









# Secretary's Digest

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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|  Leisure Day | June   |
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Members,

You have a new Executive Committee from this term with some members serving for the first time. We are looking to bring you a tenure of enlivening and educational programmes. The first two events of the year, Valentine's and Secretaries' days were held at venues not usually frequented.



We look forward to your thoughts, comments and assistance. What would you like the Committee to organise? What do you feel today's secretary would benefit from? Are there any events you could arrange, through your organisation or acquaintances? Please feel free to contact any one of us.

As you can see our ASA sisters are very active. Some associations have been holding seminars/workshops etc. in cities besides their own as well.

Ms. Pouruchisty Sidhwa of GSK writes on the evolution of the secretary. Much has changed in the past century, but whatever the Secretary might be called today, her basic duties remain and she is here to stay for some time yet.

I trust you will find the article on Proofreading as useful as I have. Please let me know whether there are any particular articles you would like to see in future issues of the Secretary's Digest.

I wish you the very best professionally and personally.

Cheers!  
Goretti Ali  
Editor

## INTRODUCTIONS

### Natasha Z. Mavalvala – President



I'm working as an Executive Secretary to the Country Manager Pakistan Saudi Arabian Airlines. I have over 30 years of service. I am a mother of three. My eldest son has graduated with a Bachelor's in Biological Anthropology from Canada. I love travelling, doing community/social work and I am on three committees. I also love dancing and handwork.

### Liana Janis Lobo - Secretary



Adventurous by nature, my interests include arts/crafts, cooking/baking, music/dancing and travel. I was a member of St. Anthony's Senior Choir from 1996 to 2006. In 2013, following my passion for hair and make-up I topped the Hair Sculpting class at Pivot Point. Since then I've taken it on as a part-time profession, working from home.

My secretarial career began in 1998 at Maskatiya Industries (Pvt.) Ltd. followed by a short stint at the Nigerian Consulate. I am currently working at Jahangir Siddiqui & Co. Ltd. since 2000, as Executive Secretary to the Founder - JS Group/Chairman – JS Bank Ltd. From 2008 – 2010, I simultaneously assisted the Board of Trustees of the Endowment Fund Trust for Preservation of the Heritage of Sindh at its inception.

I've been a member of the DSSP since 2005 and served on the Project Sub-Committee and on the Awards Sub-Committee of the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASA Congress in 2014.

### Mahnaz Irani – Treasurer



Associated with DSSP for over 20 years, and now serving on the Executive Committee as its Treasurer. I have been fortunate to have worked for organisations known for their standards and professionalism. Currently I'm working for the CEO of an advertising agency.

### Mahnaz Irani Contd.

I am proud of who and what I am! Assignments/responsibilities given to me are done with utmost enthusiasm, which has earned me the respect of the management and co-workers.

On a personal note: We are a family of four and enjoy quality time when together. With the Almighty's blessings, my 27 year old son studies in Australia, and daughter who is 23, completes her MBA this year.

I can indulge myself all day long, in needle art, be it stitching, crocheting etc. Holiday for me is either traveling or time well spent at home being creative. I am a music lover and also enjoy my time in the kitchen, cooking and experimenting with different types of fun recipes.

### Zainab Hakimuddin – Joint Secretary



I have retired from Pakistan State Oil Company after 30+ years of service. My son is presently working for the same company. I have studied and graduated from St. Joseph's School and College. This is my third term on DSSP's Executive Committee. I enjoy working for the Executive committee and also try to share my ideas and experiences with the committee. Since I do not have any other personal assignments I am always looking for opportunities through which I can help the DSSP improve. I enjoy my retired life at home. My hobbies are reading and watching TV.

### Charmaine Fernandes – Social Secretary



My personality says "I am who I am!" I am genuine and tend to seek out the same quality in others. My loyalty is granted, but, to a few. Emotionally powerful, I can handle huge amounts of stress and seldom crumble under pressure. I know how to get things done and am certainly not afraid to take on a new project.

My son Bento is my only pride and joy in life and I am sure he would continue to make me proud of his every move in life.

*Charmaine Fernandes Contd.*

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASA Congress I had taken the role as Head of the Convention Sub-Committee and along with my team delivered to the best of my abilities, which contributed to a very successful and memorable Congress, and made us all proud Pakistanis!

**Goretti Ali – Editor News Bulletin**

I enjoy travelling, art & handwork and research writing. I have contributed articles to various publications and I'm actively involved in my parish and community. I have seen most of Pakistan, parts of India, took a pilgrimage to the Holy cities in Europe, visited Canada and spent a year in New York, USA. While attending three ASA Congresses I visited Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

I have been a secretary for 30+ years, joined DSSP in 1995 and won the First PS Award in 1996, also participating in the fashion show "Nine to Five" for that event. My first term as Editor News Bulletin was the following year. For the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASA Congress last year, I handled the designing and printing of all Congress material and served as Editor News Bulletin on the Committee. I look forward to working with the Execucom during my third tenure.

**Persis Solan – Executive Member**

I am working as a Secretary to the CEO ACE Insurance Limited since the last 10 years. This is my first term on DSSP's Executive Committee. Formerly an Indian, I got married to a Pakistani Parsi and touched the ground of Pakistan in 1992. I am a mother of three children, my eldest daughter has done her ACCA, second one is doing her Bachelors in Finance and my son is in BVS Parsi High School. I love travelling, reading, shopping and spending time with my children.

**Juliana Peter – Executive Member**

I have 10 years of corporate experience in the administrative profession. I joined GSK in 2004 and moved to Siemens, Faysal Bank, Central Depository Company, AIG and since 2013 have been with Qatar Airways as Administrative Coordinator.

I joined DSSP as an Associate Member in 2013, participated in the Professional Secretary's Award in 2014 and am now on the Executive Committee for 2015-2016.

My personality traits are outgoing, enthusiastic, optimistic, high-spirited and lively. I am a highly driven person always looking out for opportunities for growth and have defined goals. I love travelling, photography, soccer, art, books and everything that helps me see the world from a different vantage point.

My two sons are still very young but the source of all my inspiration.

**Arnawaz Billia – Executive Member**

My education started from Mama Parsi Girls' High School and I graduated from St. Joseph's College for Women. My career spans over 42 years; from which four years were spent in Tehran, Iran. From a junior secretary I gradually reached the post of Personal Assistant. Have been associated with companies in fields like marketing/sales, manufacturers of High Voltage Telephone Cables, Oil and Gas Exploration and banks. I am a member of DSSP since 1980. For four years, I had been the Editor of DSSP's Digest. I was also a Member of the Executive Committee from 1990-1991. I attended my first ASA Congress that was held in Karachi and I was in charge of Logistics. Coincidentally in 2014 I was roped in to work with the Logistics team for the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASA Congress in Karachi as well. My hobbies are reading, surfing the net and watching movies.

**Maharukh Bhiladwala (MOK) - Immediate Past President & Ex-Officio (IPPXO) DSSP  
and Immediate Past President (IPP) ASA**



I was educated at St. Joseph's Convent School and started secretarial classes whilst still at school. My career in the secretarial/administration field spans nearly 48 years.

I have been on the Executive Committee of DSSP continuously since 1974, starting as Editor of one of the earliest news bulletins of the DSSP, then Social Secretary and finally President. I have held this post on and off since 1979 and have just completed my tenth term, making me the longest-serving DSSP President since inception of the Society.

As DSSP's President at the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of Secretaries in Karachi in 1990, I became President of the Association of Secretaries & Administrative Professionals in Asia-Pacific (ASA), and have just completed my 2<sup>nd</sup> tenure as ASA President for the 2013-14 term, as President of DSSP, the Association that hosted the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASA Congress in Karachi in 2014. This makes me the only Pakistani to have headed ASA, not just once, but twice!

As two-term ASA President, I am also the only Pakistani to be on the permanent Council of Presidents of ASA as an active member, and have headed several ASA procedural projects. I've been awarded medals, certificates and mementos by ASA for attendance at 11 Secretarial Congresses, one as member, eight as President DSSP and two as President DSSP & ASA.

I was on the Panel of Judges for the First Professional Secretaries' Award in Manila, Philippines in October 1994 and on the Judges' Panel in Karachi, for Pakistan's five Professional Secretaries' Awards in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004 and 2014.

I enjoy travel, movies, public speaking, scripting and acting in comedy skits in English, Urdu and Gujrati.

## DSSP NEWS

### Valentine Fun at the Marriott – Sun. 15 Feb. 2015



*The President  
commencing the evening*

Celebrating Valentine's Day on Sun. 15 Feb. at the Suzie Wong, Hotel Marriott was the first event of the year. Registration began a few minutes before the scheduled time of 3.00 pm with around 80 DSSP members. Natasha Mavalvala, DSSP's President welcomed all and began the evening by giving a brief history of St. Valentine's Day.

Without further delay, the first game was played which was matching Famous Fictional Couples. Marie Anna Croning and Ruhee Majid, the lucky winners each received a box of assorted chocolates courtesy of Lorraine Alfonso of Cake Creations.

Next was an invitation to members to compose and read out a Valentine verse of four lines or more. About a dozen budding poets came up to read their compositions amidst applause. In order to choose a winner, each was requested to once again read their verse. The audience was asked for a show of hands to demonstrate their approval. Sunnu Golwalla and Maria Lobo were the winners who also received a box of chocolates. IPPXO MOK, an excellent writer of poetry and prose also jotted down a few lines, not included in the contest, but read out for everyone by Charmaine Fernandes, Social Secretary.



*Maria and Sunnu,  
the winners of the Valentine Verse*







*Afroze and Natalia,  
the winners of the Crossword*

The last game was a Valentine's Day Crossword won by Natalia Fonseca and Afroze Tungekar. Each received a bag of cookies, prepared by Belinda Fonseca of Love at First Bite.

Next was a lucky draw where the names of four members were picked from all present. Rose D'Cruz, Goolu Driver, Nancy Cardoza and Merlyn D'Silva each received a bag of cookies.

Hi-tea was a scrumptious spread. The evening ended at around 6.00 pm with many members voicing their delight and appreciation. On the way out each member received a complimentary six pack of fizzy drinks, courtesy of Mr. Isphanyar Bhandara of Murree Brewery.

### **Secretaries' Day at the Movenpick - Sun. 26 Apr. 2015**



*A full house*

The DSSP marked Secretaries' Day this year on Sun. 26 Apr. at the Nargis Room, Movenpick Hotel. Soft drinks were served on arrival. The memento was a set of six multi-coloured clips with the day of the week printed on them, usable at work or home. Secretaries' Day was sponsored by Qatar Airways courtesy of Juliana Peter. The President commenced the afternoon giving a brief history on how Secretaries' Day, now also known as Administrative Professionals' Day, came about.

The programme chalked out for the day was a talk by IPPXO MOK on common errors made in the English language. One of the key skills of a competent secretary is her impeccable spoken and written English. As MOK explained, today with cell phones, texting and SMS one is liable to make mistakes. Some of the topics covered were spelling in the use of plurals, the apostrophe, prepositions, hanging participles, pleonasm etc. The presentation was peppered with humorous rhymes. At the end a condensed handout was given to the members.



*Table Four  
Winners of the Scavenger Hunt*

The talk was followed by a number of games all compiled by MOK. The first was a Crossword with answers relating to the workplace. Seven winners emerged from which two lucky answer sheets were chosen. Judell Almeida got a gift voucher for lunch for two at the Al-Bustan, Movenpick and Christine David received a complimentary cake from Maria D'Souza. The remaining five got a consolation gift of a fizzy drink can courtesy of Murree Brewery. The second game was a Scavenger Hunt. Table Four managed to collect the highest number of items on the list and each lady at the table received three cans each of the Murree Brewery drink. The last was a Word Quiz, the answers of which had the alphabets DSSP in them. Audrey D'Lima got 13 out of 20 correct with Natasha Mobed close behind. Audrey received a gift voucher for dinner for two at the Al-Bustan, Movenpick and Natasha got a cake courtesy of Maria D'Souza. There was a tea/coffee break between games. Before closing two lucky invitations were selected. Debbie Santamaria and Piroja Engineer each received a complimentary cake from Movenpick.



*Audrey D'Lima won Dinner for Two  
at Movenpick*

The buffet included peas pullao, chicken karahai, beef behari kebab, salad and dessert bars etc. The day ended at around 4.00 pm with members expressing their satisfaction.

## ASA NEWS



*PSWA'S Executive Committee 2015-16*

PSWA (Professional Secretaries Welfare Association – Bangladesh) held their elections on 16 Jan. 2015. Ms. Mahmuda Ara was re-elected as President for the years 2015-16. The Vice President is Ms. Nabegah Dordana and Treasurer Mr. Md. Shah Alam.

ASAP Brunei (Association of Secretaries and Administrative Professionals) marked Secretaries' Day with dinner at the ANZ Nyaman Restaurant on 21 Apr. 2015.



*IASAP members at Manas Lifestyle Resort*

IASAP (Indian Association of Secretaries and Administrative Professionals) began the New Year with a talk by Ms. Marita Nazareth on "Stay Energised" at Taj Lands End, Mumbai on Sun. 11 Jan. 2015.

On 15 Feb. members enjoyed an educational trip to Manas Lifestyle Resort on the Mumbai-Nashik Highway, Igatpuri.

IASAP visited two charitable organisations - Ahura Support and Snehalaya Charitable Trust on the 27 and 28 Feb. where they donated the amount collected at their Christmas – New Year function.



*At Ahura Support*

Women's Day celebrated on 8 Mar. 2015 was a talk on "Enhanced Role of Women in Business" by Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State, Commerce & Industry. IASAP partnered with five companies in organising this event.

IASAP's West Bengal Chapter (Kolkata) also celebrated Women's Day with a talk on "Woman of Substance" by Ms. Iti Mishra.

On Wed. 8 Apr. (marking World Health Day on 7 Apr. 2015) IASAP's members listened to Dr. Priya Alphonso talk on "Health in your Hands" at The Palladium Hotel, Mumbai.



*West meets East Global Exchange Summit 2015*

The West Bengal Chapter celebrated Administrative Professionals' Week during 19 – 25 Apr. with a Movie Nite on 22 Apr. and Hi-tea and dinner on 25 Apr.

Cisco Systems sponsored a Summit "West meets East – Global Exchange" for IASAP's Bangalore Chapter. The Bangalore conference was held on 9 Apr. at The Oberoi Hotel. At Mumbai the conference was for half a day on the 11 Apr. at the Taj Mahal Hotel.

Administrative Professionals' Day was celebrated with a lunch sponsored by Vivanta by Taj President Hotel and Blue Dart Express Ltd. on 23 Apr. The Theme was "Stepping up with Technology."



*At the Cultivating Attitudes session*

In Dec. Ms. Melissa Ong, President MAPSA (Malaysian Association of Professional Secretaries and Administrators) led a team of 33 members to Thailand and invited WSAT (The Women Secretaries' Association of Thailand) members to join in a knowledge sharing session "Cultivating Attitudes" conducted by Ms. Michelle Koh, a MAPSA Trainer.



*MAPSA Contd.*

MAPSA organised a Conference at the Grand Ballroom Kuala Lumpur on the 21 and 22 Apr. 2015 during Administrative Professionals Week. The Theme “The New Frontiers...Rising Leaders”. Their celebration luncheon was on the 21 Apr.



*Lo Hei Dinner*

Mrs. Mary Ho, SAAP (Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals) and ASA Past President, passed away on 29 Jan. 2015. DSSP offers the family of Mrs. Ho and SAAP their deep sympathies.

SAAP hosted a Lo Hei Dinner on Wed. 4 Mar. at the Spring Court Restaurant, Singapore.

A workshop titled “Effective PA’s and Executive Assistants” was held at the M. Hotel, Singapore on 23 & 24 and 26 & 27 of Mar. 2015.

On Wed. 15 Apr. SAAP arranged a full day seminar titled “Staying Relevant, Resilient and Resourceful in Today's Evolving Roles of Administrative Professionals” at the Hotel Intercontinental Singapore.

SAAP celebrated Golden Jubilee Night on Secretaries’ Day with a dinner at the Intercontinental Singapore on 22 Apr. 2015 during their Administrative Professionals’ Week events from 20 – 26 Apr.



*SLAAPS at St. Margaret's Elders Home*

SLAAPS (Sri Lanka Association of Administrative and Professional Secretaries) celebrated Founder’s Day (in commemoration of their Founder, late Mr. Eric B. M. DeSilva) on 4 Jan. 2015 by offering alms to St. Margaret’s Elders Home, Colombo. The Home needed large saucepans which were donated.

On 25 Jan. they held their 37<sup>th</sup> AGM at the Auditorium of Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Charmaine Jayewardana was re-elected as President.

SLAAPS celebrated Administrative Professionals Week during 20 – 25 Apr. and Secretaries’ Fellowship Day with a dinner and dance titled “Glow in the Dark” at the Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo on 22 Apr.



*SLAAPS Executive Committee 2015*

An “Effective Email Writing” course was organised by WSAT on the 29 Jan. 2015.

On 26 Feb. 2015 WSAT welcomed their new Board for the next two years under the leadership of Ms. Pawanrat Amornsitthiwat at an Installation Dinner.

WSAT launched a training programme “Marketing Strategy Right Management” for its members. These were full day programmes held on 14, 21 and 28 Mar. at Dusit Thani Hotel, Bangkok.

On 19 Mar. WSAT members attended a “Personality Development” course organised by the National Council of Women of Thailand.



*Ms. Pawanrat Amornsitthiwat is WSAT's President for 2015-16*

## WORKPLACE

### Do Secretaries have a future?

*by Pouruchisty Sidhwa,*

*Director Human Resources, GlaxoSmithKline Pakistan Limited*

The 1970's brought many new things to offices, including the photocopy machine and word processor. Secretaries of that era envisioned a rosy future, and many saw their jobs as a ticket to a better life.

But today, many moons later, we're living through a time when bosses have discovered that they could handle their calendars and travel arrangements online and could render their assistants expendable. Clearly, while the secretary hasn't joined the office boy and the iceman in the elephant's graveyard of outmoded occupations, technological advancements haven't panned out quite the way those midcentury futurists imagined. There are satisfactions to the job, to be sure, but for many secretaries, it remains often taxing, sometimes humiliating and increasingly precarious.

New technologies did make the lives of 20th-century secretaries easier. By the 1920s the typewriter had cemented women's place in the outer office, and later versions made for faster, less strenuous typing. The introduction of the Xerox 914 photocopier in 1959 did away with the laborious routine of carbon copies.

But even from the start, the relationship between secretaries and technology was fraught. One turn-of-the-last-century secretarial guidebook offered the cautionary tale of a secretary who refused to learn how to use an early transcribing recorder called a "business phonograph," and was promptly replaced by a younger stenographer at \$3 more a week.

As early as 1966, with the introduction of the first computerised word-processing system, secretaries were worrying that machines could replace them. They no longer had to retype a page because of a dropped letter — but would they be relegated to a "space-age typing pool" that offered little opportunity for advancement?

Indeed, that has come to pass, in good ways and bad, as some secretaries have moved from physical offices to virtual ones where "symbols of social rank" like corner offices have no meaning, might upend the hierarchy of boss and staff once and for all. For those who have always found the rank-based social system distasteful, the loss of 'the office' was liberating.

Coffee has long been a flashpoint for strong emotions about the differences between service and servility in offices; in the 1970s, when the second wave of feminism began to undo the traditional dyad of male boss and female secretary, more than one secretary was fired for refusing to make, fetch or serve coffee. This sort of thing still happens today.

Secretaries of today and 60 years ago would probably agree on something: the one technological advancement they wish existed never will. After all these years, a human being still needs to plug in the coffee maker and deliver its output. But that won't save an administrative assistant's job from the maw of computerisation. Secretaries can only hope that bosses won't take the human in question for granted.

### The Administrative Assistant: Then and Now

The role of the administrative assistant has evolved from the stereotypical secretary - the exclusively female, coffee-fetching eye-candy - to the respected, relied-upon cornerstone of any organisation's daily operations whose tasks range from office management to event planning to presentation creation, whose boss, like them, may be a male or a female, and whose colleagues account for perhaps now only 3% of the workforce.

### What's so wrong with "secretary"?

Ever since their occupation exploded in the early twentieth century, secretaries have been vital to the prosperity of organisations. Back then, the "secretary" was responsible primarily for keeping files organised, taking dictation, and conveying information from one individual to another with accuracy. As the decades went by, the title of "administrative assistant" became more prominent. Not that the term "secretary" is inherently derogatory as some may think. Derived from the Latin word "secretum", meaning to distinguish or set apart (which is also where we get the word "secret" among others), the title of secretary dates back to the Renaissance. Back then, "secretaries" referred to confidants and close advisors of powerful figures, including monarchs. Only in recent decades has the term "administrative assistant" become the "politically



correct" alternative to "secretary", having been pushed in North America by administrative professional associations since the 1940s and 1950s. However, despite the success of this push, "secretary" is a term still used in a number of prestigious titles – think "Secretary of State" in the US or "Secretary-General" in the UN.

### **Evolution of the administrative assistant**

The job itself, not just its name, has changed in time as well, particularly over the past 20 to 30 years with the arrival of personal computers and later on, the internet. Once everyone in the office had their own computer at their desk, taking dictation and storing piles of folders started to go the way of the dodo. Fast forward little more than a decade later, and everyone in the workplace was typing up their own letters and sending them at the speed of light without using a shred of paper.

Despite these technological invasions on their territory, administrative assistants did not become extinct. Rather, like any strong and resourceful group, they adapted. In fact, they have even become technology experts in many offices. Free from many of the monotonous duties of the past, thanks in part to technology, the duties of an administrative assistant have expanded in many other ways, too. Their tasks now include internet research, mastering Microsoft Office and other programs, planning large company events, budgeting, customer service, designing collateral, and drafting – rather than taking the dictation of – their supervisors' communications.

These additional, more cerebral tasks require a more intellectual education and can open doors to positions higher up the corporate ladder, especially since the role has become more about team support rather than individual support, allowing more people to take notice. Gone are the days of coming out of high school, honing your typing skills, walking into an office, and starting right away. Most administrative assistants now require a bachelor's degree and should expect rigorous interviews and aptitude tests meant to evaluate their people, organisational, problem-solving, and computer skills. In fact, many administrative assistants say that it's the variety and challenge the profession now offers that makes being an administrative assistant so appealing.

### **The administrative assistant of tomorrow**

New technology didn't just change the role of the administrative assistant within the office; it brought the role outside of the office, too – and not just because many administrative assistants are now equipped with smart phones. In fact, the business of the "virtual administrative assistant" has been on the rise for several years now. The term may elicit images of those uncanny Japanese androids you see on the news or just a CD with "easy to use" tattooed all over the packaging, but virtual administrative assistants or secretaries are real people working for themselves and offering a number of outsourced services that include traditional administrative assistant responsibilities, such as scheduling meetings, creating presentations, booking travel arrangements, maintaining databases, and more. But many virtual administrative assistant services have expanded into a range of other fields, too, including general marketing, website design and social media management.

Some say the virtual administrative assistant is the administrative assistant of the future, able to work remotely for several organisations at the same time, streamlining operations, and reducing overhead because typically they're paid an hourly wage only for the work that they're asked to do. However, this solution tends to work best only for small and medium sized businesses. As with any outsourced service, there are sacrifices involved, including valuable in-person contact and security of information, including passwords and confidential files. So, for now, larger businesses continue to see the benefit of having a full-time or temporary administrative assistant working next to everyone else right in the office. And if figures from the US Bureau of Labour Statistics (which projects the field to grow 5.8% in America by 2020) and IAAP (which projects an 8.5% increase there by 2016) are any indication, the administrative assistant will remain a fixture in offices for a long time to come, ever adapting, ever flourishing.

## KEY SKILLS

### The Art of Proofreading *by Kathleen Drum*

As Assistants, we are often asked to proofread or edit our Executives' emails, letters and reports before they are sent out, but did you know that these functions are considered so important in the UK, that there is a Society dedicated to just that? I recently attended the Society for Editors and Proofreaders ([www.SfEP.org.uk](http://www.SfEP.org.uk)) course "Proofreading 1: An Introduction". Whilst the majority of the course focussed on the technical aspects of proofreading, the professional proofreaders gave me some great tips on how to make this part of our role easier:

#### 1. Be clear on what is required

In professional circles, this is known as "the brief" and is where you find out exactly what you need to do. For example, are you the last in a long line of writers/editors where your job is to check for spelling and grammar, or are you at the beginning of the process where editing the text is encouraged or expected? The timeframe for the final document will also dictate how much time you can spend on amendments or additions. If it is urgent, then a thorough proof-read of the existing text is much better than a quick or sloppy edit. Remember – the more changes you make, the more errors you could introduce! If you are unsure about anything, then query it.

#### 2. Don't impose your personal style on a document

It is important to preserve the author's voice. If you have worked with your Executive for a while, you will be aware of their favourite words and phrases. If not, look at previous documents to get a sense of their style. If your company has a "house style" with regards to formatting or grammar, then stick to that – even if your own internal grammar rules are different!

In short:

- If it's wrong, change it.
- If it's "good enough", leave it alone.
- If you don't like it, but it's not wrong, leave it alone.

#### 3. Separate your proofreading into different "passes" of the document

If this is a new document that you haven't seen, two (or more) passes can help you familiarise yourself with the content, and means that you are less likely to miss any obvious errors.

For example, on a long letter or report, the first pass could be for layout – check that the page numbers are sequential, the justification is the same on all pages, the headings relate to the text and the heading styles are the same. The second pass could then be for content – spelling, grammar and punctuation.

#### 4. Tips for spotting *all* the errors in a document

- Read slowly.
- Watch out for incorrect use of apostrophes.
- Be smarter than the Spellchecker: look for transposed letters (form/from or sued/used) or one wrong letter in a short word (or/of, now/not, if/it).
- Don't be caught out by frequently misused words – discreet/discrete or principal/principle.
- Check for missing or extra words – especially short ones such as is, in or it.
- Know your audience – will you be using American or English spelling in your document? Be consistent.

Finally, remember to take regular breaks and think about your posture!

#### 5. Further information and resources

In the UK, the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP) ([www.sfep.org.uk](http://www.sfep.org.uk)) has a number of low-cost PDFs and hard-copy books created by members. The Society also runs courses for proofreading, copy-editing and brushing up your grammar. For reference books they recommend the *New Oxford Style Manual* which includes two updated reference works – *New Hart's Rules* (style information) and *New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*. The *New Oxford Spelling Dictionary* or the *Oxford English Dictionary* is also recommended reference books. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is available online by paid subscription ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)).

In the US, the Editorial Freelancers Association ([www.the-efa.org](http://www.the-efa.org)) performs a similar function to the SfEP and also provides booklets and other information on proofreading.

Finally, if you wish to practice proofreading, there is a (UK) book available called *Proofreading Practice: a book of exercises with model answers and commentary* written by Margaret Aherne ([www.meaherne.webeden.co.uk](http://www.meaherne.webeden.co.uk)), which is also recommended by the Society.

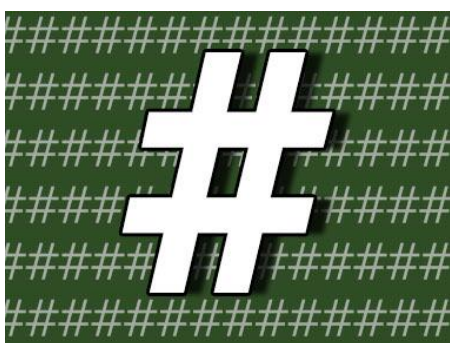
Being proficient at proofreading and editing are skills that will be useful in whatever Assistant role you do. You could also bring these skills to bear on brochures, leaflets and other literature that your company produces, as well as your company website. In the ever-changing world of work, writing (and therefore editing and proofreading) is one thing that hasn't changed – and with the increase in the number of blogs, website, mobile apps and e-books the amount of information we consume via the printed word has increased.



## WIT & WISDOM

### Weird facts about five punctuation marks you see everywhere

#### # Has a name you'd never guess



Depending on when you were born, you probably know the # symbol as a *pound sign*, *number sign*, and or for the Twitter junkies among us, a *hashtag*. Turns out, none of those names are right. According to an engineer at Bell Labs (formerly part of AT&T), which made the symbol mainstream via its touch-tone telephones in 1968, that little hex is called an **octothorpe**. The *octologically* describes the symbol's eight points. As for the *thorpe*, some theories say it comes from the Old English word for *village* (*thorp*), referencing the hex's appearance of eight little fields surrounding a central square; others say the Bell researchers were just really big fans of the late Olympian Jim Thorpe, and needed a cool-sounding syllable to finish their new word.





### @ Has hilarious names around the world

A Dutchman calls it the monkey's tail; an Israeli insists it's a strudel. They aren't bantering about some new simian-themed bakery; they're just describing the @. Though shorthand use of the @ dates back to the 16th century, it took English speakers a remarkably long time to settle on a name. Today, we know it as the "at mark", "commercial at" or "at the rate of" and are accustomed to seeing it in e-mail addresses. Meanwhile, the rest of the world was inventing brilliant descriptors, like the "little dog" (Russian), the "small snail" (Italian), and the straight-up "crazy A" (Bosnian).



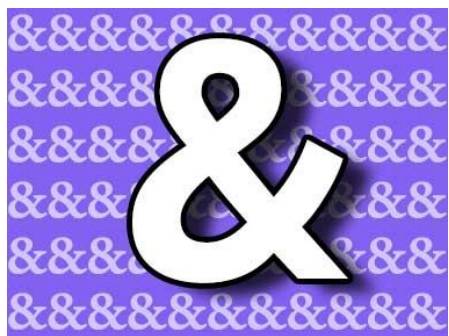
### ! Was a big pain to type

Though the **exclamation point** has helped express strong sentiments on paper since the 15th century, this upstanding punctuation mark didn't get its own dedicated typewriter key until the 1970s. Before then, typists who wanted to use interjections in their work had to type a period, then backspace and type an apostrophe atop it. Secretarial manuals of the '50s called this Franken-symbol a *bang*—not to be confused with an *interrobang*, which is an exclamation point overlapping with a question mark to indicate incredulity. Can you believe we stopped using this?



### ¶ Was a work of art, before it turned invisible

Before printed type, the paragraph mark (or *pilcrow*) was not only essential punctuation but also a Medieval style icon. In the Middle Ages, there were no standards for indenting paragraphs or using line breaks to indicate a change in topic; instead, every new paragraph was denoted by an elaborate, colorful ¶ (even if it fell in the middle of a line). These pilcrows were ornately drawn in red ink by specially-trained scribes called *rubricators* (from the Latin "rubricāre": *to color red*), often added at the very end of a manuscript's construction. If a rubricator was on deadline, he might choose to skip drawing the laborious pilcrows altogether—which is why, hundreds of years later, they have all but vanished from the page.



### & Has a more complex meaning than you think

You know when you see an & symbol (or **ampersand**) to pronounce it like the word *and*, but the word and symbol aren't always interchangeable. The & symbol can denote a cozier relationship between two things. For example, have you noticed in movie credits that sometimes two names will be joined with an & and others with the word *and*? That's because the Writers Guild of America uses the & symbol to say two writers collaborated directly with one another, while the word *and* means the writers worked on the script individually, at separate times & that's a wrap.

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