



From The Monster Daily to National Geographic



Copy editor **Nancy Gupton** exemplifies the process of putting out a perfectly printed publication.

By Jodi Cisman

TOM DANIELS



How has the internet revolutionized traditional copy editing?

NG: I don't think it has. I think copy editing is a very basic skill. It makes things sound and read correctly. I don't think it's that much different on the Web. Some sites have looser standards but we don't. I personally don't think there should be. Grammar is grammar. Writing for the Web is different so I guess you could say copy editing for the Web is a little different because you're bending to that style a little more.

What is the hardest part of your job?

NG: The hardest part is that we have more work than we can handle. When working on the Web, things happen so quickly, which means a lot of content all of the time. We're not necessarily staffed on the copy editing side to handle it so keeping up with the flow is hard.

What are your copy editing pet peeves?

NG: Yes. I have many pet peeves. I think all editors do. I honestly have so many.

The thing I see missed most are misplaced modifiers and conjunctive clauses in the wrong places. Oh, and "between you and I" - that's my biggest pet peeve. And "where we're at."

What's been the most memorable moment of your career so far?

NG: When I was at CNN and the Columbine shootings happened. That was pretty intense because we had live feeds coming in the newsroom. We were seeing bad stuff as it happened. We were, on average, getting our updates every three minutes. It was an extremely fast-paced, crazy time. No body knew what was going on. It was one of the first tragedies like that that was so well-covered. It was unprecedented and we were flying by the seat of our pants.

What makes an outstanding copy editor?

NG: An extreme attention to detail. You have to have an eye for it. If you're not naturally drawn to that, you're not going to be a good copy editor. I think you need to read a lot. You need to be able to

spot things. You can't hone your skills if you don't read publications that are well-edited.

What are the best-edited publications out there?

NG: In print, *The New Yorker*. Having worked here at *National Geographic*, I've seen first-hand the kind of work that goes into the magazine. They've got some of the best editors in the world working for them. They've got a dedicated staff of fact-checkers that process every little thing that goes into the magazine. Online, I like Salon.com. That's a good question, though. I don't really pay much attention to the editing of online Web sites.

Why is clean, grammatically-sound text a keystone to a publication?

NG: Because if you as a reader can't trust the publications, or if you find errors, you're going to turn away. You shouldn't be able to notice grammar. If you notice it, that's bad. It's a problem.

