

# Editing Pedagogy and Digital Production

Tim Lockridge

*Miami University*

**Abstract** This Program Showcase article describes two digitally focused editing courses developed for Miami University’s Professional Writing major. These courses foreground digital textual production, helping students see how digital tools, standards, and production processes sit within contemporary editorial work. In doing so, they emphasize how editing exists within interpersonal dynamics that are mediated by technology, asking students to consider the implications of those mediated relationships.

**Keywords** editing, publishing, EPUB, workflows, client-based projects, project-based learning

This Program Showcase article introduces two courses I developed for the Editing in Professional Contexts track in the Professional Writing major at Miami University. The two courses—*Print and Digital Editing* and *Developing and Publishing Digital Books*—place digital production at the center of the editing curriculum. And in this article, I want to argue that digital textual production is a useful foundation for traditional editing courses. Before I get into the hows and whys, let me clarify what I mean. When I discuss a pedagogy based on *digital textual production*, I am describing the following:

- **Digital:** Classes that yield a tangible and, ideally, market-ready digital artifact. These artifacts may also support print output, but the production process is focused on producing texts for digital reading devices.
- **Textual:** A focus on artifacts that are standards-based (EPUBs and PDFs, especially) and that work on a variety of reading devices. Although these standards may support a variety of modes and media, they are built for digital reading devices.
- **Production:** Each student in the class experiences how a project moves through the whole of the production process: from a folder of files to a single, market-ready object. This work requires collaboration, project management, editorial skills, digital literacies, and version control strategies.

Although this approach is not incompatible with traditional copyediting and technical editing curriculum, the end point is different. In both classes, the students experience how a digital object comes into being and how it moves through interpersonal relationships and technological affordances. It is, in some ways, inspired by the growing ranks of self-

publishing authors who begin their work in a traditional Microsoft Word or Google Document; collaborate with early readers, developmental editors, and copyeditors; and move their text into an application or platform (like Vellum or Kindle Direct) that outputs market-ready EPUB and PDF files. This publishing method provides a model for the classroom; specifically, it presents a way for students to see the breadth of an editorial process without the need for deep experience in graphic design or an expensive suite of specialized tools. It also, I hope, acknowledges the ways that editorial labor is changing: the increasingly outsourced work of copyediting, the role of tools like Grammarly and large language models for the self-publishing author, and a focus on delegation, collaboration, and project management that spans across many types of work—editorial and more.

This approach also offers a model for building connections—as Joanna Schreiber (2024) urges us to do—between editing and other knowledge domains, such as project management, accessibility, and user experience research (p. 452). The course design emphasizes how editing exists within interpersonal dynamics mediated by technology, asking students to consider the implications of those mediated relationships.

In this article I narrate my experience building these courses for the editing track of the professional writing major, demonstrating what a focus on digital textual production might look like in the editing classroom. I will first provide an overview of the editing track in the professional writing major at Miami University. I will then describe the two courses and their assignments. Following that description, I will reflect on the outcomes, resources, and technologies that underpin a digital textual production pedagogy.

## **Editing at Miami**

Miami University’s professional writing (PW) major grew from a previous BA in scientific and technical communication (STC). As student enrollment in the STC program declined in the late 2000s, faculty developed a new PW major to reflect the curricular breadth of rhetoric and writing. (For a full discussion of this process, see Heidi McKee’s [2016] “Researching a new professional writing major: Miami University.”) The PW major today has four tracks: Digital and Technical Communication, Intercultural Rhetoric and Writing, Public Writing and Rhetoric, and Editing in Professional Contexts. The editing track consists of one required course (*Print and Digital Editing*) and a broad pick list of related courses offered by PW faculty (such as *Style: Strategies for Editing* and *Information and Data Visualization*), creative writing faculty (*The Literary Marketplace* and *Creative Nonfiction*), and other programs (*Editing and Design*, taught by journalism faculty, and *Structure of Modern English*, taught by linguistics and literature faculty). The editing

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courses are also cross-listed with other programs, which means that a typical classroom population includes a breadth of majors: PW, creative writing, emerging technology, strategic communication, and more.

When I joined the Miami faculty in 2014, I took over as the primary instructor of *Print and Digital Editing*—the core editing course. The previous instructor had recently retired, and I did not have access to the existing syllabus. I reviewed the literature, talked with colleagues, sent emails to folks in industry, and drew on those materials to develop a new course.

The eventual course design was also informed by my own editing experience: working as a freelance writer and copyeditor after finishing my undergraduate degree, volunteering as an academic editor during graduate school, and later serving as Senior Editor of Computers and Composition Digital Press, a position I continue to hold. Across all of these roles, I have found that communication and collaboration are the keys to editorial labor: “working with the writer, for the reader,” in the words of Carol Fisher Saller (p. vii, 2016), and I have centered that concept in the course design. But I also wanted to foreground digital production and extend beyond the typical publishing focus on Microsoft Word. In doing so, I have tried to develop assignments that create a sense of “editing velocity” (O’Keefe, p. 27, 2024), using digital writing tools and collaborative practices to push against a simple author/editor structure.

This ultimately means that the courses described below extend across a breadth of knowledge domains. Although the classes I describe in this article do not fit neatly under the technical editing umbrella (as the classes also contribute to a creative writing major and draw students who are interested in a breadth of editorial work), I am aware of the pedagogical challenges in many technical editing courses: a narrow focus on grammar or proofreading (Lang & Palmer, 2017), minimal coverage of visual design or comprehensive editing (Melonçon, 2019), or a focus on separate “writer” and “editor” roles that are increasingly blurred in the contemporary workplace (Albers & Flanagan, 2019). This is perhaps complicated by the lack of a common definition or understanding of “editing” as a curricular area (Baker, Rawlins, & Pierson, 2024), or what Jocelyn Hargrave sees as a question of *being*: “the need for more distinct nomenclature to define editors and editorial practice” (2022, p. 3).

With these challenges in mind, the two courses described in the following sections foreground digital textual production. Although they contain elements of the procedural subject matter traditionally found in professional and technical editing textbooks (including style, syntax, and developmental editing), they use a publication- and project-

based approach that grounds editing in relationships, user experience, and writing technologies.

## **Print and Digital Editing**

*Print and Digital Editing* (ENG 412) is the core required course for the editing track of the PW major. The course is grounded in the idea that students should experience the process of *editing* (as an editor) and the process of being *edited* (as a writer)—two experiences that are increasingly blurred in contemporary digital textual production. To do so, the course centers on several skills and principles:

**Collaboration:** The work of editing is the work of relationships. The class foregrounds that labor, teaching students how to work alongside the text, the author, and the other people in the production process. I have found that this experience is most impactful when students are faced with authentic editorial situations in which they have a stake (rather than simulations or case studies, which are fine, but do not carry the same affective weight).

**Resources:** The course introduces students to dictionaries, style guides, usage manuals, accessibility standards, and project management guidelines, helping them see how their work is situated within broader and longer histories of language and communication. In doing so, I try to show how those resources are living documents, demonstrating how they change over time, and why.

**Project Management:** As Carolyn Rude and Angela Eaton (2011) have noted, “Editors must be good managers because most projects require work over extended periods of time, because many people think document development and production take far less time than they do, and because editors are often expected to make up for delays by others” (p. 257). All publication outcomes are projects, and collaborative classroom projects need a foundation in the procedures for work: delegating tasks, assigning roles, managing progress, and ensuring accountability.

**Tools:** Writing is a tool-mediated activity, and editorial work moves through tools depending on genre and industry: commonly Microsoft Word, Adobe InDesign, or LaTeX. Students should gain familiarity with relevant tools, but learning new tools requires access, support, and agency. Rather than prescribing specific tools, the course outlines the typical use cases and pros and cons of several tools and then asks students to select their preferred tool for a given task—outlining why they have made that choice and how it meets their work preferences and goals.

**Mechanics:** An editing curriculum needs to address both the procedural basics of editorial work (from style sheets to queries to style guides to terminology) and the functional technological literacies of doing the work. The projects discussed below are grounded in those mechanics, but they work to situate the mechanics in the larger array of course principles.

To put these skills and principles into action, the course begins with a minor copyediting project (The Scholarly Edit) that leads into a major editing project (The eBook), which foregrounds digital textual production. I discuss these projects in the sections below.

## **The Scholarly Edit**

The Scholarly Edit begins after the course's introductory weeks, in which students are introduced to procedural basics: editorial roles and workflows, copyediting basics, and reference guides. I divide the students into groups of three or four, and I give each student a manuscript of an academic text that has not yet been copyedited. (I draw these manuscripts from friends, colleagues, and graduate students.) I want the students to see an in-progress manuscript draft for a complex text, and I want them to work with a text for which they are not a subject matter expert. The students are given a time constraint via deadline, introduced to project management procedures and tools, and asked (as a group) to complete a light edit of the text. Although the manuscripts mostly consist of alphabetic text, they can contain additional media types, and I ask students to work with that media as well.

The project's collaborative, mediated structure is the core of the endeavor, and it is also the entry point for digital textual production. The students must keep a single shared stylesheet, and they must use a project management tool and process to plan and track their work. In class meetings, they must resolve questions or disputes, ensuring that the style sheet and project management tool reflect some kind of consensus on the project's status, the work done, and the decisions made. At the project's conclusion, the group must submit a single stylesheet, a digital document with changes tracked, and a cover letter with queries. Aside from the format of those documents, I do not prescribe the software the students must use to do the work. Some students will choose a technology that allows them to conduct real-time collaborative edits; others will choose to break the manuscript into smaller pieces and circulate them asynchronously. All groups must conduct multiple passes as part of their edits, and all group members must see and agree upon the edits as they happen. But they have agency in the tools and specifics of how they

do that work, and the lessons learned from those choices becomes a meaningful outcome of the assignment.

At its core, The Scholarly Edit is a fairly typical copyediting project. But it serves several goals: It helps students learn the movements of collaborative editing, it teaches them how to manage an edit that spans several steps and cross-checks, it introduces them to the work of editing difficult texts for which they are not a subject matter expert, and it gives them a chance to develop tool preferences. Most importantly, it provides a limited practice run for the much longer eBook project that follows.

## **The eBook Project**

During our first class meeting, I tell the students that we will collectively write and produce an edited collection. To do this, each student will write a chapter based on a theme that I have selected for the semester. The subject matter, form, and genre are up to the student. My requirements are simply a minimum word count and the inclusion of at least one image. Because of the number of Professional Writing majors in the course, most students will write nonfiction pieces: journalism or memoir or creative nonfiction. But the project is most interesting when the student work is varied in its form and content. Final chapter drafts are due when the class is past The Scholarly Edit, giving us the remainder of the semester devoted entirely to the book project. I divide the class into groups (of four, ideally), and I give each group the full set of chapters written by the class. There are typically 23 students, and the chapters have a minimum word count of 1,000 words, so each group receives the same set of 23 chapters (approximately 23,000 words total). The group must turn this set of files into a cohesive project by doing the following:

- selecting a title and theme;
- editing, grouping, and arranging the chapters based on that theme;
- ensuring that the edited texts are consistent in tone and mechanics; and
- writing additional text—an introduction, section dividers, a conclusion—to weave together the chapters and connect them to the theme.

Each group must also manage a number of other editorial concerns: verifying image permissions, collecting author byline information, typesetting and arranging the pages, and so on. To facilitate this, I require the group to adopt a project management system (building on their experience in the Scholarly Edit assignment) that allows each group member and me to see the progress of all assigned tasks and that shows each chapter moving through an editing sequence. Each class meeting then begins with a kind of stand-up meeting, in which the group shares what has been done, what needs to be done, and what issues need further discussion.

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For example, a typical timeline for the early stages of this project might look like this:

- **Week 1: Initial reading of chapters and discussion of genres and patterns** Students begin the initial selection of an overarching concept for the book, including possible sections and titles.
- **Week 2: Copyediting first passes** Each group member does an initial copyediting pass on six chapters.
- **Week 3: Copyediting pass two** Group members review the edits made by another group member.
- **Week 4: Copyediting pass three** Edits with tracked changes are returned to the chapter author for review and to accept or reject.

It is here that I want to note the beautiful complexity at work in this project. During the first few weeks, the tasks might feel to each writer quite similar to the copyediting work in *The Scholarly Edit*. By Week 4, however, each student occupies two different roles: 1) a writer, and 2) a member of an editing group corresponding with other writers. If there are five groups in the class, then each student is editing the work of other students but also receiving copyedits from four other groups. It is a flurry of activity and a lot to manage, and the process inevitably involves writers who blow their deadlines or are not responding or are not amenable to the edits. (All very real editorial concerns.) When I designed this project, I was worried that students would dismiss the edits as “schoolwork,” or a task to complete as quickly and efficiently as possible, and that they would thus accept all edits without question or challenge. That has not been the case. I am not sure if it is because they know this project will have an audience beyond the classroom, or because they know there will be a byline on the work, but each semester I have had students challenging edits (or asking me how best to appeal or reject possible edits to their work). These are the moments where the class comes alive: where the students are seeing the textual and interpersonal relationships at work in a complex editing process.

While the students wait for changes to be accepted or rejected, they begin writing introductions or other framing text, and they start to work on the visual layout of the book. The course does not have visual design instruction, but many of the students have taken at least one design-focused course. In the mid-to-late 2010s, many students compiled the whole project in Google Documents and encountered the design constraints of that platform. Today, most students produce the final artifact in Figma or Canva, and while neither platform is built for documents with thousands of words, the students find ways to make them work.

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As the tracked documents come back with approved changes, the students begin adding them to the group's shared document and framing them with their editorial text. When combined with a cover image, an introduction, section dividers and text, and so on, the project moves from a folder of text to a coherent whole. This is also the moment when the endeavor moves from an "assignment" to a "book" in the eyes of the students—a point when the individual, delegated tasks of a digital textual production activity become a shared goal.

As the instructor, I see my role as teaching an editorial process, helping with tricky decisions, and adjudicating conflicts. Using the group's chosen project management tool as a guide, I participate in check-ins and make sure that each group has a plan, has delegated labor, and understands where they are in the process. I also help to mediate the occasional conflict or offer advice about style or usage, but I try to give the students as much ownership of the project as possible. The assignment asks them to look at a folder of documents and imagine them as some kind of cohesive whole, and my role is to help them through that movement—understanding what is possible and helping them find a path through which to achieve it.

I tell the students they are the editors of their project, and all editorial decisions are theirs. I work as the publisher, and although I reserve a publisher's veto, I generally stay out of editorial decisions. Their work is theirs, and this project cannot function without that kind of agency. I do not want to shape the pieces, and I prefer that groups get messier drafts, which will offer more meaningful comprehensive editing lessons. To that end, I do not provide feedback on the chapter drafts, and I do not weigh in on stylistic decisions. This is a stance that has evolved over time. During the first semester I taught the course, the students were producing a book of reviews about writing software. One group decided to title their book *The Beast: A Handy Field Guide for the Adventurous Writer*. I discouraged this, telling them that people find texts through titles, keywords, and metadata, and a reader looking for a book about writing software would not be able to find "The Beast." The students resisted and pushed further from my advice: They asked a friend, an art student, to make watercolor animal illustrations for their book, depicting each application as a kind of beast and furthering their vision of a field guide. Their book became the envy of the class, and I learned that the best student work happens when I get out of the way. In the time since, I have seen things go in the other direction. For example, one year a group contemplated turning the project into a collection of blackout poetry. I listened to their debates—some group members loving the creative vision, other group members cautioning that most writers would not appreciate how their essays would be transformed into blackout poems—but stayed out of the conversation. The group abandoned the plan

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(but ultimately made a different creative project), and I think their editorial labor was better because of the shared understanding they found, an understanding that was free of my preferences or meddling.

Many of our class meetings in the last half of the semester are work sessions: students updating each other, or suggesting revisions, or discussing creative commons licenses, or talking to a writer about how their piece is sequenced in a larger whole, or running out to get the one photo that will pull the project together.

The project has a contest mechanism that is completely detached from my grade-based evaluation. After the semester ends, I ask an alum (ideally someone who is working in a publishing-related role) to read the student projects and select the best one. This does two things. First, it ensures the students have a public audience of at least one person. This moves the project from a classroom assignment modeling the real world to an editorial process with at least one non-classroom reader. Second, the contest provides the students with an evaluation that is not attached to my perception of group work. As the instructor, I have seen the process pieces, the group struggles, and the path that each book took on its way from early concept to finished product. I am biased by all of these things. But when a reader encounters a text, they do not have that context. They generally encounter the final artifact without process knowledge. The contest ensures that each project will have at least one such reader, someone who will encounter and evaluate the text in its final form. Writers need readers, and editors work within that relationship. I want the students to take on a large and challenging project, and I want them to have the space to fail safely. (If needed, they can opt out of the contest, but few rarely do.) But I also want the students to see how their work will be received by a reader who does not know them. Because it helps to have an empathetic or interested reader, I select an alum of the class—someone who years ago completed the same project. I also like how the alum connection creates a link across years of the class. The digital textual production frame should allow students to see the breadth of an editorial workflow, and a non-classroom or non-university reader becomes a useful endpoint for the project.

When I first designed the course, I planned to publish the winning book on the Apple Books Store, and I did that for a few years. (I would prefer to publish the books on Amazon, but, to date, Amazon will not let me publish a book without a price, and I am not going to generate revenue on student work.) Over time, however, the store policies and fine print grew more worrisome, so I built a website, [412books.net](http://412books.net), and have shared the books there since. The judge-selected winner gets a highlighted place on the website, and the other texts are

presented below it. The site holds many student-produced projects, documenting the work of hundreds of students.

## **Developing and Publishing Digital Books**

Where *Print and Digital Editing* centers on copyediting as part of a breadth of editorial work, *Developing and Publishing Digital Books* (ENG 426) pushes deeper into production. I developed the course in 2015, when I felt that shifts in the web design industry made the traditional Writing for the Web course a difficult proposition for English majors. As we gained more student interest in the editing track of our PW major, I began to imagine what a digital production-forward editing course might include. I also had a number of students who were reading digital books (ranging from digital library books to Kindle to WattPad) and who were interested in both digital publishing and the larger book industry. I then built the new course, which focuses on the EPUB standard: a reflowable book filetype that undergirds the digital books on the Kindle store, Apple's Books app, and most digital library systems. EPUBs are basically a bundle of HTML files, and they lack the layout and dependency complexity that makes modern web development a difficult thing to bring into a writing or editing course. By focusing on the EPUB standard and filetype, I could introduce students to many of the core principles of digital production and text workflows.

The course builds on the project-centric nature of *Print and Digital Editing*, asking students to complete two major projects: 1) a conversion of a Project Gutenberg text file to a market-ready EPUB, and 2) a similar second print-to-EPUB conversion for a client.

### **Course Structure and Assignments**

The course begins with a simple overview of HTML, enough to teach the students the basics and help them understand that digital text is stored and rendered. Most of this instruction happens outside of our class meeting time: students complete online tutorials and submit check-in assignments in which they build a simple document (a table of contents; a restaurant menu) with the skills they have learned. Our class meetings are used for discussion and activities that are supported by simple project-based in-class tasks. I also introduce them to version control technologies and practices, and we move through the first month of the course developing these skills. HTML instruction isn't necessary for this pedagogical approach; one could accomplish the same course outcomes with InDesign or other similar WYSIWYG tools. But the HTML approach aligns with my standards-based goals for digital textual production. This also differs from the HTML instruction that happens in other web-focused courses. EPUBs are small websites, but they lack most of the web's presentational and interactive features. That simplicity

gives me the flexibility to present HTML as one of several technological standards that underpin digital distribution. Through this approach, I am able to foreground digital textual production without dwelling too long on specific skills or prerequisites.

After an opening survey of HTML, metadata, version control practices, and the digital publishing landscape, the students move into the Gutenberg production project.

## **The Gutenberg Production Project**

Project Gutenberg is a digital repository of public domain books. I give each group a text file from Project Gutenberg (ideally one that has been recently scanned and is still in the process of being copyedited) and a PDF of the original print book. I try to find books with challenging components—such as recipes or screenplays or a clever use of footnotes—and I ask the students to look at the print scans and imagine how this book should work in a digital format. Do the print document and its layout accomplish something specific that needs to be recreated digitally? Or could the same goals and affordances be met—and be more accessible—in a modified digital format?

To answer these questions, the students have to look at the text through several lenses: accessibility, affordances, genre, reading technologies, and more. The example of a cookbook is useful. In the past, some students have wanted to dutifully recreate the original print page and its layout. But I first ask them if that is even possible. The EPUB will scale and zoom based on the user's font and text size choices, so how can we best present the information with knowledge of the scaled affordance? Can we mark up the text in a way that will allow the user to print the recipe or export it to their notes or recipe app? These are the spaces where the project pushes into questions of editing and audiences, asking the students to think through the text, its uses, and the technological possibilities and constraints of a user's chosen reading device. Ultimately, the work is not that of "digitizing" a print page; instead, it is an assessment of the affordances, media, and possibilities of reading technologies.

As they begin production work, the students agree on a project management system, individual roles, and a timeline for the project. The students typically work in groups of four or five, and I encourage them to take on roles and delegate work based on their perceived strengths. The digital conversion requires significant proofreading labor: The students have to compare their final artifact to the original source material, ensuring that any changes between the two are intentional, in service of the reader, and not the product of oversight or errors. Some students will choose to specialize in this proofreading work; some will dip in and out of the proofreading tasks, favoring other parts of the production process.

The students will also take on other digitizing tasks, like cleaning up images (and in many cases, making backgrounds transparent so that they render well in the EPUB format) and choosing default typefaces and visual formatting. We devote class time to accessibility and user testing, and the students use their book-in-progress with a screen reader, ensuring the text is usable. At the project's completion, the group submits the final book, a cover letter documenting their process, and the results of user and accessibility testing—noting any compatibility problems with reading devices.

## **The Client Project**

After completing the Gutenberg Project, the students repeat the process for a client. In the first years of the course, the students worked for Miami University Press, digitizing print novellas into market-ready EPUBs. More recently, the students have worked with a campus literary magazine, converting print-focused PDFs into reflowable EPUBS. In both cases, the students are given a print artifact and, if available, its source files. The work has been slightly different in both of these client collaborations. When working for Miami University Press, the students converted novellas: long-form publications comprised mostly of alphabetic text. When working with the student publication, they had to work with a variety of genres and artifacts—fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, art and illustrations—while serving the creative vision of the writers and the editorial board. Because the format shift necessitated creative changes, the students worked with the client throughout the adaptations.

In both cases, the project requires the students to move through several stages of work: assessing the original print artifact, choosing a conversion strategy, moving the text into the EPUB format, marking up and proofreading the converted text, and conducting usability and accessibility tests on the new artifact. As the project moves forward, the students iterate on their newly created digital object, creating numbered versions (e.g., 0.1, 0.2), sharing and testing them, collecting and acting on testing data, and ultimately delivering a final artifact to the client.

The projects get at the collaborative complexity that I want a digital textual production course to demonstrate. The students are working with long and complex texts, new technologies, and the challenges of reading technologies. There are facets of proofreading and traditional editing here, but the work also veers more into usability and user experience, imagining how a breadth of users take up the text, and studying what those readers need to read and use the final book.

## **Outcomes and Connections to the Major**

These two courses sit within an editing track in a Professional Writing major. But they also work without those larger structures. They draw students from other programs, and many students add them as electives. *Print and Digital Editing* (412) has consistent demand, and we offer it at least once a year. *Developing and Publishing Digital Books* (426) is currently on a two-year cycle. The courses do not have pre- or co-requisite status, although most students take them in sequence (412 first, then 426). I suspect that the large publishing project in 412 generates interest in the production- and client-project focus of 426.

The Professional Writing major has nine learning outcomes that we assess in groups of three on a three-year cycle, and these two courses directly connect to five of those outcomes:

**Digital and Multimodal Design:** Students will apply principles of visual rhetoric and design to analyze, evaluate, and create multimodal texts (e.g., data visualizations, conceptual maps, charts and graphs, infographics, social media content, websites, videos, brochures), applying coding, accessibility, and usability standards for digital and multimodal production.

**Writing Networks:** Students will recognize and analyze the social relationships among human and non-human actors in communication networks and produce writing and content strategy for network circulation.

**Project Management and Collaboration:** Students will identify and apply collaborative and project management strategies for researching, evaluating, and addressing a client's communicative needs and user needs.

**Usability/User-Experience:** Students will analyze, evaluate, and apply approaches for researching users' behaviors, expectations, and experiences to design usable, useful, and accessible communications.

**Professionalization:** Students will investigate career opportunities for professional writers and develop the ability to articulate the unique knowledges and skills they can bring to organizations.

Some of the outcome connections are clear, as my conception of a digital textual production pedagogy has direct links to multimodal design and project management. Other outcomes require more foregrounding in class conversations and activities. For example, many self-publishing authors have a strong understanding of how content,

metadata, digital storefronts, and intellectual property are intertwined (Laquintano, 2016). I try to foreground these connections to the Writing Networks outcome, helping students see how human and non-human actors alike shape the production and circulation of texts. Likewise, when students are producing digital books, we draw on usability and user-experience practices throughout the whole of the process, asking questions about the structure, usability, and delivery of digital documents.

I also use these courses to help students imagine the possibilities of editing and digital production in professional contexts. Many students enter my editing courses with a goal of working in Big Five publishing. Some will. Most will not. I try to usefully reframe the professional potential of digital editing and publishing skills, helping students imagine how their knowledge of version control, project management, metadata structures, document design, and collaboration can extend across many careers and disciplines.

## **Resources and Technologies**

Miami University is a research university with a large English department, but these courses can work within many institution types. *Print and Digital Editing* works as a standalone course, and it can fit alongside technical writing, communication, or general English studies coursework. Likewise, my recent sections of *Developing and Publishing Digital Books* have worked with campus partners and publications for the client project, but the course could easily extend into community collaborations—producing accessible digital documents for local partners, governments, or other organizations.

The two courses described here require relatively little in terms of hardware and software resources. Students produce the *Print and Digital Editing* projects in Google Docs or Microsoft Word, and many have used simple files (a spreadsheet or shared document) or free tools (Basecamp, Notion, or Trello) to manage their projects. I use free Github repositories and Markdown files for the eBook conversion projects, but instructors could accomplish the same thing with free, open-source applications like Calibre and Sigil or the more expensive Adobe InDesign. My students test their projects on reading hardware that I have acquired over time (Kindles, Kobos, and tablets) or that they checkout from the campus library. But they could do the same with the free software emulators built into Amazon's Kindle Previewer or the open source epubcheck tool.

There are multiple pathways for instructors to experiment with and learn more about this work. At the simplest level, an interested instructor could convert a Microsoft Word-based manuscript into an epub file using a WYSIWYG tool like InDesign or Calibre. For technical writing instructors familiar with formats like LaTeX or DITA, tools like Oxygen, Overleaf, and

Pandoc can export to EPUB. And for those who want to see a model EPUB conversion workflow, the Standard EBooks Project (Standard EBooks, n.d.) offers a comprehensive step-by-step guide, style manual, and open-source toolset.

Although specific software choices are not core to the course, the digital standards it takes up certainly are. The course includes much discussion of the EPUB standard, and our conversations focus deeply on questions of how technologies work and how they are shaped by market forces. The EPUB standard—managed by the World Wide Web Consortium (2025)—defines the technical specifics of the format, from supported media types to required metadata to declaring the writing mode (right to left or left to right). In many ways, our classroom conversations about the EPUB standard mirror our conversations about style guides. Just as style guides are living documents that evolve over time and reflect shifting norms and best practices, so do technical standards. This focus on standards also supports Karl Stolley’s (2016) insistence that “expression should not be trapped by production technologies,” meaning that “digital works should long outlast the software that played a role in their creation” (Manifesto tenet #2). By focusing on standards rather than software, I hope to help the students see how texts move through technologies across time. Just as the content of a print book is not constrained by its first printing or edition, so too will digital text move through various containers and technologies across a writer’s and reader’s lifetime.

Ultimately, a focus on digital textual production should not favor any one technology, or one file format or standard over another. Instead, it should help students see an array of tools, processes, and artifacts, and it should help them understand which tools serve which outcomes and why.

## **Reflections**

When Carol Fisher Saller (2016) asks us to work for the reader through the writer, she is doing so in the context of copyediting. But her guidance holds true for the whole of editing, from acquisition through preservation. The two courses described here work to trace the trajectories of texts through the technologies, publications, and ecologies that mediate them, echoing Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe’s (2004) insistence that editing extends into “the changing landscape of our culture, the cultures of other peoples, and the students and technologies who cohabit those changing places” (p. 23).

Curriculum always reflects local resources and opportunities. These courses are part of a PW major with a significant digital focus and a cohort of faculty with digital expertise. They also reflect my own background in born-digital composing and publication. But they do not

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require it. An editing class that foregrounds digital textual production can be built with any arrangement of tools and technologies. And by foregrounding digital textual production, we can better help students see and imagine the changing ways in which writers meet readers today: through digital libraries and subscription services like Kindle Unlimited, through reader-funded platforms like Patreon and Kickstarter and Substack, and through self-publishing sites like Wattpad and Gumroad. Although pathways to more traditional editing careers continue to exist, a digitally centered editing curriculum can help students imagine a more capacious ecosystem of readers, writers, and texts.

Of course, “make this course like I made it” is not a viable outcome, especially when we are talking about digital pedagogy. I do not share this program showcase with the expectation that others will simply recreate these courses or assignments. Instead, I hope this overview offers a useful way of reimagining the changing shape of editorial labor—and how those changes might usefully reconfigure pedagogy.

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## **Author Information**

Tim Lockridge is Associate Professor of English at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He is the co-author of *Writing Workflows: Beyond Word Processing* and a senior editor of *Computers and Composition Digital Press*.