

Poynter. NEWS UNIVERSITY

# **Editing Triage**

February 26, 2015

# Welcome to the Webinar



This is an event from Poynter's News University, journalism's e-learning leader

- **Host: Vicki Krueger**
- **Director, interactive learning & NewsU**
  - Use the Q&A pod to ask questions of the presenter
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# Thank You

Harnisch Foundation

- **For funding our Webinar equipment**

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- **For its support of News University**



# Polling Question

Do you have enough editing time?

- **Always**
- **Usually**
- **Rarely**
- **Never**

# Today's Presenter

Teresa Schmedding

**Deputy Managing  
Editor, Daily Herald  
Media Group**

**Oversees digital,  
design, editing, social  
media, enewsletters**

**Current president,  
ACES**

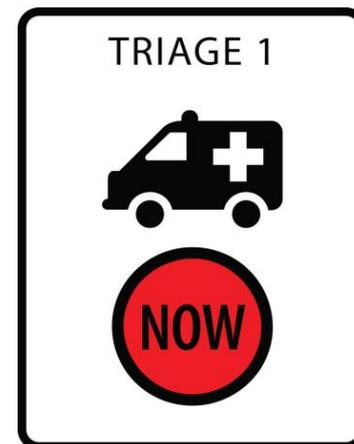
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# Today's Agenda

1. What is triage editing?
2. Why is it valuable?
3. Basic triage steps
4. How to assess damage, plan treatment
5. How to create a triage checklist
6. Sample triage checklists
7. My critical list
8. Summary



# Polling Question

What is the price of mistakes?

- **Confuses people.**
- **Misinformation hurts sources.**
- **Our credibility.**
- **Nothing. Readers are forgiving.**
- **All of the above.**
- **None of the above.**

# What is triage editing?

- **We are imperfect humans living in deadline world**
- **Not all errors are created equal**
- **Not everything can be critical all the time.**



1. Bright light in distance

2.  
Whoa!  
Dead  
in 15

3. Urgent: 30 min

4. Meh:  
1-2  
hours

5. NBD: Take your time

## Basic concept

Now imagine  
applying such  
criteria to  
editing

# What is the value?

## Deliberate approach to insane situations

- **Objective criteria in high-stress situations**
- **Order to chaos**
- **Increases consistency**
- **Reduces conflict**
- **Improves quality**
- **Saves time**



# Polling Question

What do you think is the worst error?

- **Accuracy**
- **Spelling**
- **Clarity**
- **Style**
- **Grammar**

# Basic steps

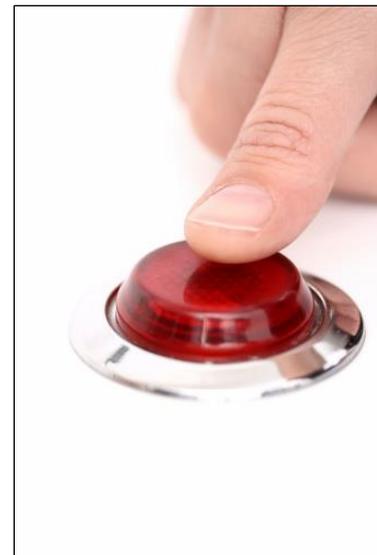
- 1. Triage content: assess value, damage**
- 2. Determine treatment (course of action)**
- 3. Treat**
- 4. Re-evaluate if needed**
- 5. Let. It. Go.**
- 6. Move on to next patient**



# Triage content

## Assess damage

- **Run spell-check, Tansa, PerfectIt, whatever tech you've got**
- **Skim document**
- **Take note of critical needs**



# Determine course of treatment

This can be sticky or simple: Your call

- **Things to consider**
  - **Weight of project**
  - **Likely eyeballs**
  - **Lifespan**
  - **Time to fix v. impact**
  - **Cost to others?**
  - **Damage your credibility?**
  - **Harm someone?**
  - **Confuse readers?**



# Polling Question

What do readers think is the worst error?

- **Accuracy**
- **Spelling**
- **Clarity**
- **Style**
- **Grammar**

# Determine course of treatment

- **Special considerations**

- Value to customer?
- Value to reader?
- Value to source?
- Value to you?
- Harm to source?
- Harm to credibility?
- Audience and goal?
- Who is the source?



# Sample triage

## Level 1:

- Career-altering errors
- Errors that cause harm
- Errors readers care about
- Errors we care about
- Errors that will domino day
- Contains libel



## Course of treatment:

Put a toe tag on it

# Treat

## Know your checklist

- **How to create one**
  - **Rely on research, branding**
  - **Talk to client**
  - **Talk to boss**
  - **Lean on metrics**
  - **Listen to readers**
  - **Rely on stylebook**
  - **Know your market, readers**
  - **Know your writers**
  - **Use whatever data you can**



# Sample checklist

## ▪ Level 1

1. Profanity
2. Name spellings
3. Math
4. Libel
5. Grammar

## ▪ Level 2 (+1)

1. Consistency
2. Smooth transitions
3. Clarity
4. Hyperlinks
5. Trademarks



# Sample checklist

## ▪ Level 3 (+1, 2)

1. Style
2. Split infinitives
3. Cosmetic
4. Plagiarism spot check
5. Duplicate words
6. Wordiness

## ▪ Level 4 (+1, 2, 3)

1. Flow
2. Tone
3. Voice
4. Fabrication check
5. Full rewrite



# Sample checklist

As time allows, in order:



- 1. Correct factual errors**
- 2. Check all display type for errors in fact and grammar**
- 3. Check all display type for clarity**
- 4. Check all type for clarity**
- 5. Fix spelling, homophone errors**
- 6. Fix usage errors**
- 7. Fix style errors**
- 8. Fix punctuation errors**

# ACHES

- 1. Accuracy**
- 2. Clarity**
- 3. Headlines**
- 4. Efficiency**
- 5. Style**



Nick Jungman,  
Director of student media,  
University of Oklahoma

# My checklist musts

- **Accuracy**
- **Clarity**
- **Big type**
- **First graph, last graph**
- **Grammar**
- **Profanity (you don't want)**
- **Big, career-altering errors (libel, fairness, balance, victim ID)**
- **Hyperlinks**



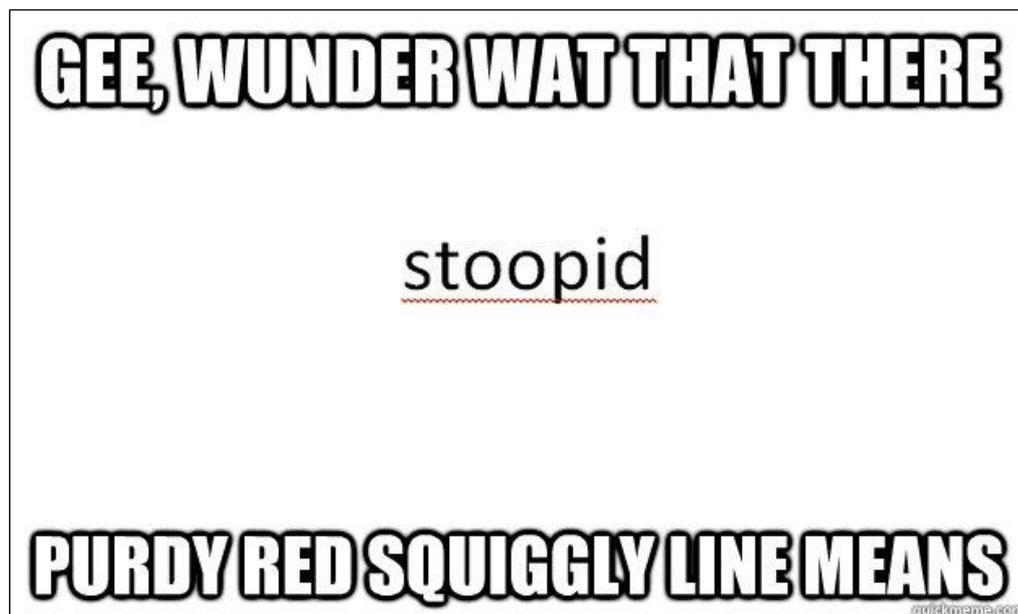
# My checklist forgettaaboutit

- **Style**
- **Cosmetic**
- **Oxford commas**
- **Who, whom**
- **Dangling modifiers**
- **Split infinitives**
- **(Anything that trips your OCD button)**



# Big bonus tips

- **Use tech – first !!!!!**
- **Spot check for accuracy, plagiarism, fabrication**



# In summary

1. What is triage editing?
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# Research

- **Audience Perceptions of Editing Quality**

Fred Vultee, *Digital Journalism*, 2014

- **When the Editor Disappears, Does Editing Disappear?**

Susan Greenberg, *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 2010

# Final thought

“A good editor accepts that they cannot achieve perfection and knows which errors it is essential to prevent and which, if missed, alter nothing of consequence.”

**Colleen Barry, Copy Curmudgeon**



(Everything about Jay Cutler is a mistake  
Teresa Schmedding)

# Thank You

We'll be going to Questions shortly

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- **Questions are not posted to the public**



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