UNIT 3 EDITING MAGAZINES

Structure

11.0 Objectives

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Skills of an editor
   11.2.1 Understanding of his readers
   11.2.2 Good editorial judgment
   11.2.3 Visualization
   11.2.4 Work within time constraints
   11.2.5 Capacity to communicate
   11.2.6 Proficiency in language
   11.2.7 Understanding the principles of design
   11.2.8 Understanding of the production process

11.3 Editing process
   11.3.1 Editing the written text
   11.3.2 Editing text based stories and other content
   11.3.3 Editing news story
   11.3.4 Editing games and puzzles
   11.3.5 Editing illustrations
   11.3.6 Editing comic strip
   11.3.7 Editing the general layout

11.4 Let us sum up

11.5 Check your progress: possible answers

11.6 Activities

11.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Unit is to provide a practical guide for persons who will be responsible for editing magazines for children. The hope is not only to provide information but also to stimulate the thought and the imagination of the reader so that he can increase his effectiveness in the print industry and enhance his feelings of success and satisfaction. At the end of the Unit you will be able to:

- recognize the skills required for an editor of a children’s magazine; and
- understand the mechanics of editing stories, newsprint, illustrations, comic strips and layout.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

A well-stocked bookstall or bookstore houses many popular magazines for children. They are very popular amongst the children and one can get overwhelmed and besieged by the colors, pictures and stories they carry. They are, hence, one major part of the print industry. Magazines for children are a source of information and knowledge and they serve the purposes of the readers well. They have thus a captive and target audience and, hence the editor for such magazines will know exactly who the readers are and, hence can have an accurate thought about the ideas, habits and interests of the readers. This does carry a major disadvantage as the readers could be taken for granted too easily.
Often we see that the magazines for children are supervised by persons who are professionals in the field of editing but are inexperienced to the needs and desires of the target audience i.e. children. It is important for the editor to love children and should be aware of their likes and dislikes. If he does not keep this in mind, the publication will lack the reader’s appeal and suffer from poor communication.

The main concern of the editor should be to maintain the professional standards of the content despite being written for and sometimes by children. At the same time the editor should make sure that recognized editorial standards are maintained while editing the contents being provided by children themselves. We will discuss this aspect in detail later in this Unit.

Thus, we can see that magazines for children occupy its own very special place in the children’s literature and have its own problems and concerns. It does share some concerns with other print media but it requires some special handling by the editor. The next few sections will discuss this in detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check your progress 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I) What is the major quality that an editor of children’s magazine should possess?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.2 SKILLS OF AN EDITOR

The editor must be equipped with certain special skills. We will discuss these in detail.

11.2.1 Understanding of his readers

This is the first and most important concern of any good editor. There is no substitute for this. The editor must know his readers, understand how they think, react and how this can be related in the magazine. However, he must be able to stand apart from the readers so that he can analyze them objectively. The editor must respect the readers and must not talk down to them. This is one major mistake that often adults do. The editor must make sure that the readers are not looked down at and are treated as equals.

11.2.2 Good editorial judgment

In the process of editing children’s magazines an editor has to take certain decisions and stand by them. Lack of this quality will make the work weak and inadequate. This quality will make him think and act like his readers. This will help the editor go beyond formulas and discover how to reach his audiences.

11.2.3 Visualization

The editor must keep a bird’s eye view of the content. He should be able to visualize how the content will look on the printed page. He will know how to select the
11.2.4 Work within time constraints

Magazine publishing is done with fixed time restrictions. Keeping schedule of publication is of utmost importance. The editor has to learn working with time constraints of bringing out the issues on time. He cannot afford to miss deadlines. He has to dedicate himself to a fixed calendar and work within rigid goals.

11.2.5 Capacity to communicate

A magazine should contain good text, catchy illustrations and sound editorials. It should appear as though the text is speaking to the audience. The editor should make sure that the content has the correct capacity to communicate. The text has to create an impression on the minds of the readers and should inspire the readers. Pictures and titles should pleasantly appear well together.

11.2.6 Proficiency in language

An editor has to be in ease with words and have linguistic competence in the language he operates. He should be well aware of the constructions of the sentences and know semantics as well. He should be able to rebuild the sentences to increase readability.

11.2.7 Understanding the principles of design

The editor should know the basics of design and pay special attention to the size, cover and general appearance of the pages. He should be able to understand the page layout to maintain a good balance on the printed page. He should also know the aspects of drawing and painting and think graphically and be conscious of the pictures and the white spaces around them to enhance readability.

11.2.8 Understanding of the production process

The editor must also have an understanding of the various processes of printing and their suitability for a particular job. The editor should be able to understand the limitations and advantages of various printing processes. This will help him to economize on expenditure.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;
2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

2) Discuss some of the skills that an editor needs to possess while editing magazines for children.

........................................................
........................................................
........................................................
........................................................

11.3 EDITING PROCESS

The job of an editor can be complicated but rewarding. The editor must thus be equipped with a large number of technical skills and must have the ability to
supervise the work of other staff members working under him. One has to keep in mind that the magazines for children can be divided into two main groups, (1) the written text, i.e. the stories and news and (2) the visual elements i.e. photographs, illustrations and comics. We also often find games and puzzles along with the written and visual content.

11.3.1 Editing the written text

The most essential element of a children's magazine is the text, or the reading matter that fills up most of the pages. We see that size of the volume, number of pages, and frequency of publication all are designed in order to make reading easier and more pleasant. The basic step in the editorial procedure is the procurement of such content either from adults writing for children or by children themselves.

The major bulk of the content is fictional stories. The other articles can be accounts of personal experiences, a how-to-do it items (for example, making arts and crafts), an informative articles (historical or geographical information of any place), biographical information (life of Madam Curie or Mahatma Gandhi) or news relating to the children's interests (school events).

Children's magazine also contains the editorial, which is the direct concern of the editor. This is an expression of the editor's point of view on a contemporary issue or his attempt to whip up some point of concern. This includes what the editor says directly to the readers, which are quite distinct from what the authors and the contributors say in their articles or features. For example, an editor can talk about health and hygiene or say-no- to- poly-bags campaign.

11.3.2 Editing text based stories and other content

One of the biggest challenges for any editor is to think of the variety of content and also to present it in the most entertaining and appealing manner. The source of the ideas of the content comes from various factors. It also has several important features that help it become publishable. Let us discuss them.

1) Needs of the reader: As discussed earlier, the editor must directly be concerned and address the needs of the reader. The editor must not think of ideas out of the blue but rather make use of the understanding he has of his readers. The content is thus based firstly on the readers and then the editor uses his creative imagination to use them correctly. The children are interested in things that are directly related to their lives. They are concerned about their needs and the issues that they face. Often as adults, we trivialize such issues but here the editor must keep them in mind. They will provide the text for your feature.

2) Firmly rooted in interest: The content should be firmly rooted in the interest level of the reader. No child would like to read articles on obscure subjects however well written they might be. Editors who plan the children's magazine must ask themselves, what questions are the readers asking themselves? What are they thinking about? The content should be planned in such a manner that they contribute to answer the questions that might arise in the minds of the reader as well as encourage their thinking ability. The relevance of the feature must be made clear to the readers. This will make the ideas flow out in better manner.

3) Teamwork: No matter how brilliant the editor he cannot come up with all the ideas. All other persons in contact with the magazine readership for example the layout artist, cartoonist etc. can also contribute the ideas for the content. A good idea also largely depends on teamwork and team cohesiveness. A clever editor must always be open to suggestions and he can thus use them to make it into a publishable feature. The editor always thinks with the help of others.
4) Purpose of your magazine: An editor must always ask himself, ‘what my magazine is going to do’? The various aspects of the content must fulfill the purpose of the magazine. A magazine is not so much for the readers as it is of the readers. The articles, therefore, are planned about, the readers collectively and individually. Each article must have an inherent message that captures the attention of the child and to sustain his interest.

5) Balance: Through a correct balance in the articles the content standard can be achieved. For a children's magazine there is the possibility of a large number of suitable subjects for the content. Not every article will appeal to every child. Some children will be very much interested in a particular subject while others may not. For example, not all children will be interested in features of sports. But each section of readership must be taken into account while planning by the editor. Hence, a balance of interests should be maintained. All the readers must not be taken to be alike, as the content should provide for the common as well as uncommon interests.

6) Comprehensive: The features should not only be well balanced but they also should be comprehensive. An alert editor must explore all the ideas behind reader interest. No subject should be overlooked and the experience of the childhood can provide ideas in content. One must also keep in mind the emergent issues.

7) Variety: There should be variety in subjects. For example, new topics can also be explored such as travelogues and cooking columns. There should be several methods of development of ideas and various kinds of treatments will keep the interests of the readers alive. For example, crossword puzzles and word games will sustain the interests of the child. However, the layout should not overshadow what the feature has to say.

8) Effective communication: The content has to be planned in such a manner that it says what has to be said and it communicates its meanings carefully. A feature must be accessible to the reader and it must be able to get to the point rather quickly. He must not labour hard to get through the text. Sometimes an editor’s note in the beginning can be used that will help the readers go through the ideas and also encourage them to read. The entire magazine should be congenial and friendly to the child. The content should be persuasive enough to direct the child in his understanding of the text.

Check your progress 3 & 4

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;
2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

3) Why is balance in the content important?

4) How will the editor ensure that the content has effective communication?
11.3.3 Editing news story

Another important feature of the content is news story. It is often felt that there is no need for news in a children’s magazine. However, news of concern to children can add great value benefit to the magazine. The editor must ensure that the good story answers all the questions that might arise in the minds of the reader. The writing style must be consistent to the needs of the children and must not have needless, antiquated details. The news has to be credible and true. It should be based on authentic facts.

One has to make sure that the news does not offend the sentiments of the reader and the editor should also go through letters to editors, advertisements and comic strips carefully. It should also protect the interests of both the reader and the magazine. One has to remember the tastes and age of the readers. For example four letters swear words are a taboo for children. The children will learn from them if they are printed. No content should reinforce bad or wrong values in the child. Foul words and profanity must be avoided at all costs by the editor.

Names of the persons in the content and the contributors must be spelt correctly. Nothing can be more dismaying to the child than to see their names miss spelt in print. One must also get the gender correct. For example, one should be specific if the contributor is male or female by suffixes such as “Singh or Kaur” (Rajinder Singh or Rajinder kaur) or Miss or Master. The news must also avoid stereotypes and the editor as to ensure that the content is free from xenophobia and racism.

The writing of any news has to be smooth and continuous. Readers especially children will get bogged down by wordiness. The editor should avoid pompous sentences. For example, the following sentence can be rewritten in the following manner. “The headmaster said that the proposed help by the children was needed to undo the chaos caused by the pupils.” This sentence can be rewritten as “The headmaster said, ‘Proposed help by the children is needed to undo the chaos caused by them.’” The editor should make sure that all pompous sentences are deleted by making shorter sentences or by breaking them into two. For example, the following sentence can be rewritten in this manner. One teacher when asked about the children’s progress the following year that showed marked improvement said that, "Nikhil has shown tremendous progress this year." This can be rewritten as, “One teacher was asked about the good progress of children in the previous year. She said that, "Nikhil has shown tremendous progress this year."

The editor must keep in mind the typographical errors that might not be seen in the spell check, for example, closest friends instead of closest fiends or this instead of thus. Usually it is easier to consume news on the radio or the TV as it is enhanced through picture or sound. Reading news in a magazine requires great energy on the part of the reader, which means that the editor must ensure that good writing is employed. This will greatly reduce the time and energy spent.

The editor must therefore delete clichés, extraneous words, jargons, ambiguities and non-descript adjectives and adverbs. The whole content should go well together and one should realize that the whole content is important rather than just the parts. The editor has to keep certain questions in mind. They are as follows:

- Does the story get right to the point?
- Is it accurate?
- Are the lead sentences smooth or does it meander or puzzle?
- Does the second paragraph deliver what was said in the first one?
Does the third paragraph continue with the development?

Is the opinion of the reader taken into account?

Is the tone of the story appropriate for the subject matter?

Do the sentences flow out from one to another?

Has the writer drawn out most from the language?

Is the word in the correct link to the subject?

Does the lead sentence work?

Check your progress 5

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

5) What are the questions the editor must ask before editing a news story?

The editor has, therefore, to ensure that the news story is credible and authentic for the reader. This, he can do by keeping the following points in mind:

1) Facts have to be correct and true. They should tell the main story and be developed in the following paragraphs.

2) Clichés must be avoided – same old words should not appear.

3) A lead should not be confusing and should not high figures, for example results of children.

4) The main clause should come with subsequent clauses, for example, “Armed with a cricket bat that was heavier than before, Rahul won the cricket match.”

5) Information must come from the subsequent paragraphs.

6) Direct quotes can also be used as it become quite compelling for readers and captivate their attention.

7) The story should be present with the context.

8) Views are important and “I and we” can be used to define ideas.

9) Slang and colloquialism must be avoided.

10) Details must be relevant to the story.

11) Sentences should be short and paragraphs should be succinct of about 117-20 words.
12) There should be use of words such as “however, meanwhile, later, elsewhere etc.”

13) Word limits are a must and they should be strictly adhered to. Writing must be tight.

14) Unnecessary sentences can be replaced by words like revert back, cancel, check out, slow down etc.

15) Sentences should be direct.

16) Weak verbs should be replaced for example, ‘The city has no electric supply’, can be written as, ‘the city lacks electric supply’.

17) The editor should make sure that the obvious is omitted, for example the class was filled with students, who else will fill a class.

18) Repetition must be avoided.

19) Unnecessary pronouns must be dropped like that, which, where, who etc.

Some rules in grammar

There are some points of grammar to be kept in mind by the editor. They are as follows:

1) Full stops should be used for initials like C.D. Singh etc.

2) Semi colons must be used in a compound sentence, which is not joined by a conjunction. It serves the time of ¾ of a period.

3) Commas should define relationship and between two adjectives like bright, red sun etc.

4) Hyphen should be used to connect the words.

5) Colons should be used in direct quotations like, The man said: “I regret doing this.”

11.3.4 Editing games and puzzles

Games and puzzles form an integral part of any children’s magazine. The editor should also look at them carefully. He should keep the following points in mind:

1) Age appropriateness: The games and the puzzles should be according to the age of the readers. They should not be too simple or too complicated. They should suit the needs and the wants of the readers.

2) Number accuracy: Each of the puzzles should be solved first and only then be printed. If numbers are being used they should be accurate and absolutely correct. If they are not rechecked it can lead to inaccuracy on the part of the readers.

3) Colours and illustrations: Puzzles can involve the use of colours or illustrations. This will give great readership appeal and variety.

4) Spacing: The puzzles and games do not occupy much space on the printed page. So they should be laid down in an appropriate corner so that the viewers do not miss them.

5) Obscure and vague terms: Terminology used in the games should not be vague or abstract. They should be concrete and based on hard facts.
Check your progress 6

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

6) Discuss any three points that the editor will keep in mind while editing games and puzzles.

11.3.5 Editing illustrations

Usually children's magazines make ample use of illustrations unlike scholarly journals. Photographs and artwork are the commonest type of illustrations to be used, as they are relatively easy to obtain and lend themselves to a variety of uses. Another popular type of illustrations is comics. The artwork can also take the form of decorative headings and thumbnail illustrations.

As soon as the content for an issue has been planned, the editor must procure all the illustrative material that is pertaining to it. The editor must keep all the illustrations in hand before planning the next step. It often happens that the selection of the content depends upon whether suitable illustrations are available or not. It can take more on an illustration than writing the content. The experienced editor always considers the visual treatment of the magazine.

The editor is always concerned about procuring pictures. Text and pictures go together with the content. A good editor will think about them together while going through with his plans. An editor has to look for certain qualities in pictures. They are given below:

1) A photograph must have a glossy print and the paper should not be dull or matt.

2) There should be distinct tonal qualities in a black and white illustration. There should well define shades of gray. There should also not be any space for pure white. Contrast should be maintained.

3) The photograph should have sharp focus and should show up in a clear outline. The near foreground or the far background should be out of focus. This will add depth to the picture.

4) The size of the picture should be correct. They should allow reduction rather than enlargement. Reducing the size will result in sharp quality of the picture.

5) Composition of the picture and the illustration should be correct. All the pictures should not run in the same direction. Vertical lines can be placed along with horizontal ones. Remember placing illustrations is like stringing beads on a string.

6) The composition of the picture should also be well balanced. This means that if a vertical line is drawn through the picture then a complete whole can be obtained.
7) They should have story value. Illustrations must connect to the text.

8) Illustrations should arouse interest and should not be obscure, it should not cause the reader to think as "what is this?"

9) Color illustrations must be used as much as possible.

10) Legal restrictions placed on photographs should be followed and credits must be given to the photographer by having his name mentioned.

11) Pictures can also be used as fillers in empty spaces.

12) Illustrations made by children should remain original. No tampering should be done to it. The names of the contributors must be made. Nothing can be more disappointing to a child than a forgotten credit.

13) To show the colour, the pen lines must be thicker than usual. Clear, strong poster colours must be used and they look best with black. Dull and muddy colours should not be used.

Check your progress 7

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

7) Discuss any four points to be kept in mind while editing illustrations.

11.3.6 Editing comic strip

Comics make an integral part of any children’s magazine. An editor has to ensure that certain standards are maintained. They are discussed below:

1) The comics should be motivating and appealing.

2) They should arouse interest.

3) They should help to build vocabulary.

4) They should satisfy the child’s expectation of art.

5) They should be easy to read.

6) They should be hilarious and provoke laughter.

7) The central idea should not be complicated or complex.

8) They should show motion, action and continuity.

9) The editor should encourage comics on history, personalities, religious figures and literary characters in order to provide variety.

10) They should be intelligent, however nonsensical or fantastic the characters might appear.
11.3.7 Editing the general layout

The editors must also be concerned about the general layout of the magazine. They should fulfill certain functions.

1) They should catch the readers’ eye. It should attract attention and be kind of flag to help in stopping the eye of the child on the magazine.

2) The content should elicit strong reader’s interest. It should be visually involving and prevent him from keeping the magazine aside.

3) The magazine must serve its purpose and intention.

4) The editor should consider the size, cover and weight.

5) The magazine should be simple and direct. The illustrations should be uncluttered and all aspects of design that are extraneous and complicated should be removed.

6) The layout should maintain variety and must be accurate.

7) The headings and the titles should be interesting and has to address the concern of the child.

8) Pictures should be well captioned and should carry the entire message of the feature.

9) Some pages are very important and they require careful attention of the editor like page 1, 2 and 3, the back pages, and the center page. Sometimes editors make sure that posters are given in the center page so that the magazine can become more collectible for the child like the photograph of a popular singer, actor or sports star.

10) Margins should be well defined and should give a shape to the page.

11) The white spaces in the magazine have also to be considered by the editor. There should be enough white space between the heading and the text.

12) The magazine can have two or four columns.

11.4 LET US SUM UP

The editor of the children’s magazine thus maintains a very special relationship with his readers. He tries to actively participate with his readers and his job is “with” the readers and not “to” the readers. A good editor always maintains communication with his audiences and his main focus is not only to ensure circulation but also to capture and arouse the interest of his readers and gain their respect and favourable response.

11.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

1) Often we see that the magazines for children are supervised by persons who are professionals in the field of editing but are inexperienced to the wants and desires of the target audience i.e. children. One of the most important points to be kept in mind by the editor is that the editor loves children and is acutely aware of their likes and dislikes. If he does not keep their desires in mind, the publication will lack reader’s appeal and will suffer from poor communication.
2) Understanding of the principles of design: The editor should know the basics of design and pay special attention to the size, cover and general appearance of the pages. He should be able to present the text well and also maintain a good balance. He should also know the aspects of drawing and painting and think graphically and be conscious of the pictures and the white spaces around them.

Check your progress 3

3) Through a correct balance in the articles the content standard can be achieved. For a children's magazine there is the possibility of a large number of suitable subjects for the content. Not every article will appeal to the child. Some children will be very much interested in a particular subject while others may not. For example, not all children will be interested in features of sports. But each section of readership must be taken into account while planning by the editor. Hence a balance of interests should be maintained. All the readers must not be alike whereas the content should provide for the common as well as uncommon interests.

Check your progress 4

4) The content has to be planned in such a manner that it says what has to be said and it communicates its meanings carefully. It should not say what one does not intend and also not have overtones that the readers are not aware of. A feature must be accessible to the reader and he must be able to get to the point rather quickly. He must not labour hard to get through the text. Sometimes an editor's note in the beginning can be used that will help the reader go through the ideas and also encourage them to read. The entire magazine should be congenial and friendly to the child. The content should be persuasive enough to direct the child in his understanding of the text.

Check your progress 5

5) Does the story get right to the point?
   1) Is it accurate?
   2) Are the lead sentences smooth or does it meander or puzzle?
   3) Does the second paragraph deliver what was said in the first one?
   4) Does the third paragraph continue with the development?
   5) Is the opinion of the reader taken into account?
   6) Is the tone of the story appropriate for the subject matter?
   7) Do the sentences flow out from one to another?
   8) Has the writer drawn out most from the language?
   9) Is the word in the correct link to the subject?
  10) Does the lead sentence work?

Check your progress 6

6) Age appropriateness: The games and the puzzles should be according to the age of the readers. They should not be too simple or too complicated. They should suit the needs and the wants of the readers.
**Number accuracy:** Each of the puzzles should be solved first and only then be printed. If numbers are being used they should be accurate and absolutely correct. If they are not rechecked it can lead to inaccuracy on the part of the readers.

**Color and illustrations:** Puzzles can involve the use of color or illustrations. This will give great readership appeal and variety.

**Check your progress 7**

7) Colour illustrations must be used as much as possible.

   Legal restrictions placed on photographs should be followed and credits must be given to the photographer by having his name mentioned.

   Pictures can also be used as fillers in empty spaces.

   Illustrations made by children should remain original. No tampering should be done to it. The names of the contributors must be made. Nothing can be more disappointing to a child than a forgotten credit.

   To show the colour the pen lines must be thicker than usual. Clear, strong poster colours must be used and they look best with black. Dull and muddy colours should not be used.

**11.6 ACTIVITIES**

1) Choose any one famous historical personality that a feature can be written on.

2) Choose any two cartoons that can be printed in a children’s magazine.

3) Choose any one game that can be printed in your magazine.