

Public Humanities Workshop 1:
Pitching Editors and the Public
Humanities Ecosystem
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**Carnegie
Mellon
University**
English

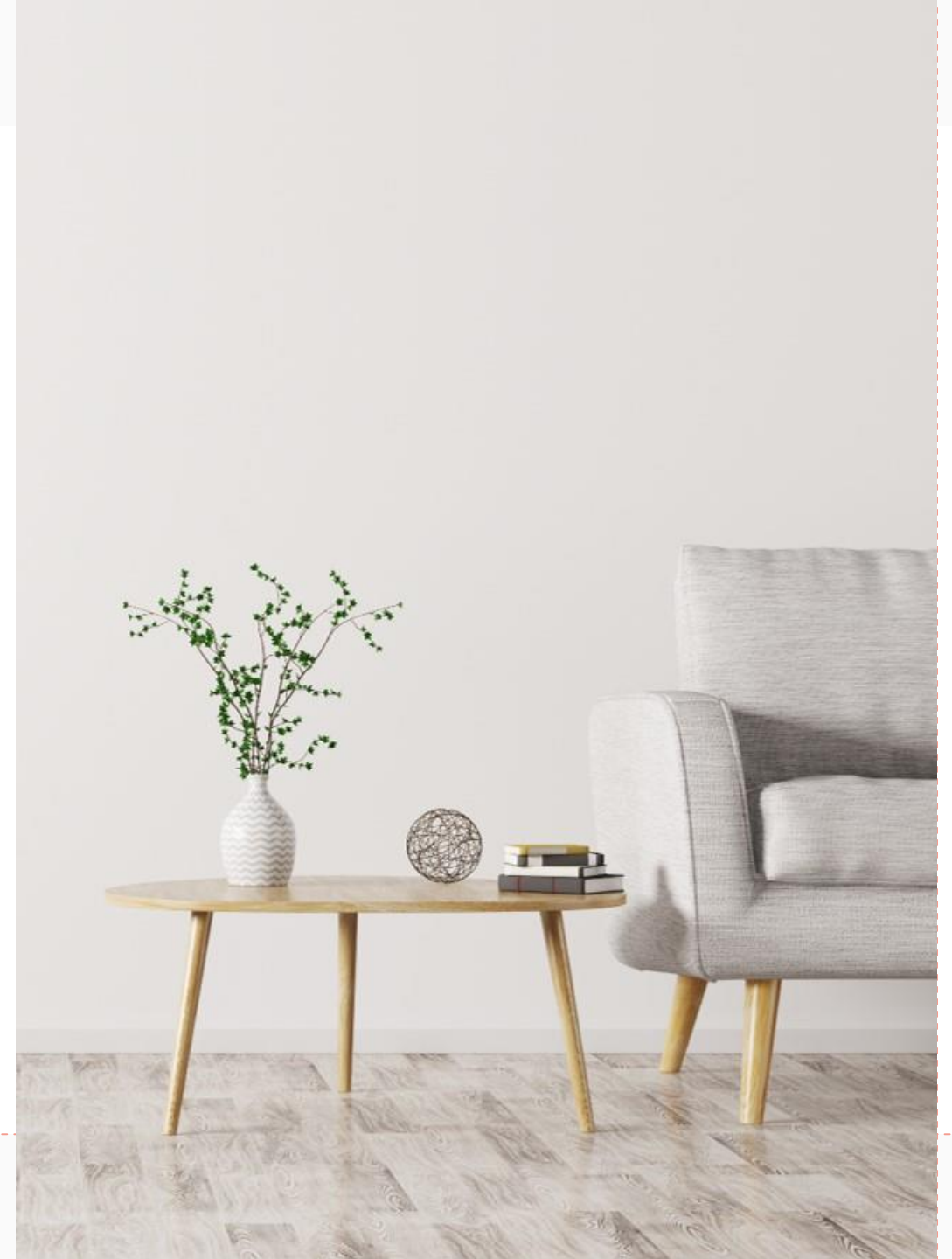
Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Goals
3. The Public Humanities Ecosystem
4. Strategies for Pitching Editors
5. Conclusion



Strategies for Pitching

Part One: Sending a Query or Pitch



When sending a pitch, it's always best to find a specific editor's email. In some circumstances, at mid-level sites (*LaRB*, *The Baffler*, etc.) this may be freely available on the masthead.

LA
RB



In others, such as at the more visible publications, email addresses will not be listed, *but they can be guessed*. Find out the email format for a particular site (something like `FIRSTNAME_LASTNAME@NAMEOFSITE.COM`) and feel free to send a pitch that way.



Research the editor, if there is a point of connection (similar interest, alma mater, lived in the same city for a time), then make it in the final paragraph of your pitch. **Be sure to use the correct honorific in the introductory email...**



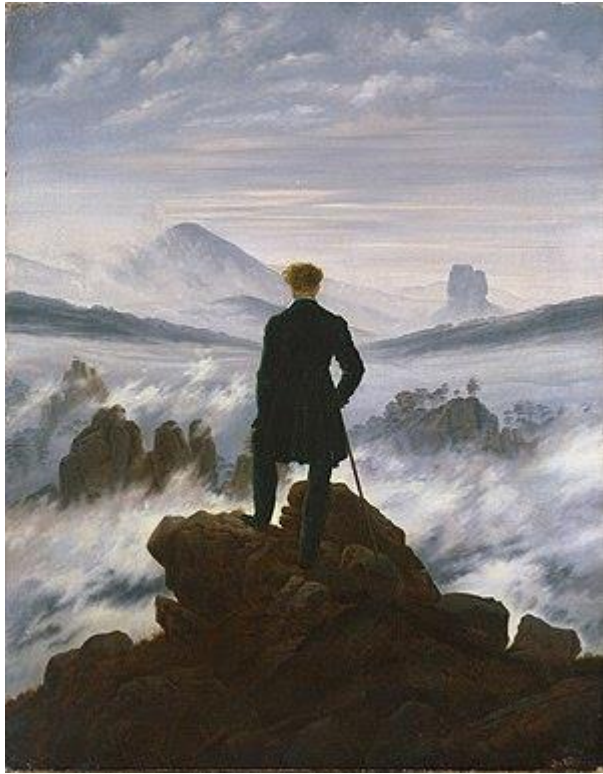
If all else fails, you can send a pitch to the submission email. Note that in general, a very small percentage of those pitches are ever responded to, much less read, much less even seen.



If you receive a rejection from the slush pile, but it's from a personalized email account, *that should be seen as a partial success*, because now you have an editor's direct contact for future pitches. Establishing relationships is crucial.



When building up a portfolio of writing, it's ideal to “level up” from less read sites to larger ones by coasting on the reputation and example of the former in benefit to the later.



Simultaneous submissions are fine, but once you've been scheduled at one place, it's bad form to kill at that site should you end up being accepted by a more prestigious one. Far better to simply write two different pieces on the same subject.

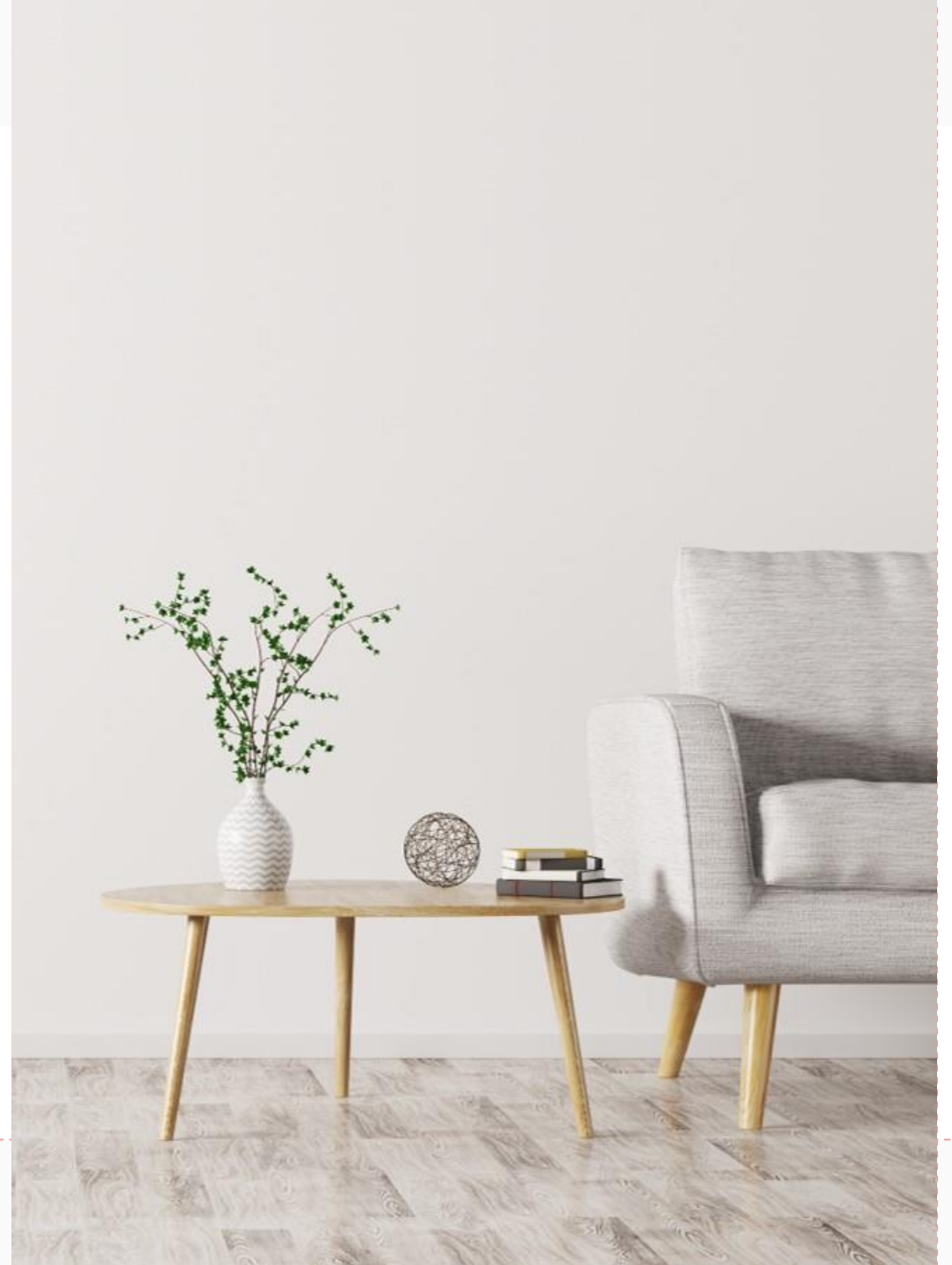
The logo for LA RB, featuring the letters 'LA' stacked above 'RB' in a bold, dark red, serif font.

When sending out pitches, if your goal is to be in the most widely read site, start there, and then if rejected, just fall down a level, and keep doing this until you find a home for your piece.



Strategies for Pitching

Part Two: The Pitch Itself



When writing a pitch, lean heavily on your credentials.



Two Parts to a Pitch:



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- 1) A few sentences on who you are, including faculty credentials and anything else that you may have written (public articles and trade books are best, but academic books are also good).

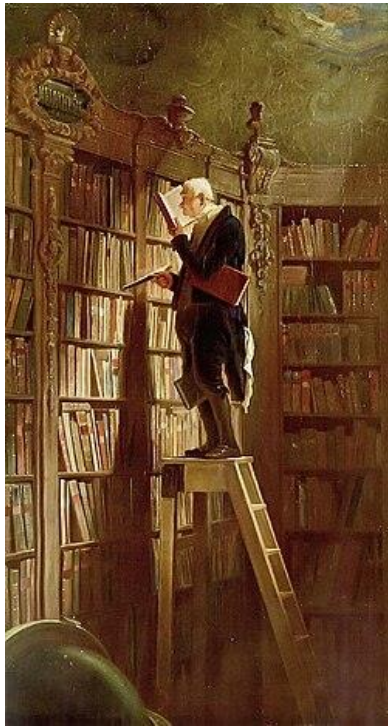


Two Parts to a Pitch:

2) The pitch itself. Three or four sentences on what you want to write, why you're the one to write it, why anyone in the public might care (here connection to current events can be helpful), and finally how you hope to do it.



Two to three short paragraphs at most. If it's long, editors will simply disregard.

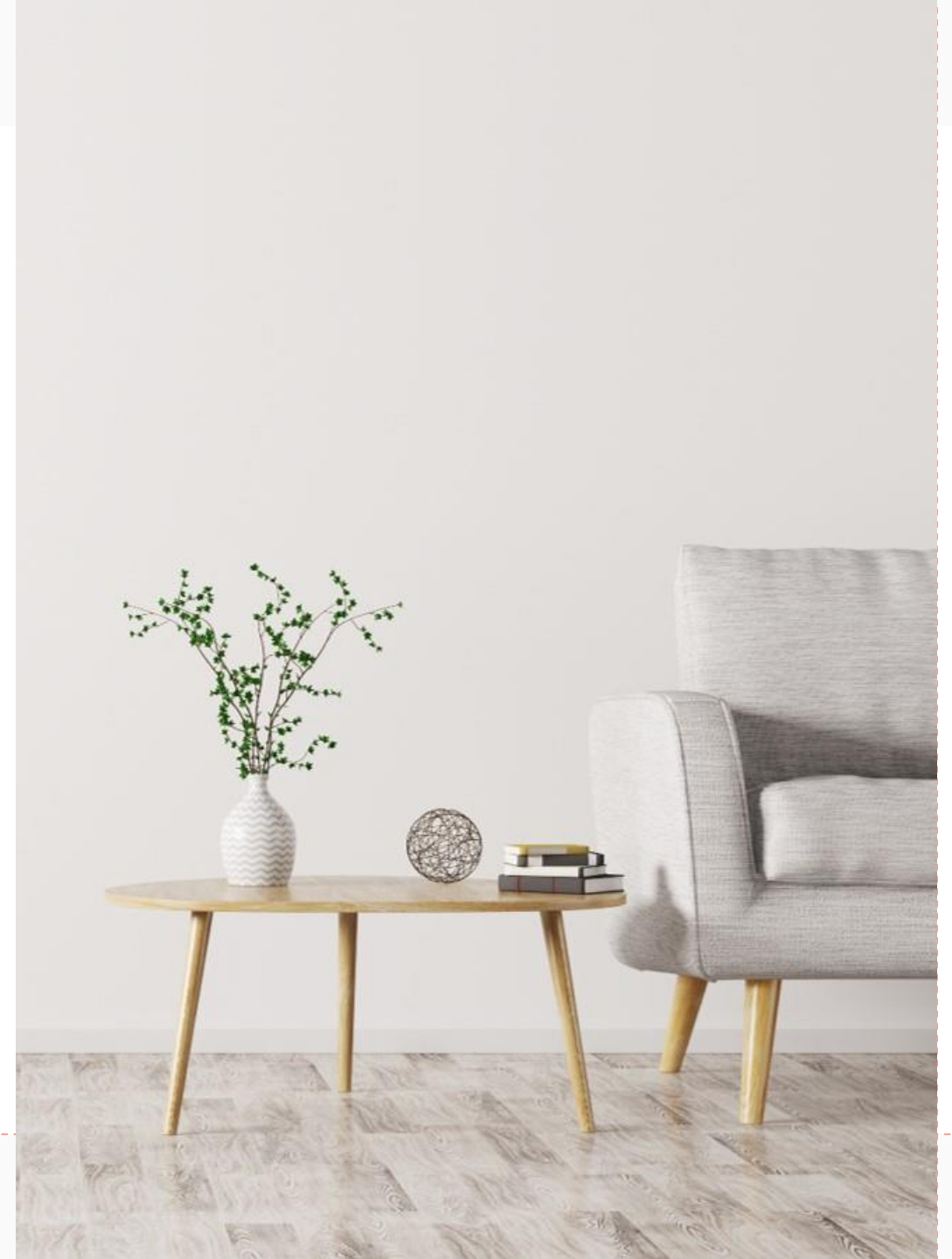


Emphasizing credentials is crucial because editors do like to work with academics, especially on a topic that they believe you might be uniquely suited to elucidate. Some warning though – many editors, sometimes fairly or unfairly, perceive academics as difficult to work with. Be mindful of that reputation.



Strategies for Pitching

Part Three: So, You Have an Acceptance...



You may be asked for follow-up with clarifications or additional ideas.

Some editors like to very much mold a piece to their publication's needs from the get-go; some are more lackadaisical.

As the writer, both approaches have positives and negatives.

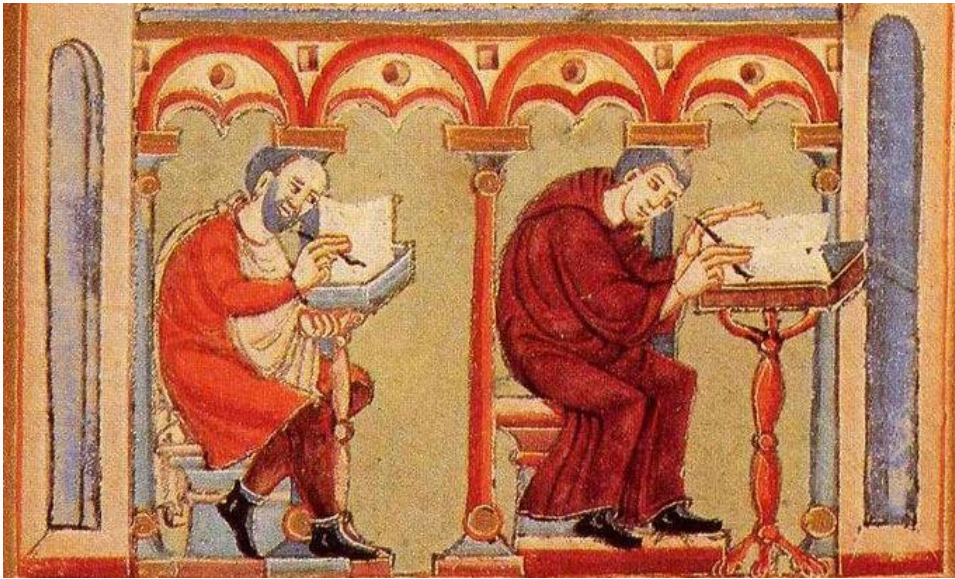
It's possible that you may go back and forth three, maybe four times.



Editors will normally stipulate tight deadlines, maybe very tight, if your subject is hinged to a breaking news story. At the big sites they will also be strict on wordcount.



The editorial process at sites can wildly vary, from a first draft being almost equivalent with the final to the overall work being radically different from the original.



Editing is a process, one where you will ideally have substantial input. Some editors preserve working with you through Google Docs or Word documents, but generally you will go through two or more rounds of edits and revisions, ideally using track changes.



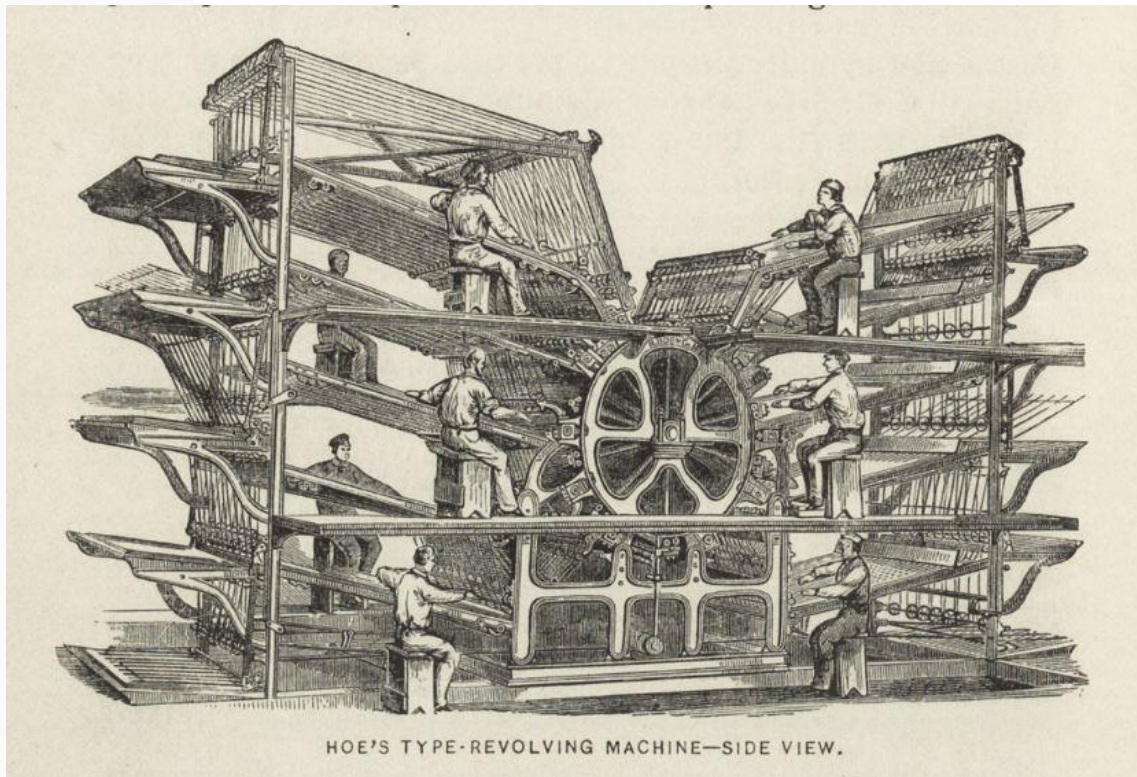
At larger sites, it's possible that you will work with your acquisition's editor, a copy editor, and a fact checker, all of whom may have different methods and expectations.



When working with an editor, you should have the right to sign off on a final draft. Never work with an editor that changes things without your approval before publishing.



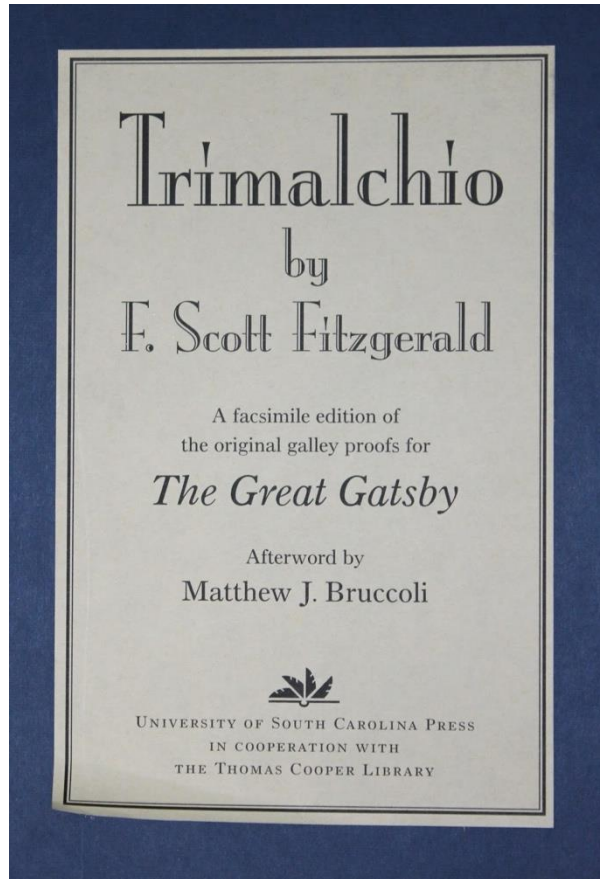
Be amenable to edits and revisions but if an editor is encouraging you to write something you don't agree with or that's not true to your argument, it's fine to pull a piece.



In general, working with editors requires more compromise than not. As a rule, knowing what small battles not to fight is crucial to bolster the ability to approach the big fights.

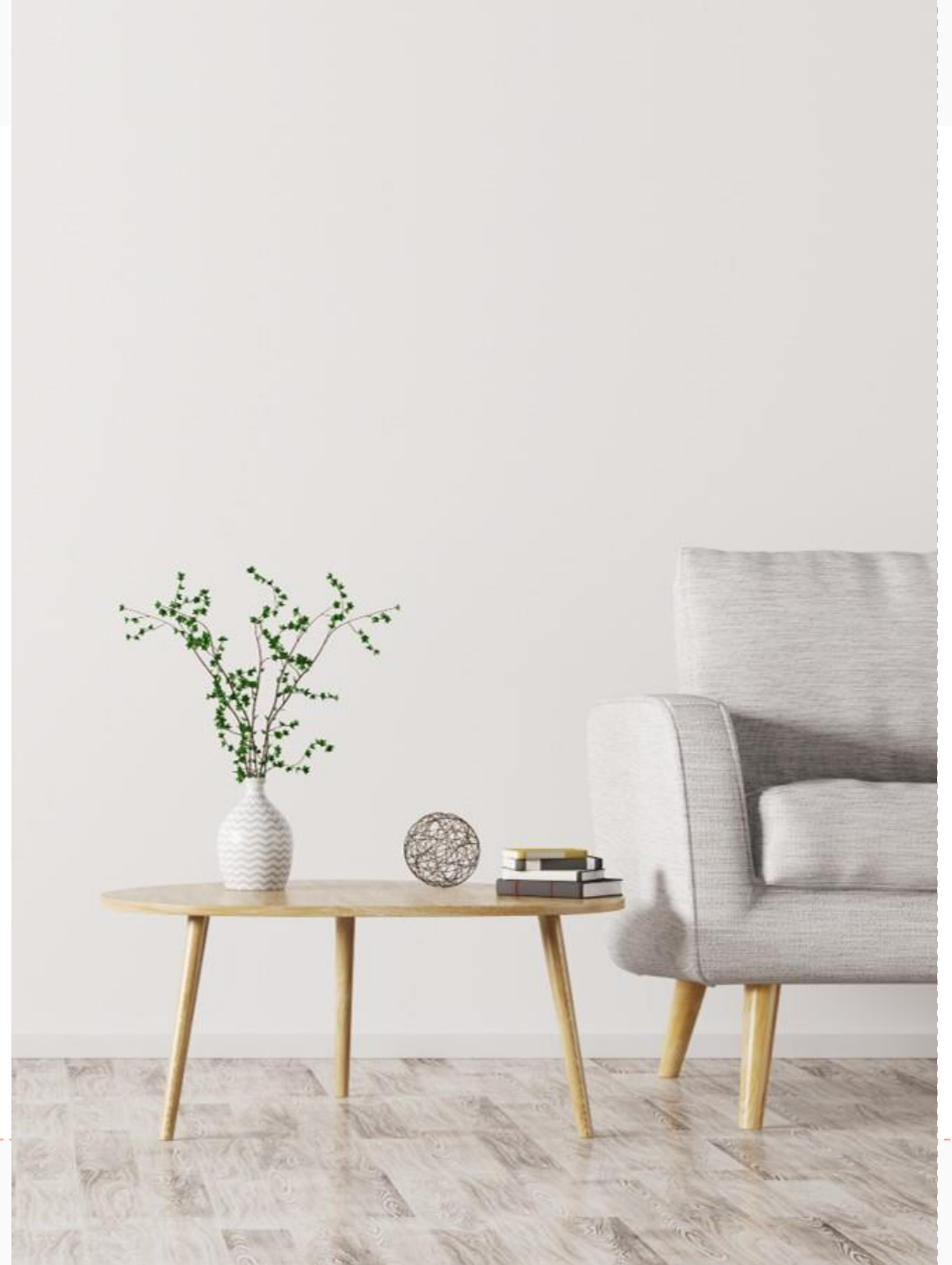


In the vast majority of cases, the editor is going to decide on the title. The title might not be what you'd intended, but the editor's goal is to get eyeballs on the article. There are good and bad aspects to this.



Strategies for Pitching

Part Four: A New Site



Finally, *The Pittsburgh Review of Books*...



Thank You

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