

**What Authors and Publishers Are Saying About
Tyler R. Tichelaar, Superior Book Productions,
and *The Nomad Editor***

“Wow! What an amazing service you provide! Your editorial expertise is a great investment for anyone who wants to become a best-selling author.”

— Patrick Snow, Publishing Coach and International Best-Selling Author
of *Creating Your Own Destiny* and *Boy Entrepreneur*

“Tyler Tichelaar’s inherent love of literature and his acumen at writing, as evidenced in his own excellent novels, has been vital in my development as a novice author. I had no idea the caliber of professional I was honored to meet when I signed on with Tyler R. Tichelaar, PhD. Tyler’s wealth of knowledge of the industry and the business of self-publishing is also phenomenal, so he will always be my go-to man for whatever questions I have as a business person. He has surely found his calling; I am glad I have found *him!*”

— Mary Flinn, Author of
The One, Second Time’s a Charm, and *Three Gifts*

“Tyler’s proofreading for my quarterly publication is very thorough, prompt, and shows his mastery of the craft of writing. It has brought the quality of my magazine to a whole new level.”

— Roslyn McGrath, Publisher of
Health & Happiness U.P. Magazine

“With an impressive knowledge of the English language, evidenced in his novels, Tichelaar is definitely top-notch. I ended up incorporating all his suggestions for revision and feel my book has profited tremendously as a result.”

— Devin Dugan, Author of *Third*

“I just published my first book and couldn’t have done it without Tyler. His turnaround time is fast, price is very reasonable, and most importantly, he cares. It is one thing to get the grammar and punctuation right. It is an entirely different thing to analyze and give valuable feedback on the content, flow, and humor. I was worried that he would get frustrated by my repetitive questions (i.e., what if we....). He was not. He made me feel like his only client, although I know he had a long line of projects waiting for him.”

— Jeremy Kisner, CFP, CRPS, President, SureVest Capital Management,
and Author of *A Good Financial Advisor Will Tell You...*

“I highly recommend Superior Book Productions. I am a first-time author who self-published my book. Working with both Tyler and Larry [junior editor, interior book layout and cover designer, and web designer at Superior Book Productions] was an incredible experience. They took the lead and brought my manuscript to life. This was a huge process involving editing, interior book layout, creating a cover, building my website, and loading all my files for the e-book, hardcover, and paperback. The end result was nothing but incredible! I could not have done this without them. The timing of getting things done was right on schedule and the work was superb!”

— Alan Charles, Keynote Speaker—Drug Awareness and Prevention,
Radio Host, and Author of *Walking Out the Other Side:
An Addict’s Journey from Loneliness to Life*

“While I have worked with other editors, Tyler and Larry of Superior Book Productions stand out. Their flexibility and on-time delivery makes working with them an exciting experience. As a returning customer, I can say with certainty that they provide flawless execution by not only editing grammar and punctuation, but the content to make sure there is a good flow of ideas from one section to the next. Tyler and Larry are not shy to redirect any author on the right path when things are not clear. I enjoyed working with them, and I will continue doing so in the future.”

—Teddie E. Malangwasira, PhD and Author of
Leading in a Diverse Environment and Leadership Is Not About Race

“I have worked with several editors, and I can safely say that Tyler Tichelaar is outstanding. He has a deep understanding of storytelling, language, and structure. Not only do I learn something every time we work together, but his feedback on story structure, characterization, and conversations helped me turn good books into great books.”

— Chris Shockowitz, Author of the
Zalthuras and Outward Bound series

“I had no idea how much I was getting when I brought my book to Tyler Tichelaar! Within twenty-four hours, I felt like he was my personal friend, who truly cared about *my book*! He is a magician when it comes to editing.... His services didn’t stop once my book was published. (In fact, they still haven’t!) When I think about the time he spent (still spends) with me...and the speed at which he responds, I can’t fathom that he has other clients!”

— Carol Paul, Author of
Team Clean: The Ultimate Family Clean-Up-the-House Formula!

“I had the good fortune to hire Tyler Tichelaar as my editor. Tyler guided me in transforming a bundle of thoughts into a flowing, readable book. He is an alchemist with words. He is a fun and enjoyable person to work with. He is skilled in taking difficult concepts and presenting them in a flowing, understandable format. Tyler’s speed and accuracy are remarkable, and he keeps the project moving forward. Tyler is generous with his time and guided me in every aspect of the book. His generosity was also apparent in making his brilliant services affordable. Tyler is a literary genius and adds a golden dimension that is seamlessly woven into his work. I am so grateful to him for the magic he performed in editing my book.”

— Fredrick Swaroop Honig, Author of
The Unitive Field: The Union of Science and Spirituality

“I found Superior Book Productions to be a most valuable partner in editing and producing my book, *The Essence of Lean*. This was my first book, and both Tyler and Larry were very helpful and responsive as they walked me through the entire process.”

— David Hinds, PhD, Professor and Author of *The Essence of Lean*

“This was my first experience writing a book. As an editor, Tyler nurtured me, explaining the reason for any changes in the manuscript. He was so responsive that I felt he was always at my side ready to help, not only about wordsmithing, but also in navigating the intricacies of the publishing world. I could depend on him to answer my questions almost immediately even if they were sent during non-business hours. Larry was an easy transition for the interior design. He understood from the start my concept of how the book should appear. His experience in publishing and his expertise in formatting documents to required specifications were invaluable. My document was accepted immediately without the need for changes. I wholeheartedly recommend Superior Book Productions for any author wanting to get a book into print.”

— Georgia Blair, Co-Author of
Banana George! Don’t Wait for Life to Happen, Make It Happen

“I am indebted to the depth and acumen of Dr. Tichelaar’s editorial skills.”

— Victor R. Volkman, Owner of Loving Healing Press

*Wordsmithing Your Way to Success
by Making Authors' Dreams Come True*

The Nomad Editor

Living the Lifestyle You Want, Doing
Work You Love

Tyler R. Tichelaar, PhD

The Nomad Editor:
Living the Lifestyle You Want, Doing Work You Love

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Disclaimer: All references to clients in this book are fictional composites of client situations and do not reflect any specific client situation, except those where the client is directly named. In all other cases, client names have been changed to protect their privacy.

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To Vaughn,
Who gave me the idea to write this book.



Acknowledgments

IT WOULD HAVE been impossible to write this book if I didn't have editing clients and people who believed in me enough to help me become an editor. I wish to thank in particular:

Vaughn Laurila, who first gave me the idea to write this book. He has brainstormed business ideas and shared books with me for over a decade. I appreciate how he has always supported and helped to enhance my dreams.

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Alex Kofsky helped me come up with the title for this book and coached me through the final stages to create a truly marketable product. He is an old soul, wise beyond his years.

Irene Watson helped me to become self-employed by hiring me as a book reviewer for Reader Views and then to write press releases, interview authors, and edit books for her clients. Irene, you are gone but not forgotten. When faced with a challenge, I constantly think, "What would Irene do?"

Victor Volkman, along with Irene Watson, first interviewed me on the *Authors Access* internet radio show. Next thing I knew, I was a guest cohost. As time went by, Victor and I became board members together for the Upper Peninsula Publishers and Authors Association, he published some of my books through Modern History Press, and he continues to use my editing services as well as offer me advice. His support has been invaluable.

Pat Ryan O'Day hired me to be the proofreader at *Marquette Monthly* where I was able to polish my editing and proofreading skills under someone who had been in the magazine business for decades. Pat, I know you're up there smiling about how many people, like myself, are still benefiting from your influence.

Larry Alexander is more like my brother than my business colleague. Since we first shared an office and taught composition at Northern Michigan University more than a quarter century ago, we have been friends. He has selflessly supported my writing and self-employment goals and become part of my team. I thank him for his own incredible editing skills and for the stellar layout and design of this and all my books. Larry, you are my rock.

Kathy Kuczek's fabulous illustrations far exceeded my expectations and gave the tone and feel to the book I wanted. Her work proves that a picture is worth a thousand words.

Diana Deluca, Roslyn Hurley, and Jenifer Brady all read early drafts of the book and provided me with insightful feedback and support. They are the best beta readers an author—and an editor—could wish for. They are also wonderful, longtime friends.

To my many English teachers and professors: I appreciate what all of you taught me, especially when you corrected my errors. It was no fun getting an A for content and an F for grammar on my papers, but it made me learn grammar and punctuation—a gift you gave me that I'm now giving to others.

My editing clients are far too many to mention, but they have all helped me to live my dream. I feel privileged to have also been able to play a role in the achievement of theirs. Thank you. It's been a joy to serve you.

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Foreword by Patrick Snow

WHEN I BEGAN my career some twenty-five years ago as a new author and speaker, I was clueless about the importance of editing and how a good editor can make or break a book's success. I stumbled across a few editors here and there, but I had no real success with them. As a result, the first printing of my book *Creating Your Own Destiny* had more than fifty grammar and spelling errors. I soon found myself embarrassed and looking for a new editor.

Then I began to ask myself, "How and where can I find an editor who can make my words shine, get my point across, and deliver a professional piece of work to the marketplace?" I remained dumbfounded—there just seemed to be so many editing options out there, but how could I know whom to trust, whether they were any good, or even if they were overcharging me? Plus, what was a reasonable time to get my manuscript reedited and turned into a product I could be proud of?

I quickly discovered all editors are not the same! Some are just in it for the money, while others take ownership of their clients' work, are passionate about quality, and seek to communicate the author's voice to the reader. I finally understood the difference between copy editing, content editing, hybrid ghostwriting, and full ghostwriting. And it was Tyler Tichelaar who taught me all of this, and so much more.

In 2007, I had the opportunity to be the keynote speaker for the Upper Peninsula Publishers and Authors Association's annual meeting in Marquette, Michigan. There I had the pleasure of meeting Tyler for the first time. We soon became great friends; he reedited *Creating Your Own Destiny*, eliminating all the errors in my book, retaining my voice, and altogether making my book shine. Since then, Tyler has edited all of my other books and countless special reports.

After that, Tyler and I formed a business partnership. He has become the managing editor for my publishing coaching business, which has successfully produced upwards of 1,200 books for my clients in the last twenty years. Tyler has edited and proofread hundreds of those books. He has also traveled to both Maui, Hawaii, and Seattle, Washington, to speak at my Best Seller Publishing Institutes and is a regular and sought-after guest instructor on my weekly Inner Circle coaching calls.

I consistently hear rave reviews from my clients about the quality of Tyler's work. I will probably embarrass him with these comments, but I am convinced that Tyler Tichelaar is one of the great writers and editors of our time. His difference is that he cares about authors, and he can deliver a higher quality to the marketplace than anyone else I have ever met. He once took a terrible, sixty-five-page manuscript from an older client of mine in her seventies who barely spoke English as her third language, overhauled it, did a complete hybrid ghostwrite, and delivered a world-class, 175-page book that made the woman look like she had mastered the English language. I have 100 other stories about Tyler Tichelaar just like this that have literally allowed my clients to use the books he has edited for them to quit their jobs and earn full-time livings as authors, speakers, and coaches.

In *The Nomad Editor*, Tyler Tichelaar will show you exactly how to achieve your dreams, working from home, doing the work you love, while serving others. In the process, he will teach you how to gain control of your life, your career, and your writing passions.

Furthermore, when you follow the formulas and strategies in this book, you will acquire the basic skills and knowledge needed to succeed as an editor. You will learn how much to charge, how and when to accept payment, and how to set up your business working from home. You will learn how to market yourself and your business to attract paying clientele. Most importantly, you will learn how to deliver value to your clients so they will become your lifetime fans, and you will then receive years and years of warm referrals from your happy and successful clients. Additionally, you will learn how to avoid the clients who will eat you alive by stealing all your time. You will learn how to juggle multiple projects, meet deadlines, and grow your business in such a way that you will never have to punch a time clock for a job or work for someone else again. Tyler Tichelaar is absolutely brilliant and provides you with a complete turnkey editing business in a box, except it is

written and communicated to you in a book. *The Nomad Editor* is perhaps the most important resource you will ever need to succeed in this space, and I am sure one day it will be considered the single greatest resource book editors need to ensure their success!

Reading this book and applying it to your life and business will enable you to live the life you have already dreamed about; you will succeed at working from home as a successful editor serving hundreds of clients on a global basis. Tyler has been building his business on multiple continents and has clients as far away as Australia and New Zealand, and all of them sing his praises. You, too, can experience this level of success when you apply his wisdom and insights to your editing business.

Throughout this book, you will learn that you are the driving force needed to build the business you desire. You have the power, skill set, and determination to succeed, but you will only achieve this success when you read, reread, and apply these insights to your life and business. Tyler will show you the importance of being nice, showing empathy, and doing research for clients so their messages are historically accurate, all their quotes are correctly attributed, and so forth.

The marvelous thing about Tyler is that he is not just an editor. He is also a proofreader and a successful book reviewer. Many of the book reviews he has written have been so successful that they have landed my clients on national media programs such as Fox News and in newspapers like the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

Tyler's academic credentials include a PhD in literature from Western Michigan University, and master's and bachelor's degrees in English from Northern Michigan University. More importantly, he is an award-winning author of twenty books, ranging from historical fiction and fantasy to literary criticism and biography. His talent is off the charts, and I personally believe his books are right up there with those of Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, and other greats! He is every bit the talent they are, and arguably their modern version!

The bottom line is this: If you want to be a successful editor, then Tyler Tichelaar is your man, and this is your book. So get ready for an amazing ride. Put up your tray table, fasten your seatbelt, and hold on for the journey of a lifetime. Your future begins now, and your dreams are about to come true. Mark my words!

Enjoy your journey of serving others, and financially benefitting for a lifetime as a result. I believe in you. Tyler believes in you. We know when you apply the wisdom in these pages, you will become an unstoppable force, fully capable of creating your own destiny!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Snow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Snow

Publishing and Book Marketing Coach and International Best-Selling Author of *Creating Your Own Destiny*, *The Affluent Entrepreneur*, and *Boy Entrepreneur*

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Introduction

“Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness.
He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it!”

— Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*

DO YOU LOVE books? Can you pay close attention to detail? Do you have strong writing skills and a firm grasp of grammar and punctuation rules?

Then you might have the skills to become an editor.

Are you tired of having your talents overlooked? Are you tired of fighting traffic on your daily commute? Do you want the flexibility to go to lunch with friends or take a day off when you wish? Would you like to travel when and where you want and still be able to work wherever you are?

Then you may enjoy becoming a freelancer.

Are you able to set, achieve, and surpass daily goals? Are you able to juggle multiple projects at once? Can you abide by your word, meet deadlines, and provide high quality work?

Then you may have the motivation to be a business owner.

I decided to write *The Nomad Editor* because many people over the years have asked me how to become a freelance editor and work from home—or wherever in the world they want. I also have had many would-be editors ask me to hire them. Some of them had the skills, some did not.

Here’s the thing: No degree programs exist for how to become an editor. There is no required course of study, and there is no universally recognized certification to determine whether you are qualified. I’m afraid the grammar police don’t have any real authority.

A lot of people think they have what it takes to be an editor. I can’t tell you how many books I have had to rescue after authors told me they already

had their books edited by “my niece who is an English major,” “my sister who is a librarian,” or “my friend who writes real good.” Chances are none of those people had the required skills to be an editor, especially not a book editor. And the authors who hired them had no clue their editors weren’t up to snuff since they didn’t have excellent writing skills themselves. After all, some think their friends “write *real good*.” Ugh.

Am I qualified to be an editor? I believe I am because of my education and years of experience, but in the beginning, even I wasn’t so sure. If you’re starting to feel a bit of doubt right now about whether you have what it takes to be an editor, that’s probably a good sign that you might be more qualified than many who think they are editors and really aren’t. It shows you have a conscious and are conscientious. Rest assured, even if you don’t have the skills, you can get them.

You wouldn’t be reading this book if you weren’t interested in becoming a freelance editor. Hopefully, I can help you along on that journey. I’ll admit upfront, however, that I won’t have all the answers for you. I’m still learning myself. Sadly, there are scarce resources for those who wish to become editors. There are a few workshops or summer programs you might attend, but even those aren’t the same as in-the-field experience. As a result, I’m largely self-taught, although I believe years of school, writing for publication, and teaching writing at the college level ultimately prepared me for the work I do today.

In these pages, I will share how I became an editor and how I remain one by keeping my business growing and lucrative. You’ll learn about the technical skills you need, but because grammar and punctuation can be learned elsewhere—and hopefully you already have mastered them—this book will focus upon an editor’s daily life. You’ll learn about the other skills I use every day, such as time management, customer service, record-keeping, marketing, and sales. You’ll acquire tools for dealing with difficult clients and for meeting deadlines without having to work long hours. You’ll learn a little about how the publishing industry works, and you’ll discover how to set boundaries between your work and your personal life so you don’t lose your sanity. Ultimately, you will be prepared to achieve success. You might even get a few good chuckles from my experiences.

Are you ready to begin? Then I have a test for you. In this chapter there was a typo. Did you catch it? If so, congratulations. If not, go back and look for it. (Hopefully, you won’t find any I left there by accident—nothing’s more embarrassing as an editor than being told you missed a typo, but it does happen.) So did you find that typo? Three paragraphs back, the word *conscious*

was used when *conscience* should have been. If you caught it, I suspect you may have what it takes to be an editor, at least when it comes to paying attention to detail.

Do you have a thick skin? That's definitely another requirement. You need to be a perfectionist who won't beat yourself up over an error when it happens, and you have to be prepared not to let your clients beat you up over them either. So if you missed that typo, don't feel too bad. So far, I've edited more than 400 books, and no one has chewed me out over a typo yet, but now and then, I hate to admit it, someone does catch one I missed.

But there's more to editing than just catching typos. There are many skills you will need to succeed, so let's start looking at those skills and what your life as an editor will look like.

I wish you much success in the pursuit of your career. May your Wi-Fi never fail you as you travel the world editing books. May all your subjects and pronouns agree. And may you find joy in helping to add life-changing books to the world.

Here's to your good fortune!

Tyler R. Tichelaar



Chapter 1

My Nomadic Journey to Editing

“Sitting alone in a room reading a book, with no one to interrupt me.
That is all I ever consciously wanted out of life.”

— Anne Tyler, *Celestial Navigation*

I WAS BORN ON Wednesday, May 26, 1971, in St. Luke’s Hospital (later known as Marquette General Hospital and today as UP Health System) in Marquette, Michigan, at 4:11 p.m. to Richard and Nancy (nee White) Tichelaar.

Why do I start off with such a detailed, boring, “who cares” sentence? As an example of what you have to watch out for and correct when you are an editor. This book is not my biography but a book about editing, so this chapter should only contain facts relevant to my topic. As an editor, you need to know how to cut, cut, cut anything that does not relate to the topic’s purpose or advance the plot. (Even if you are editing nonfiction, there is a plot, or purpose, the book is moving toward; we’ll talk more about that in Chapter 13.) Never be afraid to cut what falls under the umbrella of boring and irrelevant.

So let me begin again, this time only incorporating what is relevant to understanding my background as it relates to becoming an editor.

I never considered the possibility of being an editor until I was in my early thirties. Like most freelance editors out there, I’d already had a few different careers before I found my true vocation. But from an early age, my interests and occupations were preparing me for eventually becoming a full-time freelance editor, which I did when I was thirty-seven.

Of course, I was the kid who always had his nose in a book. I loved to read. Not only that, but I also loved to write. In grade school, I would staple pieces of paper together to make my own books and then copy stories out of

other books or write my own. I still have the books I made in third grade in Young Authors.

In fourth grade, one of my friends told me she had an aunt who was an author. That's when it dawned on me that being an author was a job. And that was the job I wanted.

I doubt I had even heard the word "editor" at that age.

I set my goal on becoming an author. When I told people that was my dream, many of them told me how hard it would be to make it a reality. I took that as a challenge and remained determined. I became the weird kid reading Dickens and Jane Austen in high school. I wanted to learn how to be the best author possible, and I believed I could only do that by studying master novelists.

After a few false writing attempts, including an entire sequel to *Gone with the Wind* that I wrote in my head, I began on June 4, 1987, to pen what would be the first novel I would complete. I was sixteen and very dedicated to my craft, sitting at my desk for two hours every morning during summer vacation until I had a complete draft. Then I revised it multiple times—all by hand. I finished my novel in two years, and then, when I was eighteen and had started college, I typed it all on my first computer.

In the fall of 1989, I began college at Northern Michigan University in my hometown of Marquette. College limited the time I had to write novels, but it also allowed me to learn more about my craft. Of course, I became an English major. Specifically, I was in the graduate-bound program. That meant lots of literature courses, and I took more than necessary: Shakespeare, Chaucer, British and American literature surveys, major authors courses in James Joyce and William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. I also took creative writing classes and continued to write.

My goal in college was to publish my first novel so that when I graduated, I would be prepared to live the life of an author, always writing and living off my royalties. That dream was exposed to reality when, in the spring of 1991, I sent my first novel off to a publisher. After a few weeks, the editor at the publishing company wrote back praising my manuscript but telling me the company had just bought two other novels, so would I be willing to share in the publishing costs? My share of those costs would be many thousands of dollars. At that time, I was working at McDonald's for \$3.35 an hour. Obviously, I said no.

Suffice to say, I didn't get a novel published while I was in college. I kept sending my first novel out, and I collected rejection letters, but I also managed to write two more novels during those years. My junior and senior

years, I got a job working at the Writing Center on campus. That was my first real experience with editing. I read students' papers, marked them up, and then gave the students suggestions for improvement. I loved doing it, but the thought of becoming an editor never occurred to me. My senior year, I had no idea what I would do with my bachelor's in English, so I decided I would get a master's degree. I went to the English department secretary and asked for an application for the MA program. She asked whether I also wanted one for becoming a teaching assistant. I had no idea the English department even had teaching assistants, but I said yes. After all, I was told it would pay \$4,500 a year. That was better than what I had been making at McDonald's or the Writing Center.

I had no teaching experience, but since I had worked at the Writing Center and been named the Outstanding Senior in the English Department, I got my foot in the door and soon had twenty-four freshman to teach how to write essays. I turned out to be a fairly good teacher—not fabulous, but I liked teaching and my students seemed to like me. I realized I could make a small difference in the world by teaching and encouraging students to have dreams, think for themselves, and learn how to communicate their ideas.

Meanwhile, my dream of being an author continued. By then, I was old enough to know how the real world worked, so I became more practical, deciding I would continue teaching to support myself until I got a book published and could start collecting those royalties.

In the spring of 1995, I was accepted into the doctorate program at Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo. Kalamazoo was about 465 miles from my hometown of Marquette, so I was reluctant to move so far. I committed to being at Western in the autumn, but in my heart, I had some questions about moving so far from my family and friends. That summer, I signed up to do temporary work with Manpower. I was sent to work for Lutheran Social Services, where I typed up adoption records and other documents that had been voice-recorded. I was a fairly fast typist, and I also got the punctuation and grammar right, which not all the people the agency hired could do. I learned a valuable lesson at Manpower. If you are paid hourly and you are fast, you will quickly work your way out of a job. In other words, if I could do in fifteen hours what someone else could do in twenty, and we were both being paid \$7.00 an hour, then I would ultimately make \$105, and the other person would make \$140, even though I got the job done faster. I have never in my life slacked off on a job, and I will always do the job as quickly and accurately as possible, but I learned a valuable lesson about the need to ensure you are paid what you are worth.

I did go to Western Michigan University, and five years later, I had earned a PhD in literature with a specialty in nineteenth century British literature. I wrote my dissertation on Gothic literature, which was later published in 2012 as *The Gothic Wanderer: From Transgression to Redemption* by Modern History Press. During my years at Western, I taught freshman composition, British literature, and co-taught classes in post-colonial literature and James Joyce. I loved teaching and I loved studying literature, and most of the time, I loved my students. Grading their papers wasn't always fun, especially when they didn't take the class seriously, but I did my best to help them become better writers. Grading papers is excellent practice for editing books—books are just about fifty times longer. By that point, I was also trying to get scholarly articles published in journals so I was starting to work with editors, but becoming an editor myself still never dawned on me.

As I neared completion of my doctorate, I began looking for a teaching job at the university level—ideally, the perfect tenure-track position in which I would teach nineteenth century British literature. However, a few hundred other people had just graduated with doctorates in British literature, and they were all looking for jobs, so there just weren't enough positions to go around. After I applied for 200 positions, and collected 200 rejection letters, I was finally offered a one-year position, renewable for four years, at Clemson University in South Carolina—even farther from home! The pay wasn't very good, but it was better than being an adjunct at Western Michigan University or Northern Michigan University, the only other options open to me. At Clemson, I would teach four classes each semester, earning \$24,000 annually. If I had been an adjunct at Western or Northern, I would have gotten \$3,000 for one class, so being at Clemson was equivalent to having four adjunct positions—a ton of work, but enough money to live on—barely.

At Clemson, I taught three sections of freshman composition and one section of the British literature survey. Of course, teaching composition meant grading tons of papers. It was standard to assign about six papers per course, and with about twenty-four students per class, that meant grading 432 four- to five-page papers each semester, and that didn't count grading the British literature quizzes and papers. It may be called grading papers, but it's really editing. My students turned in their essays on paper, and I then corrected them, inserting commas, marking misspellings, and pointing out where they should rewrite sentences, expand content, or cut unnecessary details. Students were expected to revise a few of their papers for their portfolios, so it was very much an editing and revising process. If you want to be an editor, try teaching first. Grading papers can be a hair-pulling experience,

but it will teach you what to expect from writers and how to teach them to improve their writing.

Because I wish to be as truthful as possible in this book about what you will face as an editor, let me say this: Many of the authors I work with write no better than my college freshmen did. Some of them write worse because they've been out of college for so long and have not needed to write much in their careers. That isn't to say I didn't have some really good writers among my students, and equally, I work with some really good authors, but the percentage of good to poor writers is about the same as among college freshmen.

All that said, I enjoyed teaching. I loved teaching literature. I loved freshman composition too when my students applied themselves and I actually saw them improve over the course of the semester. But I was also frustrated by those who made no effort but just kept turning in the same poor quality work that made me suspect they had written their papers the night before and only as one draft.

I would have continued teaching, despite my students' lack of effort, if only to pay the bills, except that Clemson was 1,200 miles from Marquette, and my heart was in Marquette. I continued to apply for better teaching positions without success, and then mid-year, the State of South Carolina needed to cut half-a-billion dollars from its budget, and that meant all the state universities needed to make budget cuts. You guessed it—there went my job. Without any other job prospects, I decided I would move back to Marquette. I didn't want to keep moving from one university to another for years while trying to get that elusive tenure-track position. I also was used to cooler temperatures and South Carolina was already far too hot, so I didn't want to end up at a school in Texas or Arizona. In the end, Clemson came up with the money for me to return the following year, but by the spring of 2001, I had decided I needed to go home.

I was still writing novels during this time. In fact, in 1999, I began writing a novel that would eventually become *The Marquette Trilogy*, a historical fiction series about my hometown. While at Clemson, I kept trying to write scholarly papers to submit to journals, but my interest in doing so quickly waned. Journals paid nothing for articles, and even if I got my articles published, they would only be read by the hundred or so specialists in my field. The only reason to write them seemed to be to get noticed so you'd get tenure. I was disillusioned by academia at this point. I mean, how many people besides me really cared about the Wandering Jew theme as expressed in Fanny Burney's 1814 novel *The Wanderer*, or Dickens' use of Rosicrucianism

in *A Tale of Two Cities*? No, I would rather write novels and reach a wider audience. In writing my trilogy, I had decided it was time Upper Michigan was depicted in adult fiction and its importance made known to the world. Up to that point, only a few novels, such as Robert Traver's *An Anatomy of a Murder*, had been set in Upper Michigan. I wanted to help create a literature for Upper Michigan. My purpose became to—perhaps a bit arrogantly—as Stephen Dedalus writes in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, “forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.” To do that, I felt I had to be in Marquette. And so I took a leap of faith, left academia, and returned home.

I wish I could say I published a book right after I moved back to Marquette and it was all smooth sailing from then on, but life rarely works like that. I moved back in with my parents and spent that summer applying for jobs locally and writing my novels. I had no idea initially that the one novel I planned to write would turn into a trilogy, or that it would take two years of basically just doing research on Marquette's history and three more years of writing to complete it, but I dedicated myself to the task and wrote religiously every evening and for many hours on weekends.

Meanwhile, no employer in Marquette wanted to give me a job. All the people who interviewed me suspected I was just waiting to be hired at Northern Michigan University, and once that happened, I would quit, even though I explained to them that there were no teaching jobs at NMU for me. Ultimately, I ended up working for Manpower again, doing temporary work in a lawyer's office, until I finally landed a full-time job with health benefits at a call center. Full-time and health benefits sound good, but the job paid \$7.50 an hour and consisted of answering the phone. I was mostly taking phone calls for a gas and electricity supplier, and it was a rare day when I didn't get sworn at by a customer angry about a bill. I even had a customer threaten to come to my office and “take me out.” This employment situation was a far cry from what I went to school for, and more than a 33 percent pay cut from the low wages I had been making at Clemson. But it was a job, and I was back home, and I still hoped to get a novel published and fulfill what I believed was my destiny.

By 2003, I was still at the call center after nearly two years, still unsuccessfully trying to find a better job and coming to the conclusion that I would be better off moving to a larger city. I knew I didn't want to go back into teaching because of the job market, and I would no longer be even remotely competitive because I had been out of academia for two years. Only then did I consider I might become an editor and work for a publishing house in New

York, or, preferably, Chicago, which was closer to Marquette. But I hated big cities, so I kept dragging my feet about moving.

Then, in April 2003, I was promoted to call center supervisor. It was a significant raise—about as much money as I had made at Clemson. It was also closer to the kind of role I was used to since being a manager is in many ways like being a teacher; you have to train and manage employees, just like you do students. I still had to talk to the most difficult customers when they got mad at my employees, but I didn't have to talk to customers eight hours a day. After another year, I was promoted to call center manager, which was even better. I was now part of the management team and making a decent enough wage that I was able to buy a house. I also was able to use my education a little in writing some marketing pieces for the company. That was the best part of my job.

Trust me, I could write a whole book about working in a call center. It was a lot like the antics on the TV show *The Office*. Someday, I will write a comical novel about it. What's important, however, is that I was able to find a job to tide me over while I continued working toward my dream of becoming an author.

Finally, in 2004, I had finished writing my trilogy and begun looking for a publisher. Meanwhile, I wrote two more novels. I sent out query letters to publishers and agents, and I began to collect rejection letters. A few of the rejection letters were actually personalized rather than being just form letters. The editors said how much they would like to help with the project, but they thought my novels were too regional or just not the right fit for them. I could understand that. Publishers in New York knew nothing about Upper Michigan, and they couldn't see how readers across the nation would be interested in reading about it, even though I tried to convince them that my novels reflected the American Dream playing out in a city that could be a microcosm for any in the United States, and, therefore, it would resonate with readers nationwide. Regardless, the publishers just didn't have the vision I had for my novels.

I continued to send out letters to publishers, and I continued to collect rejection letters, until one day I had an epiphany. "Why," I asked myself, "should someone in New York get to decide whether people in Upper Michigan are allowed to read my books?" What I had been doing made no sense. It was time to take control of the situation. It was time to figure out how I could publish my novels myself.

About this time, the self-publishing revolution was beginning. Improvements in technology meant that books could be printed on demand. The

result was a steep decline in book production costs. In the 1980s, I had heard stories of people who had spent \$30,000 to self-publish a book. After a little research, I discovered I could publish a book with an online print-on-demand company for as little as \$1,000. The print-on-demand publisher would do the interior layout, design the cover for me, and give me twenty copies for that price. It would even do an editorial evaluation. I couldn't have found a better deal. I could also buy copies from the publisher at a significant discount. (Later, I would discover that discount wasn't significant enough—the local bookstores wanted 40 percent of my sales, which meant I would lose eight cents for every book I sold in a bookstore. As a result, I would seek out even more inexpensive ways to publish my successive books. But for the time being, I had found a way to print my books in an affordable manner and begin to sell them to my prospective readers in Upper Michigan.)

My purpose here isn't to explain self-publishing. Plenty of books have been written on the topic, and I recommend that anyone interested in being a freelance editor read some of them; you'll want to learn all aspects of the publishing industry so you can make life easier for your clients who will need handholding and expect you not only to be their editor but their publishing coach; you'll also want to learn how to work with layout people and printers to make your clients' books look professional and to make the jobs of everyone involved easier. *Dan Poynter's Self-Publishing Manual* is a great book to start with.

The important thing is that I took another leap of faith and published my first novel, *Iron Pioneers: The Marquette Trilogy, Book One*, in February 2006. It wasn't an overnight success, but it got enough local interest that I made back my expenses and went on to publish the next two novels in the trilogy, and then several more books as the years went by. With the publication of this book, I am now the author of twenty books, and I plan to write and publish many more before I'm done.

Once I had self-published, I discovered I also had to learn about marketing if I was going to get anyone to read my books. Many authors find marketing to be their biggest obstacle because they are introverts; they want to write their books, but they don't want to speak in public about them or try to convince anyone to buy them. I don't pretend to be a great marketer, but I've never shied away from it, even when it's meant forcing myself to pick up the phone or go into a bookstore to talk to the manager. When I was about to publish my first book, I realized, "If I can sell gas and electricity—which I don't care about—to people over the phone for eight hours a day, then I can definitely sell my books, which I really care about."

Today, as a freelance editor, I also have to know how to market my services to people, and so being a salesperson in a call center, as much as I disliked the job, ended up benefiting me in multiple ways in the long run.

My life now started to change dramatically. I thought by publishing my first book, I was launching my career as an author, and I was, but I was also on the brink of launching my career as an editor. This change came about through a mix of good fortune and a strong determination to find a new career that would be fulfilling and allow me to use my education.

Soon after I published my first book, I joined the Upper Peninsula Publishers and Authors Association. Through that organization, and mainly by talking to the other members, I learned a lot about self-publishing and book marketing. At about the same time, the company I worked for was in a bad position due to efforts to overturn deregulation in Michigan. I was concerned I might lose my job, and I was also unhappy wasting my writing skills and education, so I began looking for other sources of income. I knew it was unlikely I could support myself on book sales alone—since by now I had accepted that my regional novels were unlikely to become national bestsellers—and I knew there were no jobs in Marquette conducive to what I wanted to do. I didn't want to go back into teaching, and I was tired of working for other people I didn't always see eye-to-eye with, so I started looking online for work that would involve writing—work I could do from home. I joined self-publishing listservs, posted book reviews to Amazon, and did anything else I could think of to get noticed and find other sources of income connected to writing. Through this hit-and-miss search for a new career, I eventually became an editor. For about a year, I felt frustrated over my inability to find fulfilling work, and then everything came together very quickly.

One day, I responded to an email request for authors to be interviewed for the *Authors Access* internet radio show. I suggested I could speak on the show about writing regional fiction. The show's hosts, Irene Watson and Victor Volkman, agreed to have me on the program. Little did I know they would soon become two of my best friends in the publishing industry. Irene owned Reader Views, a book review and publicity company, and once I learned this, I signed up to be a book reviewer for her company. She was very happy with the work I did, and she knew I was looking for other work, so she soon hired me to interview authors and write press releases. This was not enough money by any means to leave my day job, but it allowed me to earn money on the side, become more familiar with the publishing industry, and use my writing skills. Victor and Irene also asked me to be the guest host for the *Authors Access* show whenever one of them was out, which I quickly agreed to. In time,

Victor, who owned Loving Healing Press and Modern History Press, also agreed to publish my books *King Arthur's Children* and *The Gothic Wanderer*. The three of us also produced the book, *Authors Access: Thirty Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers*, which featured articles by many of the show's guests on topics they had been interviewed about. I would also write several articles for the book.

That same month, when I was first interviewed on *Authors Access*, the Upper Peninsula Publishers and Authors Association held its annual conference and hosted Patrick Snow, a bestselling author and publishing coach, as its keynote speaker. To save the organization money, Patrick agreed to stay in someone's home, and since I had a spare room, I agreed to host him. This simple act of saying yes was one of the best things I ever did. I knew if Patrick stayed with me, I'd have the opportunity to pick his brain about the publishing industry. What I didn't expect was that he would be impressed that I had a PhD, and that as a publishing coach, he was looking for editors for his clients' books. I immediately agreed to edit books for Patrick's clients, and within about a year, I was getting enough referrals from Patrick and enough work from Reader Views to keep me busy every night after work.

Once Patrick asked me to edit for his clients, I felt I had better make sure my editing and proofreading skills were up to snuff. That might seem silly since I had a doctorate and had taught English, but I was conscientious, and I knew publishing industry standards were not necessarily those of academia. As a result, I responded to an ad for a proofreader at the *Marquette Monthly*, a local monthly magazine. The job was fifteen to twenty hours a month, so it would not be too time-consuming and it would allow me to hone my skills. It turned out those hours all had to be put in the week before the magazine's deadline, so once hired, I regularly had a very busy last week of the month.

As you can imagine, between working a full-time job, doing work on the side for Reader Views and *Marquette Monthly*, and editing books for Patrick's clients, every minute of nearly every day was full, and I was starting to feel very stressed. However, one thing that helped my stress a lot was that since 2006, just before my first book came out, I had started attending a local group focused on the Law of Attraction and particularly the Teachings of Abraham. Abraham is a collection of entities channeled through Esther Hicks that answers people's questions about the universe, the meaning of life, and how to make the Law of Attraction work in their lives. I felt like the Law of Attraction was definitely working in my life since I was now attracting what I wanted—book sales and meaningful work. By this point, I had published four books

and I had a sizeable amount of extra income coming in—the equivalent of half my day job income.

My day job was very demanding and stressful, though, and I could barely keep up with everything there. One day at work, I had a meeting with my boss and the two supervisors who worked under me to see how we could better distribute the work, since they all knew I had too much on my plate. Beforehand, I was asked to make a list of all my tasks and responsibilities, and then we would see what could be moved off my list. When that meeting was over, one item had been moved off my list and two had been added. Obviously, the meeting had not worked to my benefit.

A few days later at my Abraham-Hicks group, we watched a video in which someone asked Abraham how to handle feeling overwhelmed at work. Abraham said to make a list and then rip it in half. Next, tell your boss which half you are going to do. Well, I'd already made my list and it hadn't worked out for me, but I spent several days thinking about Abraham's advice. Then I realized that my work didn't include just my day job, but all my side jobs. If I were to rip my to-do list in half, it meant I would either have to quit doing all the work on the side or quit my day job. Guess which one I picked.

I felt so elated and relieved when I realized I was going to quit my day job. Of course, I was nervous about it, and I wanted to be cautious about how I did it. I knew it would be hard to replace me at my day job and that time would be needed to train my successor, so I gave my notice the first week of December and agreed to stay until Friday, January 30, 2009. That would give me some extra income over the holidays and time to save some money. I also had several weeks of vacation time saved up that would help tide me over in case I didn't have enough editing work in the beginning. But without my day job, I would also have more time to focus on finding editing work.

It was a scary leap of faith, but I took it regardless. The first couple of months of self-employment, I worried how I would make my mortgage payments, but by spring, I had constant work that has not let up since.

So that's the story of how I became a freelance editor. It happened in a roundabout way, but everything I learned in the jobs I had and my determination to continue writing ultimately got me where I was meant to be. What happened since—how I've maintained an editing business and learned to find balance between my work and personal life—will be described in the following chapters.

When I tell people what I do, they often say, "Oh, you have the dream job. You get to work from home." I'll tell you right now that being an editor is not a dream job. It is probably the best job for me, personally, but it is

not cushy or stress-free. People say to me, “Oh, you can be flexible with your time,” and my friends think I’m always free for lunch, but I always work more than forty hours a week, and often more than fifty. My relatives seem to think all I do is sit at home and write my own books, and therefore, I’m free to go run errands for them. The truth is, working for yourself from home means you have to fight to keep your boundaries strong. Yes, if I really want to take time to do something non-work related during the week, I can, but I also may have to make up for it by working an evening or a weekend. And yes, working for yourself means you can be a nomad. You can travel wherever you want and still do your work—but if you are self-employed and have no one to help you, that means checking emails and replying to clients on your vacations, or finding someone you trust to keep your business afloat while you’re away. If you want to live abroad, of course, you will take your work with you. I just want to be very clear from the start that being a nomad editor doesn’t mean just sunbathing on the Riviera; it means working hard so you can afford to take the time to sunbathe wherever and whenever you want.

If you have the skills and the right attitude, I’m sure you will enjoy working from home and doing the work, but just as with any job, editing has its frustrations and difficulties. You certainly can’t just work a few hours a day and then play the rest of the time if you want to support yourself. Books take a long time to edit, and most authors are in a hurry to get their books published. I easily spend anywhere from twenty to forty or more hours on every book I edit. With some books, it’s been 100 hours. A book can be several weeks of work because between client phone calls and emails and other interruptions, I can usually only get about five hours of actual editing done in a day, and I always work eight and often nine or ten hours a day. Of course, I eat lunch and breakfast in that time, but usually while reading and responding to emails.

As a freelance editor, it’s best to commit to working regular hours or a certain number of hours and not being easily swayed from them. The advantage is that most of your friends will have day jobs and be busy working too, but retired friends and relatives will want your time. Yes, if you want to go for a walk or drive to the grocery store during your work hours, you can do that, but I recommend you commit to a regular schedule as much as possible. I’ll talk more about all of this and the daily frustrations and triumphs of being an editor in the remainder of this book. But realize right now that this job is work just like any other job; it just gives you more flexibility so you can also be a nomad.

Best of all, you get to spend your day playing with words. Sometimes those words won't make much sense because your client can barely write a complete sentence, but other times, you get hired to edit a really fabulous book. Most of the time, you are editing a mediocre book that you are helping to turn into a good book. You also get to meet some fascinating people because, let's face it, while a lot of bad books are written, it takes someone with a lot of gumption and motivation to write a book, and most people who write books do have something interesting or original to say, maybe even something fascinating or innovative, even if they need you to ensure they say it well.

At the end of the day, I feel the best thing about my job is that I am helping to bring books into the world that will make a difference for who knows how many people. Whether those books are entertaining novels that help people forget their troubles, business books that help people become financially independent, or self-help books that help people overcome drug addictions or dysfunctional behaviors, books help people. Consequently, while I'm in the editing business, I'm also in the people-helping business, and that's a wonderful thing!

Being an editor is not always easy, but it's still wonderful. In the chapters that follow, I'll share the pros and cons of being a freelance editor. I'll teach you what to expect, and I'll offer resources for acquiring the skills you need to succeed. Ultimately, by learning from the mistakes I've made and the successes I've had, you'll be better prepared to have a long and enjoyable career as an editor.