

Editing, Moderating, Curating, Deleting, Part 1

Merriam-Webster: **Editing**: to prepare (something, such as literary material) for publication or public presentation; to alter, adapt, or refine especially to bring about conformity to a standard or to suit a particular purpose.

In the world of reading and writing, editors are invaluable. They can help an author express ideas in the best way possible, while remaining true to the author's original intent. Editors mix and match, parse, and generally get an author to express thoughts in clear and concise language. We are "self-editors," just like we are our own "publishers," but a second set of eyes can provide insights into our own work.

I read self-published books and blogs, books that are seemingly half-edited, and well-edited ones as well. It's not just proper spelling and punctuation that can make or break books, they can almost make or break the ideas. A great idea, poorly written and expressed, is likely to be frowned upon. That's the way we are as humans.

I am not talking about texting, or any online chat forum, here. That is the most informal of communication, and is probably the only place where writing can be completely unconventional and still acceptable. However, many texts are "[permanent records](#)," so it's best to keep Murphy's Law in mind!



ANYTHING
THAT CAN GO WRONG
WILL GO WRONG

Murphy's Law

A publisher makes skillful use of editors, of course. As it bears on this topic, editors are almost always employed at the request of an author, or, at the very least, it is **expected** that a book or essay may be edited. There is **definite consent** from all parties: author, publisher, editor. Is it possible to edit **without consent**? Of course, but is it *wise*?

Probably not.

The last post discussed a bit about [republication liability](#), 'the idea that you are legally a "publisher" of all statements of others that you republish even if you accurately quote the original speaker and attribute the statement to them' (Greene, 2020). If the statement is libelous, you may be responsible,

even though you are accurately quoting another. Can you imagine how crazy this could get in the age of the Internet and social media? That's downright frightening!

This is why we have the federal law that provides immunity from prosecution for publication and republication, treating companies more like "passive distributors" (even though they are *not*) and allowing websites to actually flourish. That's the basis of "[Section 230](#)," a phrase I've heard in the news recently. Quoting the law directly here: It allows providers of [interactive computer services](#) to be free from liability from "any action voluntarily taken in good faith to restrict access to or availability of material that the provider or user considers to be obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected; or any action taken to enable or make available to information content providers or others the technical means to restrict access to material described in paragraph [one]." Not only can social media and other websites act as *republishers with immunity*; they can take action "in good faith" to *restrict (edit)* access to information. They do not need to be passive distributors to get better protection under the law. That is the real point of Section 230.

We are the original publishers of our thoughts and, in this section of the law, we are referred to as the "customers" of the interactive computer service. Colloquially, many who make a living from posting on social media call themselves "content creators," or just creators. We, run-of-the-mill users and *consumers* of social media, without much at stake on the Internet, and *creators*, who have an entire career on the Internet, **do not own the websites used to publish our own posts or materials.**

There are hundreds of people who have created massive followings on various sites, and **generate large income streams for both themselves and the interactive computer services - the social media companies.** Of course, those creators have a lot of skin in the game and would never want to be "edited out" of social media or the Internet. The Internet is generally considered to be "big enough for everyone," and if a customer didn't like one website, they were free to move to another, or even build their own sites to use to reach their audiences. You can even create your own server structures and control *everything*, bottom up. Well, not even everything, because you need a service provider, like telephone or cable, to actually provide access to the Internet. Everything else would be under the auspices of a single person or company (See: Facebook or Twitter).

As a matter of fact, the Internet has always been big enough for everyone... until Parler happened. But even before Parler, there was Alex Jones. Oh, boy.

References:

Greene, D. (2020). Publisher or Platform? It Doesn't Matter. See:

https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2020/12/publisher-or-platform-it-doesnt-matter?fbclid=IwAR0vXiNrudVEfcH1XqMo19Ta59P-ujjJ9H_klsbAaGrzXHC3A5BwmyY_-Pw.

Legal Information Institute. (2020). 47 U.S. Code § 230 - Protection for private blocking and screening of offensive material. See: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/47/230>.