

TOPICAL FEATURE

Effective Onscreen Editing: New Tools for an Old Profession (4th ed.)

Alba I. Cid, MSc / Quincy, MA

It's highly unfortunate, but for a large majority of people, their writing and editing software is basically a typewriter: most shortcuts, symbols, or things like automatic find and replace, for example, don't exist. This is where *Effective Onscreen Editing* stands out: it will make you aware of the software editing tools you have available at your disposal. It will teach you how to use them to the best of your abilities to make your work more accurate and efficient. There is a lot of content, so even if you know some about the workings of the software, you are bound to learn some very good tips. Mr Hart has decades of experience as an editor and was willing to share them in his book.

The text is not organized around Microsoft Word but around editing functions within a word processing program. Therefore, the book should be useful to those using other programs as well. However, Word is still the most often used program for editing, so you will see the most about it. Take a look at what is covered: A detailed table of contents is available at <http://geoff-hart.com/books/eoe/detailed-TOC.html>. Perhaps you will need a boost from your search engine to verify how to properly set a function up in an alternative software, but the practices introduced within the book are extremely effective regardless because they introduce the general principles and how to use them. The book also takes into account Mac users and points out differences in protocols if necessary. The book covers Word 2016, so anyone who orders it will also receive for free a copy of Hart's more recent book *Write Faster with Your Word Processor*, which contains updated information on changes in Word 2019. It also has a website to add updates to the content.

The portions of this book I found most valuable were those that deal with tailoring your word processing program to suit your preferences when displaying documents, strategies for maneuvering quickly through a document, how to select text quickly and accurately, track changes, how to use styles and templates, using AutoCorrect to fill in text, leveraging find and replace tools, discussion of macros, and style sheets. Additionally, Hart gives good advice on adding explanatory comments to a document to communicate with the author. Although learning how to use these tools properly can take a long time, it can lead to greater accuracy and efficiency in the long term, which is critical in medical writing and editing.

The book also provides other advice not directly related to word processing software. The author discusses import-

ant issues such as document access, contracts, and pay rates. He also provides advice on working in teams and equipment that promotes healthy ergonomics. Details on editing graphics, video, and multimedia files—mediums that are becoming increasingly common—are also discussed. The book is a very useful colossus, including its appendix of shortcuts.

As a bonus, Mr Hart cares about keeping the book updated as word processing functions change, and he provides links to the book's webpage. The book has a website that includes images and further information and can be regularly updated. You have access to these new explanations if you own the book. Previous editions of *Effective Onscreen Editing* are available to users of earlier versions of the Microsoft Word program.

Further, the book is reasonably priced and is substantially discounted for groups, students, and members of professional organizations (<http://geoff-hart.com/books/eoe/onscreen-book.htm#buy>). The book is available in print, EPUB, and PDF formats. A digital version would be recommended so that the links in the text, as well as the clickable index and table of contents, can be easily used. A compressed version of the webpages for the book, with links to all the images and procedures, can also be downloaded so that you can work offline if you're travelling.

The book has made an impact and is now on its fourth edition. The European Medical Writers Association gave the prior edition a very good review, with the review author saying, "This might just be the most useful book I have ever reviewed. Anyone who does any kind of editing work or who wishes to use Word more efficiently should strongly consider buying it." It's true that it takes a lot of time and effort to read the book and apply its precepts, but there are many good ideas worth incorporating into your work. It's easy to open the book to learn how to deal with a particular issue and save time with a solution. The savings in time and the increase in accuracy should be considerable, so I highly recommend the book as well.

Author declaration and disclosures: *The author notes no commercial associations that may pose a conflict of interest in relation to this article.*

Author contact: *alba_cid@verizon.net*

