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DH6012: Contemporary Practices in Publishing and Editing

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Reflective Portfolio

Introduction

This reflective portfolio revolves around three themes in the course “*Contemporary Practices in Publishing and Editing*”: The Role of the Editor, Publishing and Editing: Practices in Sound, and Participatory Editing.

Each of these themes also indicated that the role of the editor in the digital age has changed. The first reflection talks about in digital communication, the change in processing in the role of editors. The second reflection focuses on sound editing and publishing, analyzing how some streaming platforms changed the traditional ways of sound editing and publishing, at the same time, it also raises new issues about algorithm control and editing responsibilities. The final reflection considers the internet’s participatory editing culture, rethinking about in the digital age, openness and collaboration still have some inequity.

These three reflections made me rethink the role of editors already have some changes in this digital era. Editing is not only a work skill, but also it is a way to understand the world and connect with others.

1. The Role of the Editor

This week’s theme made me rethink the position of editing in academic communication. In the past, I thought the editor was just responsible for modifying text and typesetting, but when I read the article of O’Sullivan *et al.* (2016), I began to realize that in the digital age, the editors play more complex roles. They stated that communication is actually a process of cultivation, and in digital communication, editors and scholars should go through collaboration and open communication to cultivate academic communities, the editor does not just play the role of information screeners. Editors need to go through empathy, generosity, and collaboration to help the academic

community develop an understanding of knowledge in communication (pp.388-389). However, I also realized that it is not easy to realize this ideal in reality. Although social media and digital publishing platforms encourage people and scholars to share and open access right now, they often emphasize the traffic, speed, and exposure, it made when editors to practice the idea of “Thick collegiality” have some challenges. So, when platforms are more pursuing traffic and business profits, the real academic communication and critical thinking will be lacking.

However, in *Who Owns the Future?*, Lanier (2013) provides a warning of these ideals. The author states that when we enjoy the digital culture brings free service, actually, we just use our own knowledge, ideas, and personal data to exchange these convenient services, but the real winners are often technology companies that control platforms (pp.73-74). The Lanier’s opinion made me reflect on the editor’s situation in the contemporary publishing system. When knowledge dissemination relies more on large-scale commercial platforms, the editor’s work also seems trapped in a similar contradiction: how to keep a balance between the open and control? If the editor only works according to the commercial platform’s requirements, the ideal of open access may become a new inequality, because “decentralization” often is a representation, instead of enabling the platform and capital to regain the initiative.

In my opinion, the role of the editor has become more complex in the digital age. They are not only a person of process the text or maintain the publishing process, but also they are a bridge between the author, reader, and platform. The editor should not only promote sharing the knowledge, but also should pay more attention to the digital platform’s interests and rights issues. Between the open and control, the editor often need to make difficult judgments: Is it to pursue the maximum dissemination? Or keep to academic fairness and principles? It made me realize that in the digital age, truly challenging is not what technology is used for, but how editors can keep critical thinking in this era. For me, the editor’s value is not how to make the article more beautiful, but they can enable knowledge to be better understood and conveyed through their own judgment and communication.

2. Publishing and Editing: Practices in Sound

In recent years, the rise of TikTok, YouTube, and some music streaming platforms has enabled more and more people to easily use audio editing apps or software for mixing, splicing, and re-creation. People do not just listen to music passively, but they join in the sound recreation, which looks like everyone can become a sound editor, but this freedom of creation also brings some new issues: in the digital age, everyone can edit

sound, so who is the real originator? and who owns the copyright of the production?

As *Business Insider* (2011) shows, the decline of the music industry is not because people no longer listen to music, but because the business model has changed. Nowadays, people still listen to music, but nobody wants to pay for it. With this consumption habit change, streaming media and self-media have risen rapidly. They meet this demand in the form of "free" or "low-cost subscriptions and enable music dissemination more freely, and meanwhile, they also redistribute the music industry's profit. In the past, only the publisher and editor could decide what could be heard, but now these options are handed to the platform and algorithm. The platform through data traffic to decide who can be heard, meanwhile, it also redefines what "hot" means and what is worth listening to. However, this kind of surface openness does not bring real equality, instead platform capitalism, it enables the centralisation of more power.

This phenomenon made me rethink the sound culture's re-creativity. In the digital age, editor not just a professional technology, it may be a new lifestyle. Everyone can through the recreation of sound to express themself, but these profits and rights are still dominated by platforms and algorithms. In my opinion, the sound editor cannot just do the person of technical processing in the digital era, but also needs to connect the sound production and dissemination; meanwhile, the editor needs to think about what social effects when these sounds are disseminated. The digital age made sound creation easier, and made expression more direct, but I don't want algorithms and platforms to replace humans in deciding what can be heard. I hope that in the future, this freedom of sound editing can be kept, meanwhile, we need to have more respect for sound. The real sound editor should enable more genuine and diverse voices to be heard.

3. Participatory Editing

"Participatory Editing" is a core concept in digital culture; it changed our traditional understanding of the role of the editor. O'Reilly's (2005) idea of an "architecture of participation" emphasized that users are not just customers of content, but rather a common participant in a knowledge product. From social media to Wikipedia, the internet made information dissemination more open, and our collaboration more easy. However, openness does not mean giving everyone have the right to participate; if we clearly think about it, we may find that actually this openness is not complete fairness.

Leonard and Bond (2019) note that when they researched the gender structure of Wikipedia, they found in 2011 less than 15% of Wikipedia editors were women and that only 16.9% of biographies feature women (pp.7-8). This data indicates that like

Wikipedia this big platform also has gender prejudice. I realized open participation is not equality. Nowadays, the technical platform provides a space of collaboration for us, but society's right structure cannot immediately disappear. Even though everyone can edit, but not everyone has the same opportunity to be accepted and seen, which is decided in the platform's operation module and society's cultural cognition.

This phenomenon made me have more complex feelings about openness. Participatory editing redefines the relationship between editors and readers, making knowledge production more open and shared. But collective wisdom does not always represent fairness; usually, who can participate and who can express their own opinion are decided by the condition of resources, language, and technology, etc. For a person familiar with platform rules and language advantages, openness is an opportunity, but for those who lack these conditions, participatory editing may still another limited. We thought the internet made knowledge freer, but we forgot that the right structure, algorithm, and cultural prejudice still influence who can be seen. So, the editor's work is not just to fix the text, but rather should find a balance between different voices, and enable more outstanding people can be seen. Participatory editing's meaning is that we need to learn to listen, respect, and understand different people's voices. When people from different backgrounds, languages, and experiences can be equally recorded and seen, participatory editing can truly demonstrate its value.

Reference

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