

# Postal Newsletter

## Press

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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## What should I write about?

By Tony Carobine, President

Did you ever find yourself, as editor, pondering this question; what should I write about for the next issue of the paper? No matter how hard you try, you can't come up with a topic that you think is worthy of spending time to develop into an article. I'm sure all of us could admit to being in that frame of mind at one time or another. But when you think about it, we should never suffer from a lack of subject matter to address in our publications.

From our union or postal service to the communities in which we live, there is always something newsworthy happening that could be addressed in the various forms of writing available to us as editors.

Today, one of the most neglected forms of writing in organizational publications is the editorial, wherein the editor expresses his or her personal views. Every one of us has an opinion on just about every subject. In today's world there are events happening on a daily basis that affect us as postal workers, consumers and citizens, not to mention our families as well. Why not delve into some of these important happenings on a regular basis by addressing them in the form of editorials in your publication?

By doing so you may just generate discussion on important issues of the day and prompt members to participate by expressing their opinions in the form of Letters to the Editor. Discussion on such issues, whatever they may be, projects "life" in an organization and may very well increase readership of the paper.

Editorials should contain logical arguments that are reasonable and honest.

Using analogies and humor can also make an editorial more effective. A well-written, thought-provoking editorial is an asset



as it will work to increase the stature and credibility of a publication and the organization it serves as a result.

Opinion/editorial columns should, of course, be labeled as such with the writer's byline to ensure the reader understands these are the personal views of the writer.

**Include the members**

When considering the inclusion of opinions in the paper, we should not overlook opportunities to include the opinions of our members. People like to read about people; themselves first and others second. In this regard, consider a column in each issue whereby randomly selected members are asked the same question on a particular subject. Publish their responses (and if possible, a photo of each member). The topics for such questions are endless; from union issues to management actions to community and national issues.

**Plan ahead**

Instead of waiting until it's time to put the paper together, try to get into the habit of always being on the lookout for subject matter for editorial and member opinion columns. In doing so, you will have time to formulate your thoughts and decide on what you want to say, therefore making your task much easier.

### August Biennial PPA Conference — Make your reservations now!



The Meadows Events & Conference Center at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino site of the PPA Conference on August 3-5. Preceding the conference will be a full day of workshops on Wednesday, August 2. See pages 4-5 for more information and a registration form.

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**Statement of purpose:** Published by the American Postal Workers Union National Postal Press Association, the *PPA Newsletter* is an educational tool designed to assist PPA members with the performance of their duties as communicators and to help promote the goals and objectives of the APWU.

**This publication is 100% union printer produced: Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.**



# Buy your insurance policy now!

By Edward J. Brennan,  
Secretary-Treasurer

In August, the American Postal Workers Union National Postal Press Association will hold its biennial conference in Altoona, Iowa. This event will bring together many APWU communicators from around the country who have varying levels of experience with publishing union newsletters from the seasoned editor to the new editor. However, some of our editors will remain at home for one reason or another and our entire union could suffer great harm because of it.

Our editors are a major link in the educational chain of our union. They are the lifeline between the union leadership and the rank and file members. They are the guardians of the written word. They are the protectors of good journalism and fair and honest reporting. They are the voice of local and state organizations. They are the voice of the members whom they represent. They are the protectors of proper grammar, freedom of the press and the legalities of journalism which relate to postal union publications. They should be the trained editors which our union needs so badly during these trying times.

**Every local or state organization should find some way to finance the education of their editor through the Postal Press Association. The PPA conference is only held every two years and is a long-**

**standing educational event in our union going back to 1967!**

As editors we should take pride in our positions and have the desire to put forth our best efforts in performing the duties of editing. We should learn the necessity of obtaining instruction in both the fundamental mechanics of editing a newsletter and also the legal aspects of those things that go into that publication.

**Additionally, the PPA conference is not just for the education of editors. Communicating with the membership is also the responsibility of every representative of our union. Therefore, workshops presented at the conference are not only geared towards helping editors, but also helping all union representatives improve their communication skills.**

The PPA conference is just like money in the bank for our union. Everything we need to know to become more knowledgeable communicators is there for the taking. All we have to do is be there and be a part of the conference. It is an insurance policy for our local, state, and national union in that the knowledge gained at the conference could insure the education of our membership. It could insure the addition of members. It could rally our members around our national union. It could insure us from lawsuits or election violations. Do we have adequate coverage? Plan to attend the PPA conference. Protect yourselves!

# Avoid the charge of libel

You can always be sued. The suit may not prevail against you because the person suing may not want to pursue it any further, or the suit has no merit, but you can still be sued. Therefore, it's best to be careful with controversial subjects.

There is a rule of thumb: "when in doubt – leave it out," but this is not always the proper route. If you think, however, that running a certain photo, article, cartoon, or piece will bring out the worst in someone, strong enough for them to want to sue you or your local, maybe you shouldn't run it.

Your local can be ruined by a large libel suit. So could you. You don't want your local to disappear just because of the newsletter you work hard to produce.

Unsure of whether or not an article is libelous or inappropriate? Your Postal Press Association can help. Upon request, (if the material has not already been published) the PPA will provide a confidential review and offer an opinion. Over the years this service has helped to avoid many potentially costly lawsuits.



# Tried anything new lately?

By **Jenny L. Gust,**  
Editor-at-Large

Suppose someone handed you a stack of PPA publications including your own paper. After reading the papers would the content of your paper rise to the top, hover in the middle or sink to the bottom? Reading other publications can help you improve what you are doing. You will see what works and looks good. You will also see what doesn't work!

If you are looking to change it up a bit here are some ideas to help. Photos of your members/officers help to put a face with a name. Try an interview with someone – get their point of view and a

photo to go with it. Do a survey of your members – see what is on their minds and/or what they want to see in the pa-



per. Try to find someone or a few people to draw or work up a cartoon or two. We need a sense of humor! If you find an art-

## Are you part of the SOLUTION or part of the PROBLEM?

By **Hank Greenberg, Honorary Member**  
PPA Advisory Council

There's a lot of talk today about union membership and the direction it's going. It seems like everyone has the answer – and no one has the answer. Let's review some of the problems in hopes that you can come up with some of the solutions.

Everyone's fall guy is "apathy." We can all agree that apathy is a major problem and possibly the biggest problem. But just saying "apathy" is not going to make it go away. Instead, ask the members why they are apathetic; why they don't care; why they aren't interested?

You can go into any post office and find members who are more excited about last Sunday's sporting event than what the union is doing to protect their job. Hey! It's your job we're talking about! When "the game" is over, you still have a mortgage to pay and a family to provide for.

There was a time when just one employee or one office had a problem and postal workers all over the country rose up in protest. Unfortunately today we find people saying, "hey, it's not my office so it's not my problem." Forgive me, but I think it's everyone's problem.

It's a general attitude in society today and unfortunately time is running out; we need to do everything possible to get everyone

to focus on the issues we face in the Postal Service.

Draw up a list of questions and survey the members. Put the questionnaire in your paper. Give them enough space to vent. Members don't have to sign it. We might find that "our" issues are not necessarily "their" issues. If this is true, then this will show we have not been listening to our members.

Almost 60 years ago I began my career as editor of the Miami local paper. I believed then, and I believe now, that the local union newspaper is the single most important vehicle to educate the members and motivate the members. Articles about Members – and their opinions, give them a sense of belonging.

If your local does not have a paper (or publish one on a regular basis), don't be surprised if your members do not know what's going on and believe every rumor they hear. You will always hear more dissatisfaction from people who are uninformed....Your union newspaper is the LAST thing your members need – and also the FIRST thing your members need, because your union newspaper is a rumor killer.

Find out about this and much more at the upcoming PPA National Conference. It's worth your time – and your members will benefit from the knowledge you gain.

ist maybe they could redo the banner of your paper.

Every chance you get be sure to publicize the victories – grievance wins, arbitration wins, even things that are fixed before going through the steps – that we all know can take forever in the system. Let the members know – hey we are fighting and we are winning!

Notices of meetings – when, where, time, and agenda. Report on last month's meeting and what happened. Work on your officers, even stewards, to write articles for the paper. Just tell them it doesn't have to be a Pulitzer Prize winner – just write like you are talking to someone. Write about future events – picnics, conventions, parties, Labor Day walks, holiday events, charity events, etc.

Legislative and political news and how it could affect their jobs. Let them know what the national and state APWU are doing on their behalf. Check out the websites of the national and your state before you publish. They generally have lots of information available for you to use.

Is someone in your local interested in health and safety? Maybe they could write up something once in a while. Also, people love to hear about other members – birthdays, anniversary, births, grandchildren, members who are ill or had surgery. Show respect for members/retirees who have passed away – put condolences in the paper. Try to keep retirees in the loop also. You might find one who would love to write about what they are doing now. Have a member or steward of the month. Have an Ask the Editor column for questions concerning the contract and grievance procedure and what your rights are.

Last but not least, you can check out the APWU PPA website! There you will find lots of union history, profiles, fillers for your newsletter – all kinds of goodies. There is no way you will have any blank space ever again if you check it out!

Be proud of your paper! Make the effort to have it rise to the top!

**P. S. Hope to see you at the PPA conference. It's going to be great! Wonderful, informative workshops, Awards Banquet, Friday Night at the Movies, and Joan Walsh will be the Keynote Speaker. You really don't want to miss it!**

# Plans set for August Biennial Conference

Plans are set for the 2017 biennial conference of the American Postal Workers Union National Postal Press Association (PPA). Established in 1967, this event is part of the PPA's mission; helping communicators fulfill their responsibilities of informing and energizing the membership of our great union.

The intensive four-day program consists of eleven workshops that will be helpful to all who attend; from novice to experienced, to local or state organizations interested in establishing, or enhancing a communications program for its membership. Also featured will be three general sessions, along with four networking events.

Held every two years, the PPA Conference is not just for editors. Regardless of the office held in our union, learning about communication as a means to better represent the membership should be a part of every representative's educational development.

With postal workers facing constant challenges, it is especially important to have an active, supportive and united membership. In this regard, we should consider the value of maintaining a presence with our members and in our communities by the regular use of effective communication mediums; such as newsletters, social media and by communicating through other public forums as well.

This event is an opportunity to learn more about communication – a valuable activity that can influence not only the membership but also everyone the union needs to reach in order to promote and protect the interests of APWU members and their families.

The conference will be held at The Meadows Events & Conference Center at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino Altoona, Iowa. A guestroom rate of \$129.00 per day for king or double queen occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 12%. To make room reservations, please visit the PPA website, [www.apwupostalpress.org](http://www.apwupostalpress.org) or call 1-800-325-9015 using group code 08022017APW. Prairie Meadows will provide free shuttle service from Des Moines

International Airport, complimentary Internet access and no charge for parking a vehicle.

## PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS Wednesday, August 2

### (A) Starting from Scratch

This session is primarily for individuals new to editing a union publication and for local or state organizations interested in establishing or reestablishing a publication for their members. Included will be an overview of the reasons an organization needs to communicate and the ABC's of how to get started. With an extensive record of involvement in labor communications, the workshop leaders will share their experiences with participants.

### (B) Communicating to Win: Case Studies of Effective Communication in Recent Struggles and Victories

How are workers still winning against the odds, sometimes in the face of daunting challenges? This workshop will introduce selected case studies of recent struggles in which unions used highly effective internal and external communication strategies to help achieve bargaining goals or key policy changes. We will analyze real examples from contract and issue campaigns and ask what lessons we can learn and apply to our own contexts.

### (C) Legal Issues: Who Pays for What I Say?

Who does a union publication belong to? Do libel and copyright laws affect your freedom of speech and freedom of the press? What are the benefits of establishing an editorial policy? How do union election laws apply to union publications and websites? *Legal Issues: Who Pays for What I Say?* will address these questions and others with a presentation on the issues of editorial policies, responsible journalism, libel, copyright and union elections.

## CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS Thursday, August 3 – Saturday, August 5

### (D) Your Message and the Media, Improving Your Union's Image

Public support can help an organization achieve its objectives. *Your Message and the Media, Improving Your Union's Image* will help you build a positive public image for your local or state union by looking at: How to publicize your union's contributions to the community; ideas for regularly making the union visible to the public and why seeking media coverage only to publicize the union's problems could be disastrous. Also discussed will be the preparation of press releases, developing media contacts, interviews, and other tactics to use for establishing and maintaining a positive and progressive public image.

### (E) Re-designing Your Publication

Is your newsletter in-tune with the times, or is it a relic? This workshop will help you modernize your paper, transforming it into a powerful instrument that commands attention. Learn design techniques that will capture the reader's interest in the first few seconds; improve six key elements of your newsletter: format, nameplate, masthead, page layout, type choices, and paper selection; discover ways to use photos, headlines, outquotes, borders, rules and other elements for maximum impact. *Re-designing Your Publication* will provide you with the specific "how-to's" for propelling your newsletter to a new level of quality and effectiveness. **(Note: Participants should bring a copy of their publication to this workshop.)**

### (F) Labor Communicators – Linking the Past to the Present

This workshop will explore the relevance of labor history to today's labor movement. By examining how our predecessors built and maintained effective unions, we can learn what strategies and tactics might

be used to increase general union membership and energize their membership and inspire and energize that li

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# ennial PPA Conference

eful today. As the labor movement increasingly becomes comprised of a new generation of members, it's important to learn the lessons that the founders of our profession learned so well themselves. This session will help communicators educate their readers about the purpose of unions, encourage them to increase their involvement and encourage them to face up to the issues ahead.

## Writing and Editing for Union Communicator

In this valuable hands-on session, you will learn the elements of writing and editing. You will be taken through a host of exercises to help you write inspiring editorials, powerful news stories, attention-getting headlines, headlines that scream "Read Me" and more. This workshop is a must for anyone that communicates with the membership through the written word. **(Note: The length of this workshop requires two workshop choices. Therefore make three workshop selections on registration form if attending this workshop.)**

## Communications for Member Involvement and Union Building

In today's multi-media environment, editors have the opportunity to make their publications the centerpiece of a strategic communications system that builds stronger union. This highly interactive workshop will walk through the steps of assessing your local's communications needs and capacity, analyzing what messages and what best motivate members, considering pros and cons of print, electronic, and face-to-face formats, developing a distribution/communications network that reaches all members, and integrating the newsletter into the overall communications plan.

## Using Electronic Communication to Get Your Message

To tweet or not to tweet? That is the question – indeed one of many questions

– that union communicators face today. This fast-paced workshop will examine when and how electronic communication can broaden the reach of your print publication and reinforce important messages, as well as how to recognize situations where electronic communication might not be the right choice. Then we'll delve into "dos and don'ts" of member communication via e-mail, mass text, and social media platforms, and tips for establishing or improving your local union's on-line presence.

## (J) Public Speaking: Becoming an Effective Spokesperson

To win at the media game there are two principles you need to master. You must develop a focused message and you must deliver your message in a believable way. This principle, along with others will be examined at this workshop, including tactics for getting our message across, regardless of the questions asked or whether the interview is on television, radio, or in print. Part of this hands-on workshop will include a role playing exercise whereby some of the participants are videotaped in an actual interview situation and critiqued on their presentation.

## (K) Photojournalism: Capturing Visual Images of Your Union

This interactive session will examine the benefits of including the membership and activities of the union in your publication, website and Facebook page through the art of photojournalism. Learn the process of proper image taking; propelling you beyond the traditional "grip-and-grin" photographs to capturing eye catching images like a pro! We will also cover the proper care of your camera equipment and shooting technique. A portion of this workshop will also include a "field trip" whereby attendees will take photos for a classroom critique. Yes, you will get to critique the instructor too! **(Note: Participants should bring their Point & Shoot, Single-lens Reflex, Digital Single Lens Reflex, or Cell Phone Camera.)**

## 2017 PPA Conference Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Publication: \_\_\_\_\_

Local or State Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration Fee: (PPA Members): \$160.00  
After July 5: \$200.00**

**Non-PPA Members: \$225.00**

The registration fee includes workshops, dinner, refreshment breaks, and Awards Banquet. (Note: The registration fee is all-inclusive and must be paid in full prior to the close of registration.)

## Pre-conference Session Wednesday, August 2

Please select **two of the three half-day workshops** (A-C). Walk-ins are not permitted.

\_\_\_ (A)      \_\_\_ (B)      \_\_\_ (C)

## Conference Workshops

### Thursday, August 3 – Saturday, August 5

You must register for these workshops in advance by selecting four of the workshops and your alternative choices by using the letter next to the workshop description (D-K). **Note: The length of Workshop G (Writing & Editing for the Union Communicator) requires using two workshop choices. Therefore only make three workshop selections if attending this workshop.** Assignments will be made on a first-registered-first-served basis. Class size is limited. Walk-ins are not permitted.

\_\_\_ First Choice    \_\_\_ Second Choice    \_\_\_ Third Choice    \_\_\_ Fourth Choice

\_\_\_ Alternative Choice 1    \_\_\_ Alternative Choice 2

Please make your check payable to **APWU National Postal Press Association** and mail it along with this registration form to:

**APWU National Postal Press Association  
PO Box 888  
Iron Mountain MI 49801**

# Sharpen listening skills

Effective listening can make you more efficient and more productive.

Unfortunately, most people are only 25 percent effective as listeners.

The following tips and suggestions can help you become a better listener.

## The benefit of listening

- **People will** respect and like you more

*“Unfortunately, most people are only 25 percent effective as listeners.”*

because you have shown that you care about them and what they have to say.

- **You’ll be** better informed, because when you actively listen, you learn more.
- **You’ll be** better able to get things done, because you’ll understand how to motivate people when you pay attention to what they’re really saying – and thinking.
- **People will** listen to what you’re saying because they realize that you have made them feel important – and they want to please you.

## What good listeners do

- **Look at** the person who’s speaking.
- **Question** the speaker to clarify what’s being said.
- **Repeat some** of the things the speaker says.
- **Don’t rush** the speaker.
- **Pay close** attention to what the speaker is saying.
- **Don’t interrupt** the speaker.
- **Don’t change** the subject until the speaker has finished his or her thoughts.

## How to listen better

• **Listen for** ideas not just for facts. When you listen only for facts, you may not grasp the ideas or themes of the speaker. Here are some questions you might ask yourself when listening:

- Why am I being told this information?
- What does it lead to?
- If that’s true, what does it prove?

• **Judge what** the speaker says, not how it is said. Don’t let the speaker’s delivery get in the way of your understanding the message. Ignore any peculiar manner-

isms or speaking problems the speaker may exhibit.

- **Be optimistic** when you listen. Try to find something of interest in the subject no matter how dry it may seem at first. Open your mind and try to find out what attracted the speaker to the subject.
- **Don’t jump to conclusions.** Don’t listen to the beginning of a sentence and try

to fill in the rest. Wait and keep listening. Clear your head of your own ideas and listen to those of the speaker.

• **Be a flexible listener** when you’re taking notes. Determine as soon as possible how the speaker puts forth his or her ideas, and gear your note-taking style to the speaker’s style. *Example:* Ask yourself, “Is the speaker concise or does he or she take a while to make a point?”

• **Concentrate.** Remain relaxed but attentive. But don’t become tense, or you’ll make any distractions more pronounced. *Your best bet:* Try to remove as many distractions as possible. *One way:* When going to meetings get there early and sit up front where there will be fewer distractions.

• **Remember** that you can think at least four times as fast as someone can talk.

That means that your thoughts will race ahead of the speaker’s words – and you can become so detached that you’ll have a hard time catching up with what was said. To stay on track, try to summarize what was said, or interpret the speaker’s ideas, or evaluate the speaker’s logic. You’ll have time to do these things because your thoughts move so swiftly.

• **Work at listening.** Try to listen alertly and enthusiastically. Strive to “be alive.” *How:* Respond to the speaker by giving feedback. *Examples:* Come up with an ap-

propriate comment, smile if appropriate, and summarize what the speaker just said.

- **Keep your mind open** – and restrain your emotions. Don’t be distracted by strong words that may offend you. Train yourself to note the presence of emotional words – but to let them pass without an emotional reaction on your part. Work on interpreting and evaluating what the speaker is saying.
- **Practice mental exercises.** Use every opportunity to sharpen your listening skills. Work on your attitude. And practice, practice, practice.

## A few more tips

Try these valuable tips which will help you develop rapport with the speaker.

- **Accept the** speaker’s feelings. Show that you have empathy for the person or his or her problems.
- **Ask questions** to let the speaker know you are paying attention to him or her. People realize you’re listening to them when you ask a question, wait for an answer, and follow up with a related question.

## AIM to listen

Try this simple formula that will help you



remember three vital listening concepts. It’s called AIM.

- **A – Attention.** Don’t fake paying attention. If the person is important enough to listen to, then try to resist distractions.
- **I – Interest.** Try to maintain interest even if you don’t think the topic or person is interesting. Tell yourself that the content might prove useful to you someday.
- **M – Motivation.** Try to motivate yourself by going over all the reasons you should pay attention. Be sure to list motives that offer you the greatest benefits.

# Editor's toolbox: Helpful ideas for APWU communicators

## Editing for brevity and clarity

You've written a draft document, and you're fairly satisfied with your effort. Don't stop now. The most important part is editing your own copy. *Use these tips to tighten and polish your prose.*

Purge extraneous words from every phrase. Weed out any word that adds nothing to meaning. Example: Change "during the course of" to "during."

Substitute short punchy words for long, showy ones. Examples: Use "try" for "endeavor" and "total" for "aggregate."

Avoid vague adjectives. Example: Instead of writing, "We received numerous inquiries," write "We received 104 inquiries."

## Powerful anti-procrastination tools

Scores of people have found these two tips helpful in dealing with procrastination:

**Use the "five-minute plan."** Every task has a first step. Commit yourself to the five or ten minutes it takes to make that first step, perhaps writing a paragraph or making a phone call. When that's completed, consider committing to another five minutes for the next step ... and then another five. Once you start, momentum will keep you going.

**Lighten the pressure.** Before you begin, promise yourself that you will work on the project only within the time you have available that day. By being reasonable with yourself and your expectations, you stand a far better chance of starting, and that's usually the hardest part.

## Laughter really is the best medicine

A hearty chuckle combats stress with physiological effects: It quickly increases heart rate and blood pressure. Then there is a sudden relaxation period where blood pressure drops below levels previous to the laugh; the brain may then release endorphins, which are the stress busters we release during exercise. A good laugh also

gives the face, diaphragm and abdomen a muscle massage. Scientists believe it even increases the saliva's virus combatant, immunoglobulin A. By allowing us to take a more removed angle on a stressful situation, and play up its absurdities, humor turns our daily disasters into comedy.



## Break writer's block

You've been asked to write a report on an important conference you just attended. But the more you work, the more frustrated you become. A four-step technique can help you when you're stymied by a long, important writing assignment. Here is how it works:

1. **Write down everything** that comes to mind on the subject. Don't try to arrange, evaluate or censor your ideas at this point. Don't worry about organizing your thoughts; there will be plenty of time for that.

2. **Categorize your information.** At this stage you should have very broad classifications. Take a note pad and list one general heading to a page. Then, on that page, copy all the notes related to the category.

3. **Create an outline.** You'll probably be able to eliminate whole sections because you won't have enough supporting material to justify including a topic. You may also decide that you want to keep certain sections and need to do additional research to flesh out these topics.

4. **Take a critical look at your outline.** Does one section lead logically to the next? Have you kept your audience in mind? Can you do some more cutting to sharpen your focus? Do you build to a logical conclusion?

With a clear, well-organized outline you should have little trouble filling in the sections of your report.

## Me, myself and I

Do you use reflexive pronouns properly?

Reflexive pronouns are words that end in -self and refer back to the subject. *Examples:* "He had himself to blame." or "I timed myself in the reading test."

The same form is sometimes used to emphasize that someone is doing something personally. *Example:* "The announcement was made by the president himself."

Unfortunately, some writers mistakenly consider "myself" to be more polite than "I" or "me." In Standard English, reflexive forms are not used as substitutes for "I" or "me."

*Incorrect:* "Ms. Smith and myself attended the meeting."

*Correct:* "Ms. Smith and I attended the meeting."

*Incorrect:* "The project was completed by Harry and myself."

*Correct:* "The project was completed by Harry and me."

## Write killer copy for your website

If you write copy for your organization's website you need to take into account the reading habits of the typical Internet surfer. Most people don't actually read – they scan.

Research indicates that 79% of surfers scan the page instead of reading it word for word. If you don't adopt your copy to this scanning style – you're just a mouse click away from cyber extinction. When you write for the web make sure the copy is:

**Concise.** Web content should have 50% fewer words than its paper equivalent and no single chunk of text should run more than 75 words. To write concise text you must tighten your language and avoid overly detailed information.

**Scannable.** To write scannable text add tables of contents, section summaries, bullets, numbered lists, highlighted key words, headings and short paragraphs with well-developed topic sentences.

# Why you need to edit

You start editing by looking at the big picture does this story make sense?

Editing is crucial to a well-rounded, readable newsletter. Unfortunately, many people think of an editor as a censor someone with a big, red pencil. Actually, an editor can be the writer's savior and the reader's best friend (even if they never know it).

Without any editing your newsletter will be a hodgepodge. Some articles will be too long. Others will be incomplete. Some will ramble. Others won't make sense. All of them will probably contain grammatical and spelling errors.

Your main job is to read for comprehension and interest, and to suggest any changes needed to make the story readable. Secondly, you'll look for errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## What the editor does

Reading for comprehension is a matter of putting yourself in your readers' shoes, and "listening" as you read each story. Trust your own reactions. Here are the questions you may ask yourself:

- Did you understand the story all the way through?
- Can you tell what the main point of the story is?
- Is the main point in the lead paragraph?
- Did you have to read any sentences twice?
- Does the language sound natural?

Would any reader understand it?

- Does the article raise questions that don't get answered?

If you find problems, note them in the margins of the story. Be prepared to explain your proposed solutions when you talk to the writer.

## An ounce of prevention

Let all your writers know what you expect. Specify an article length (normally measured in words). Tell them they should have a good beginning that summarizes the article, then a logical order with short

words, sentences and paragraphs. Tell them you'll edit their article when they've finished and that everyone gets this treatment.

## Be constructive

When you edit, always suggest alternatives. Don't say, or write, "That's boring." Say: "This point might interest people more if you ..." Don't make major changes to an article without consulting the author. And don't try to rewrite the article yourself. Send it back to the author, with your suggestions.

— Canadian Association of Labour Media

# Building a news gathering network

Developing an enthusiastic team of reporters for your publication can make your job easier and your publication more complete and interesting.

The first step is to decide how many reporters you need and what they will cover. If your organization is an area local, you may want to have a correspondent for each associate office within the area local. If your newsletter is a state publication, you may want to recruit a reporter for each local within the state.

Gathering information for your newsletter will not be a high priority for most of your reporters. Therefore, try to make their jobs as easy and rewarding as you possibly can.

At the beginning of the year, give each reporter a colorful (hard to misplace) folder

with pockets on either side. Include your publication schedule and copy deadlines as well as instructions on how to submit copy.

If you are lucky enough to have reporters who are willing to write, then by all means ask them to write their stories. If your reporters are reluctant to write, just ask them to submit only the facts. Give your reporters recognition in each issue if possible. One method is to list contributing reporters in the masthead. Another is to have their names appear in a credit line at the end of each story they submit. If they have done the reporting and you have done the writing, your credit line can read, "Reported by Eric Smith."

Finally, praise your reporters whenever appropriate and thank them each time they submit information.