

Editing Pictures and other Illustrative Materials in the Art of Book Publishing

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Abstract

The art of book publishing begins with a manuscript – getting it and shaping it towards publication. In a bid to publicize and spread among people the words, pictures and other forms of illustrative materials the imaginative and mind (authors, photographers, illustrators, etc.) have produced, editors and publishers as it were, open and close the ‘gate’ that stands between the information source (authors, photographers, illustrators, etc) and the receiver (reader). Both words and pictures are ‘set in order’ before publication. Pictures and other illustrative materials must bear captions, stating what the pictures cannot say for themselves. This paper stresses the fact that editing as gate keeping process is not restricted to accepting and rejecting of manuscripts for publication. It is the process of building a nexus between text and image (pictures and other forms of illustrative materials) during its transformation from the authors manuscript to the printer’s plate.

Introduction

Grannis (1967) cited in Okwilagwe (2001) defines publishing as To make public – to send forth among the people – the words and pictures that creative minds have produced, that editors have worked over, and the printers have reproduced. Publishing is the co-ordination of the multitudes of activities needed to produce books. It is the process of coordinating the various processes needed to bring a book from the idea in the mind of the author to the printed product available for distribution to the relevant audience (Altbach, 1992).

Book Publishing has also been described by Woll (1999) as the mission to disseminate ideas and promote literacy. It means to publicize and spread among people the words and pictures the imaginative minds have produced, that editors have edited and printers have reproduced. Publishing activities therefore consist of planning, selecting, editing, designing, producing, marketing (promotion and sales) and distribution

of printed materials such as books. Publishing in the general sense involves the manufacturing of all paper-based media through which information is disseminated, (Okwilagwe 2001).

From these definitions, publishing is a process, a transformer and distributor or disseminator of ideas. These definitions also identify different processions in book publishing: creative mind (authors and artists), editors (manuscript analysts, critics, gate-keepers, indexers, judges of other people's judgment, etc) printers (manufacturers and industrialist, who use machinery and raw materials such as paper and ink, to produce the miraculous physical object we call a book) and marketers (researches the readers market, and determines the market need, book sellers/distributors).

The book, the major output of publishing is a primary means of communicating knowledge which is central to the provision of information, entertainment, analysis, and education, to the people. Books remain the most efficient and dominant means of appealing to the individual's intellect to bring about transformation (Ihebuzor, 2006), and are also the major instrument for entrenching national interaction, cooperation and understanding, (Ubahakwe, 1984).

Theoretical Framework

To provide a strong logical basis for this paper within the context of book publishing as mass communication, the following two theories are considered: Social Responsibility Media Theory; and Gate Keeping Theory.

On the authority of Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso (2008), the Social Responsibility Media theory was propounded by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramms in 1963. When applied to communication research in book publishing, Social Responsibility Media theory explains that books carry with them an important part of society's development. We learn from them, we are entertained by them, and we possess them. Illustrated and reading books have helped to lay foundation for an educational progress of an enlightened and free society. This is an important media (book

publishing) social responsibilities are good partner in the society. Book publishing is first and foremost service to humanity. The publisher, the illustrator, and the photographer are affording humanity the opportunity to read an author's expression of thoughts and ideas.

The second theory is the Gate-keeping theory. This gate-keeping media theory was propounded by Kurt Lewin in 1947, (Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso, 2008). The point here is that no book publisher can publish all manuscripts received, hook line, and sinker. Editors, designers and illustrators as it were, open and close the "gate" that stands between the information source (the author) and the receiver (reader). Gate keeping in publishing is not restricted to accepting of manuscripts for publication. It also involves editing of illustrative materials for clarity of expression. Editorial here describes the cutting, revising and reshaping that take place before publication. This relates to gate-keeping which Esimokha (2008) describes as the process of filtering messages from source to receiver. To reach its intended readers, every published message has to pass through many gates (authors/manuscript, editorial, design/typesetting/graphics, pre-press/print-production/finishing, promotion/marketing/sales, and readers). Some of these gates will be wide open, some ajar, and some closed.

Editing: An Overview

The word 'edit' literally, means "give out" or "set in order" or "reconstruct" for publication. The derived word 'editorial' describes the cutting, revising and reshaping that takes place before publication. In other words, editing in this work means preparation of another person's photographs or other illustrative materials for publication, and would consequently entail dealing with picture definition, clarity of artistic expression, composition, visual impact, technical proficiency and colour, decency (ensuring that nothing obscene is allowed), help to set in order to convince the reader of the truth of the claims in the text.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1995) gives the meaning of Editing as: Assemble, prepare, modify or condense (written material, especially the work of another or others for publication). The

Collins English Dictionary (2009) gives the meaning as: To prepare (text) for publication, by checking and improving its accuracy or clarity. From these, the emphasis is only on the text. Editing according to Wikipedia (2012) is the process of selecting and preparing written visual, audible and film media used to convey information through the process of correction, condensation, organization and other modifications performed with the intention of producing a correct, consistent, accurate and complete work. Complete with both pictures and text in place. These can come in forms of contents editing; copy editing; and proof-reading.

Editors look over author's manuscript to be sure that it is well written, that the pictures and other illustrations are telling the story better, so that readers can understand it, that the illustrative materials are in good taste, that it leaves no questions unanswered and it is not libelous. Like the manuscript/typescript, photographs and other illustrative materials also require the same careful editing and other preparations that are often taken for granted. Anaeto, Solo-Anaeto, and Tejumaiye, (2009:130) opine:

Pictures, like written copies are also edited. Photographs are edited to tell only what they are supposed to tell, reconstructed to give emphasis where it is needed, and reduced or enlarged to fit space.

Photo Editing

A good and professional editor has the important responsibility of searching for photographs or identifying photographers, illustrators and/or cartographers (map makers) to provide illustrative materials for their titles.

In this regard, the editor, according to Onyema (2005) has to:

- i) Participate in reaching an agreement with the suppliers on their freelance fees and as well delivery schedule;
- ii) Ensure that proper permission is obtained from the owner or holders of authority over the objects before they photographed and used; and

- iii) Liaise with illustration materials suppliers to ensure that the job is completed promptly and to specification.

According to Ihebuzor (2006), the editor also checks that tables, charts, graphs, and illustrations agree with the text, helps to plan or select illustrations and use them for effective communication; makes sure that illustrations are suitable for reproduction; and helps to plan the visuals of the publication.

The meaning of this is that the editor who is the guardian of the book's content, in collaboration with publication's designers (visual planners) and artists and sometimes with the author, generates a list of photographs and illustrations required. All visual art concerns itself with the production of images, which are pictures and other illustrative materials. When these images are used for conveying specific information in book publishing, the art form is generally called illustration (Dalley, 1988).

The photo editing process often begins with the author's idea (or the idea is suggested to him/her as a competent author), the illustration brief, continuing as a collaboration between the author, the editor and the graphic artist/illustrator as the work is created. As such, editing is a practice that includes creative skills, team work, and human relations. A constructive and co-operative relationship between authors and their editors is vital to successful publishing.

During the preparation of briefs for designers and illustrators for the book project as well as copy-editing, the editor is in the position to visualize how the book should be in terms of format, cover, and the illustrations it may have. According to Onyema (2005), the editor's task to prepare the following essential brief (written description) to guide graphic designers and illustrators include:

- i) Design brief - format specification, including chapter headings, running heads, type/image area, bleeds and margins;
- ii) Cover brief and cover copy (text) - creative cover with a text image relationship;

- iii) Illustration brief - indicate very clearly the type of illustration, viz colour, line, wash, etc; and
- iv) Map/diagram sketches (e.g. Geography, Biology, Mathematics texts) usually supplied by the author.

Drawn illustrations are sometimes prepared from copies of those previously published, if suitably amended, or from authors original line work, roughs sketches or ideas. They are edited for sense and consistency before being passed to the designer or illustrator who is adequately briefed. Correction cycles on weak point of the illustration follow. The desired position of the illustrations is indicated in the text (Clark, 1991).

The author may also need to resolve queries on pictures and illustrations if the author cannot supply illustrations, editors sometimes have to undertake picture research or brief a researcher if the publisher is responsible for obtaining copyright holders. Each illustration or table is labeled and compared against the accompanying text and caption for agreement. All pictures should bear captions, stating what the pictures cannot say for themselves (Jefkins, 1977). This collaboration involves the gate keeping function because the editor takes in and takes out, corrects mistakes and also makes sure that the right illustration, photograph, and graphics are used. As the editor reads the text and the graphics, he/she has to understand what the author intends to say without losing track of the author's intention. It may be the intention of the author to use abstract illustration and not realistic pictures, etc. Effective editing is a worthwhile step on the road to publishing. Even a piece of work one considers a masterpiece, can benefit from the attention of the right and experienced editor. Most authors do a poor job editing themselves, even if they are excellent in editing other author's works.

Illustrations speak volumes and are as important a vehicle for communication as the printed words in a book (Ihebuzor, 2006). Aesthetically, illustrations make books, especially children's books more captivating. It is however imperative to note that bad illustrations can tell a thousand lies, and can distort the flow of communication process.

Good illustrations in book publishing should do one or more of the following:

- (i) Capture the attention of the reader;
- (ii) Identify the subject of the message; and
- (iii) Help convince the reader of the truth of the claims made in the text.

The editor working in collaboration with the graphic artist know that illustrative materials have a variety of communication functions in book publishing. Telling the story better or clarification of issues. However, where these functions are not obvious, such illustrative materials should be removed. The functions that qualify illustrations for inclusion include:

- (a) Attraction and getting attention: illustrative materials help to attract the readers' eyes to the cover or page. Book publishers make use of illustrations to attract readers to the written or verbal symbols and by so doing, arouse their attention; and
- (b) Information: illustration, especially photographs help to intensify experience or meaning by complementing the written message.

Spicer (1995) explains that photo editing is to process text and illustrative materials; check illustrative materials for completeness, clarity and relevance to text; check for missing illustration and instigate any missing materials search. Good editors apart from checking illustrative materials for completeness and suitability; protect they publishing houses against copyright infringement; and also help authors communicate clearly through the limited medium of print. Editors know how to clear up ambiguities and confusion; get the artist to improve awkward illustrations and root out the many other visual obstacles that can arise in the way of clear communication. It is important to note that the best publication's illustrators benefit from editorial help and are often the most grateful after all. However, a bad illustration or picture is worse than having no illustration at all in a book, especially in Nursery and Primary School levels. Pictures and other illustrative materials must be indeed needed and functional, and not merely as an ornament in a book. The author may provide the required pictures and they should be clear and sharp; they should also be properly identified. The publisher may assist in obtaining some other needed pictures and make the author pay for them later by deducting the cost from his royalty. Copyright owner of pictures lifted from existing sources must be acknowledged, and merely acknowledging

the source without having secured prior permission may not exonerate an author from the offence of copyright violation (Areo, 2009).

Good and professional editors note the following:

- (i) Careful inspection of each illustration to ensure that it corresponds with the message contents of the text;
- (ii) Check and ensure that the list of the illustrations forwarded with the typescript tally exactly with the captions;
- (iii) Check and ensure that each caption is as concise and as descriptive of the illustration as possible;
- (iv) The illustration should be seen to complement and supplement the text as well. This is creating a text-image relationship and building a nexus between text and illustrative materials; and
- (v) Photographs should be handled with care. Writing on the back for ease of identification must be done in soft pencil, and lightly done to avoid defacing the picture.

The processing steps for illustration are the same as the verbal copy. Illustrations and pictures can, and do contain errors. The errors could be mechanical or qualitative. Mechanical errors could be in the form of stains and other spots. Qualitative errors could be poor tones, faulty backgrounds and poor draughtmanship. Illustrative materials with such errors should be removed or corrected or the work be re-done to get a better quality photograph or illustration. The shape the size and the content have to be appreciated for the message and the layout of the page. Editors and publication's designers do not have to use the whole photograph. The contact print will enable them to decide which part of the picture would be needed. The process of eliminating extraneous details in a photograph is an aspect of photo editing known as cropping, (Ezirim, 2003). In other words, cropping is the elimination of unwanted portions of a picture. This is done to focus on the information worthy aspect of pictures and other illustrative materials.

In some subject areas such as Biology, Geography, and other Science and Technology disciplines, where pictures and other illustrative materials are heavily required for effective learning and communication, the author

is required to clearly indicate and mark up the illustrations. Here illustrations are edited and label tags and captions are inserted. Spellings are checked for consistency and correctness.

Cropping of Pictures and Illustrative Materials as Editing

Picture research, photography and illustrations are usually commissioned by the editor but also in close association with the designer. Here, the editor writes the captions, cuts and extends the text to make it fit in. Cropping is the figurative cutting by the editor or graphic artist of the original picture and illustration to eliminate the faulty or unwanted parts. It is figurative because portions of the picture are rarely cut away manually or electronically through the use of computer.

Cropping is done for the following reasons:

- a) **Design Principles:** Good book design depends on the arrangement of each element with relationship to every other element in the design. These elements include Balance, Contrast and Unity. They must function as communication, not merely as art. If it does both, so much the better, but art for arts sake has no room in book publishing. The page layout that transmits the message. For the reader to absorb the information, the editor should ensure that the type are organized in blocks and columns, and to keep the page layout free from unnecessary visuals that only add clutter. A book designer is like a good editor. The layout may have many elements in it, but it should 'read' as one unit.

- b) **Cropping for Content:** Check and consider the relevance of suggested illustrative materials by the author, in terms of appropriateness, whether sufficient or too many, and where labeling and appropriate captions are needed, whether specimens have been adequately provided by the author.

Photographs from photographers and illustrations from artists often contain shortcomings that should be corrected. Unnecessary and disturbing 'details' should be removed. Good cropping can eliminate weak points and emphasize strong points. Communicating some themes and suppressing others, (Folarin, 1998).

According to Well, (1981) and cited in Areo (2009: 219), the illustrations should be:

Simple and uncluttered —too much detail can confuse the reader; Well-labelled but not excessively: clear there should be no doubt about the illustrations purpose; Large enough to use most of the available space to the full.

- c) Cropping for Space: A photograph or illustration is really used in its original dimension. Enlargement and reduction is done for effective communication, so that the essence of the message can be delivered. It goes through pre-press with the lithographer, or for colour pictures for colour separation. Printing plates are then made from the films.
- d) Cropping for shape and economy of shape: The choice of a picture/ illustration shape has a particular relevance to the content. The ideal format/shape, according to international standard, is one that conforms to the ration of three to five, and even when this ideal cannot he attained, the editor should at list, make sure that the image area is approximately three-fifths of the text image area, both as to width and depth, (Ihebuzor, 2006). Illustration formats are either in portrait or in Landscape. For books targeted at the general audience, the editor with the assistance of a creative photographer or illustrator, can go portrait, landscape, elongated, or even experimental bizarre formats. Publishers in America are more at liberty to showcase creativity.

Conclusion

This work has highlighted the imperativeness of the gate-keeping process of editing pictures and other illustrative materials in the art of book publishing. A good and professional editing is a worthwhile step on the road to good publishing. Even a piece of picture or illustrative material one considers a masterpiece, can benefit from the attention of the editor.

A constructive and co-operative relationship between the publisher (editor) and the author is vital to successful publishing. The level of benefit the author derives from the publisher's provision of pictures and other

illustrative materials, from the queries raised on authors pictures and illustrations are geared towards improving communication, particularly visual communication. The principal reason for these actions is to help authors communicate clearly through the effective use of text and image. This paper also notes the fact that editors are indeed the soul of the publishing enterprise. The diversity of their responsibilities make the editing job quite challenging but important in the art of book publishing, from conception to consumption.

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