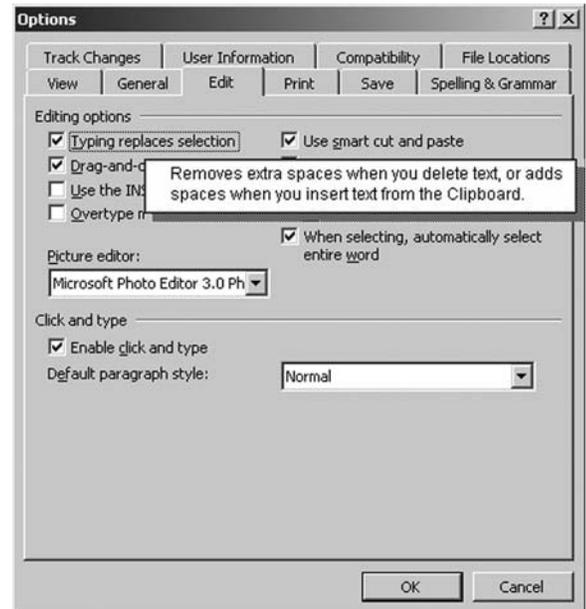
You can identify when an author has used bibliographic citation software, such as Endnote, by selecting the "Show field shading always" option on the Tools/

Options/View tab. Because some journals require that all such coding be stripped from a submitted manuscript, it was helpful to learn that this can be accomplished by picking "Select all" from the Edit menu and simultaneously pressing the "Control-Shift-F9" keys.

Have you ever noticed Word automatically making formatting or other changes that you didn't want? The "AutoFormat" and "AutoCorrect" features on the Tools/AutoCorrect menu were probably the culprits. It is here that you can turn on or off the automatic bullet and numbered lists, superscripted ordinals, hyperlink creation, and others. And you can customize this feature to make it work for you with options like "Replace text as you type". For instance, if you frequently query an author for the manufacturer and city of a drug, you can create a user-defined shortcut for inserting the text "AUTHOR: Please provide manufacturer and location" by merely typing an easy-to-remember, prespecified code, such as "MAN".

Many functionalities are available at your fingertips by combining right-clicking your mouse with the position of your cursor. For instance, you can access the toolbar customization function by positioning your cursor in the toolbar and right-clicking your mouse. If spelling or grammar errors, or both, are showing in your document, positioning your cursor over an error and right-clicking your mouse will reveal suggested corrections—and give you the option to ignore the error. Hyperlinks can be removed by right clicking on hyperlinked text and selecting "Hyperlink/Remove hyperlink".

Keyboard commands are another way to access Word functionality. You can strip formatting on a block of text and return it to the default format by selecting it and pressing "Control-space". You can custom-assign easy-to-remember keyboard commands (such as Alt-A for the alpha character) to frequently used symbols in the Insert/Symbol/Special characters/Shortcut key dialog box. These will be saved in your Normal.dot file and be available to you every time Word launches.

Additional pointers were provided on simple and complex applications of the "Find-and-Replace" feature and converting text into tables. This dynamic presentation stimulated spirited discussion and tip-sharing. The take-away message was that with patience and training, you can learn to make Word work for you rather than against you, and with the proper tools under your belt, you, too, can become a Word wizard. For more information, subscribe to the presenters' newsletter, *MS-Word Tips for Editors*, available through their Web site (*www.inera.com*). 🌀