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# 7 Merely Conventional Signs: The Editor and the Illustrated Scholarly Book

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'What is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?'

– Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865

'What do you do?'
'I'm an accountant. I always say don't work for your money; make your money work for you. What do you do?'
'I edit scholarly books.'
'I see I'll have to watch my grammar around you!'

– Conversation held with a party bore, Toronto, 1988

The smallest of party small talk deals exclusively in the realm of cliché, and the cliché about editors goes deep. We correct grammar and spelling. We dot the i's and cross the t's. And, of course, our medium is text. But editors deal in more than one form of communication; the text speaks but so do the images, the interplay of text and image, and the physical properties of the book. The editor does not create or select these elements, but she or he had better be able to conceptualize how they fit together and to assess how successfully they do so if they are to serve successfully as a coherent architecture, or map, for the reader.[1]

The editor of an illustrated book has three roles: she must fully understand how its textual and visual components balance one another to form an integrated whole; she must keep in play and maintain order among the intellectual, physical, and institutional factors involved in its production; and she must facilitate constructive relationships between those involved in bringing the project to completion. This chapter explores these strands in the process of producing an illustrated scholarly

work. How do such projects challenge the way an editor thinks about the physical aspects of a book? How do they change the timing and structure of the process? What additional skills must the editor develop? How does the inclusion of illustrations affect the editor's relationship with the author and with the designer, and the mediation of the two? As well, I examine the potential need for an editor to manage additional institutional relationships. A university press will often seek a publishing partner to produce an illustrated book, collaborating with an institution such as a museum or an art gallery. What issues arise for the editor as a result?

The clearest way to illustrate these roles is by looking at a particular book and a particular process. The one I have in mind has enough pictures and conversations to have pleased Alice very much.

## The Book

*The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, by Allan J. Ryan, was published by the University of British Columbia Press (UBC Press) in 1999. The designer was George Vaitkunas, and I was both copyeditor and production editor. The book was co-published by the University of Washington Press, which functioned purely in a buy-in capacity: it bought a guaranteed number of copies in exchange for a joint imprint on the title page and shared logo space on the spine. There was a single version of the final product, designed for the Canadian and American markets simultaneously.

*The Trickster Shift* is an unusual book. It explores the effect and power of the Trickster figure in contemporary Native art. Woven intricately through Native cultural sensibility, the Trickster, often embodied as Coyote, expresses a wry, ironic humour. To capture that sense of play and shape-shifting influence, author Allan Ryan wanted the presentation of text and image to be as playful and seemingly unstable as his subject. Through his narrative he intersperses other viewpoints: anecdotes, poems, quotations, and interviews with Native artists, their voices and his switching back and forth. This is accomplished with a shift in typography, the main narrative being set in Utopia serif and the other voices in Thesis sans. (I rather like the way the names of the typefaces seem to reverse the roles of these two narrative forms; whose thesis is this piece of scholarship?) More extensive narratives – short stories, longer interviews, and artists' statements – are set on coloured pages.[2] Throughout, a rolling tally of footnotes serves as a counterpoint to the main narrative, adding a layer of meta-commentary:



> Quotations and notes are used extensively to disburse the narrative voices and reflect the intertextual nature of the discourse. Neither quotation nor note should be considered a secondary or subordinate text. At various points in the conversation, other voices intersect with the principal narrative . . . Non sequitur, song, poem, prose, and personal anecdote enrich and enliven the discourse. In some instances notes take the form of extended annotation and include illustrations. In this they constitute a kind of hypertext or hypermedia, forms of non-sequential writing and visualizing that until recently were primarily associated with literary studies and computer science. More important, the text honours and participates to some degree in a non-linear process of representation shared by many of the artists interviewed.[3]

Thus, the page has to deal with at least three textual layers at once: the 'authoritative' voice of the scholar; the 'subversive' voice of the artist; and the contemplative, mediating voice of the note apparatus, another tune in the round (fig. 7.1). And that is only the text. The illustrations, of course, are key to the way the book communicates. There are 160, both colour and black and white, over 320 pages. To support the sense of the work unfolding as one long, seamless, twisting narrative, Jack Kerouac style, we decided to number the images in a single sequence rather than breaking them down by chapter.

Once published, the book won an award in the scholarly illustrated category of the Association of American University Presses book awards, an Alcuin Society design citation in the non-fiction illustrated category, and an American Book Award for literature – not for art or anthropology. The idea of scholarly text as literature is rare, at least in this period. That the book received recognition not for elucidating its discipline but for its style is a testament to its effort to blur the boundaries between text and image and to embody the trickster play that is its subject.

Allan Ryan, the book's author, has this to say about its narrative process:

> I imagined the primary narrative in several ways: as an odyssey – like John Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves* – embarking on a journey of discovery, starting out, and meeting people along the way who taught him new things on a progressively deeper level.
>
> As a play, with the images as stage sets and the interviews as primary dialogue with me providing connecting dialogue, and voices in the footnotes speaking from the wings, or the front seats, adding to the story. In this, they break down the actor/audience division.

As a novel with every paragraph connected in some way to the next one, with a definite story arc and denouement . . .

I also wrote it like a long song, crafting one paragraph before moving on to the next. There was no rough draft.

As an argument, like a lawyer, presenting more and more examples to build a case and in the footnotes continually referring back to earlier examples to strengthen my case.

And . . . I imagined it as a vital or vibrant trickster discourse or conversation – among, about, and as trickster, that would capture a multi-vocal conversation at a particular point in time and history – some of the artists are no longer living – and invite readers to become informed participants in the ongoing conversation. And that is happening.

After publication, I imagined it akin to a sacred medicine bundle, more than the sum of its parts, containing in the words and images of the artists a power to heal or at least begin to treat cultural and cross-cultural ignorance.[4]

That's an ambitious agenda for a scholarly work, and various dangers are evident: no rough draft; footnotes referring back to other notes; example piling on example; a conversation. This might be a recipe for ill-disciplined rambling. And the images: cartoons; photographs of installations and demonstrations; paintings; outdoor sculpture; collage; a wooden toilet; a Mohawk woman dressed as Elvis; painted stoneware; a shadowbox. All these complex intentions and elements necessitated following the first rule of scholarly illustrated book production: know what you're dealing with.

## The Assessment

On receiving such a project, the editor's first task is to assess what is in hand, what is missing, and what might be extraneous. Has the author submitted what's expected? I'm assuming here that the author has been given at least basic guidance long before about technical considerations such as resolution, mode, tonal range, and file format for photographs, and requirements in terms of vector, bitmap, outline fonts, and greyscale for non-photographic illustration. For a sadly large number of projects, great efforts have been made to get images that are ultimately unusable, but that is outside the scope of my discussion here.



It is an especially critical act, as it is only in reading the strategically foregrounded passages that the terrible and tragic historical ironies are revealed. None is more forceful or poignant than the Wounded Knee component, which incorporates the final page from the final chapter of Dee Brown's haunting book (1972, 418).[26] The visible text reads:

dead Indians were left lying where they had fallen. (After the blizzard, when a burial party returned to Wounded Knee, they found the bodies, including Big Foot's, frozen into grotesque shapes.)

The wagonloads of wounded Sioux (four men and forty-seven women and children) reached Pine Ridge after dark. Because all available barracks were filled with soldiers, they were left lying in the open wagons in the bitter cold while an inept Army officer searched for shelter. Finally the Episcopal mission was opened, the benches taken out, and hay scattered over the rough flooring.

It was the fourth day after Christmas in the Year of Our Lord 1890. When the first torn and bleeding bodies were carried into the candlelit church, those who were conscious could see Christmas greenery hanging from the open rafters. Across the chancel front above the pulpit was strung a crudely lettered banner: PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN.

In conversation art historian Ruth Phillips said of Poitras, 'I think he's the blackest humorist of them all. To me, his work is dark to the point of depression, but for that reason it's among the strongest of all. I think he's important to your study.'[27] Whether Poitras is the blackest or the bleakest of humorists is debatable, given the work by some of the other artists in this chapter. He does, however, bring to this study and to the practice of aesthetic trickery a degree of conceptual sophistication that has few rivals.

The same juxtaposition of faith professed and faith practised that imbues the Poitras and Brown Wounded Knee 'collaboration' with so much ironic intensity is evident as well in Carl Beam's sharply titled *Calvary to Cavalry* (Figure 99), from his

98
Edward Poitras
*Small Matters*, detail, 1988-9
nails, wire, paper, Instasign,
75 x 176 x 5 cm

26 The slaughter of an estimated 300 Sioux, more than half of them women and children, at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, on 29 December 1890, brought a bloody end to a half-century war waged by the American government against Indians for possession of the American West. In 1973 Indian activists inspired by the courage of their ancestors occupied the same site for seventy-one days in an armed stand-off with federal agents. Ironically, a century after the 1890 massacre the macabre photograph of Minneconjou chief Big Foot lying frozen in the snow – the ultimate Indian victim – is arguably as much a symbol of cultural survival and tribal tenacity as any studio portrait of Sitting Bull or Geronimo. See the discussion of Jim Logan's paintings *Unreasonable History* (Figure 140, p. 255) and *The Death of Big Foot* in Ryan (1994a). See also Hill (1989, 34).

27 J. Jerome Zolten says that creators of black humour try to 'transcend the pain and absurdity of reality ... by deliberately plumbing the tragic for comic possibilities. The goal is to subvert pain by undermining the seriousness of the subject ... The black humorist tries to undercut seriousness by painting over it with the comic. The implication is that the external will in some way alter the internal. Since laughing is a sign that "everything is alright," then laughing in the face of tragedy must mean that the healing process has begun' (1988, 135).



Figure 7.1: Typical page of text (191) from *The Trickster Shift* (courtesy UBC Press)

At the outset, the physical art manuscript must be accounted for: numbered very gently on the back with pencil; transparencies placed in separate labelled envelopes; digital images stored as separate files with recognizable names. If one does not exist, a comprehensive list of these original resources must be drawn up, giving each image an identifying number (which will almost certainly change); indicating whether it is available as a scan, print, transparency, or in multiple forms, and who owns the media; keeping a tally of costs; and noting institutional conditions attached to physical and intellectual reproduction (table 7.1). This list, or log, is a crucial tool to develop from the beginning. Constantly updated, it is the traffic control centre for the illustrated book and the editor's responsibility.

From the original art manuscript, too, a full reference set of photocopies must be made: the editor's working copy for the duration of the project. As an editor, the sooner I'm parted from the original art and know that it is with the designer, the more comfortable I am. All caption text must be physically separated from the images as well. A caption placed within a figure is categorized in the wrong place, as image rather than text. Or as the editorial mantra goes, a caption is 'the explanatory material that appears outside . . . an illustration.'[5] By separating all such text from image and collating it into a new file, the editor makes a rudimentary start at a textual element that may not exist at the start of the project: the caption file.

Of course, the initial sorting process applies to the text as well in terms of ensuring that all the elements are present and accounted for, files can be opened, the most recent drafts have been submitted. With respect to the illustrated book, however, an additional filter is employed, as the editor checks the connections between text and images. Are the images referred to directly in the text or only tangentially? Are they referred to by a number or by name? Has the author provided directions for positioning them? Are they to be placed throughout the narrative or grouped in a gallery, or is that undetermined?

Essentially, then, the editor's first task is to take apart the submitted materials in order to identify them, sort them, and manipulate them throughout the process so that, much like taking apart a musical instrument or a piece of machinery for maintenance, the cleaned and perfected pieces can eventually be assembled into a final working whole. Although such operations are physical and organizational, they have an intellectual component. In the course of this preparatory work, the editor gains a sense of the proportion of text to image. Are the images

Table 7.1
Categories in an art log

| Figure no. (bold = new no.) | Title / description | Format | Ordered (Yes/ No) | Received / location | Cost of reproduction | Cost of permission | Institution | Notes / Credit and reproduction requirements |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60. | *Annunciation* | Colour transparency | Y | In house | $xxx | $xxx | Yukon Arts Centre Gallery | Photo: Joanne Jackson Johnson |
| | | | | | | | | No crop/bleed |
| 61 | *Jesus Was Not a Whiteman* | Colour transparency | Y | In-house | $xxx | $xxx | Yukon Arts Centre Gallery | Photo: Joanne Jackson Johnson |
| | | | | | | | | No crop/bleed |
| 62 | *Bingo Dauber Fetish, Indian Brand Series, Part II* | Photograph | Y | In-house | $xxx | $xxx | American Indian Contemporary Arts | Peter B. Jones |
| 63 | *Soupbone and Skawndawg* | Print for scanning (Line art) | n/a | In-house | $xxx | $xxx | n/a | Courtesy of the artist |
| 64 | *What becomes a Legend most?* | Colour transparency | N | MCAC | $xxx | $xxx | McMichael Canadian Art Collection | Photo: Larry Ostrom, Christie Lake Studios |

clustered too thickly within the supporting text in places – making life difficult for both the designer and the reader – and are there long stretches of unillustrated text? Do chapters end consistently with text or with image? Does the work appear at least in broad terms to illustrate concepts in a balanced way? A book on architecture with twenty images of Georgian houses and two of Victorian Gothic may need to be rethought.

Armed with an assessment of the physical book submission and an initial sense of the needs and issues involved, the editor must start a conversation with the author and the designer.

## The Meeting

Editing a scholarly work can be a solitary endeavour. Most copyeditors never meet the authors and may not even have much email contact with them. The design process might either be non-existent – the press decides to use a standard template – or be worked out wholly separately from the editorial process. This can work for a purely textual book and possibly for a book that contains a mere nod towards illustration. (The press will allow a dozen photographs and the author has provided twenty options. The editor whittles it down to sixteen on the basis of relevant content, and provides those to the designer, who culls the remaining four on the basis of quality. No meeting required, but image here is being treated rather cursorily and it could be debated whose interest that serves.) This modular work process does not suit a book that depends on visual media as a crucial channel of communication.

Once the editor has completed the round of classification just described with respect to the physical submission, *and the designer has had an opportunity to review the materials thus organized,* it's time for a meeting. There is no substitute for having the author, designer, and editor in the same room at this stage, or at the very least, at the ends of a conference call and with the same reference materials in front of them.[6] This is the time and place to establish purpose, expectations, and procedures. As George Vaitkunas notes, 'The design process for *Trickster Shift* was most enjoyable since I was able to meet with the author and editor at the earliest stages of the publishing project.' In other words, early communication makes the job not only easier but more pleasurable. This is significant. In scholarly publishing, you don't get the opportunity to 'make your money work for you,' as my



party acquaintance put it; much of its value as a profession lies in the merit of the work itself.

Above I described the narrative intention of *The Trickster Shift.* It was at this first meeting that Allan Ryan expounded on his motivations; what had appeared at first as a rather overwhelmingly annotated discourse with some potentially messy bits of additional text was an admirably conceived project, but we needed to address several issues. The longer interviews had been provided in an appendix, which to my mind meant they were far less likely to be read, and certainly not to be read as part of the primary story. In keeping with the spirit of a narrative simultaneously multiple and continuous, like strands in a rope, the footnotes had been numbered from 1 to 225 sequentially across chapters, but this was more appealing as a concept than in practice, especially combined with the great quantity of cross-referencing. I was concerned that the reader would become exhausted.

As well, as Vaitkunas points out, 'The author had previously assembled a layout of an earlier version of the manuscript as part of a thesis presentation and, therefore, had some definite ideas about how the text/commentary relationship should be designed using parallel vertical columns, placing commentary to the side of the main text.'

While most of the artwork had been obtained, much of the permissions correspondence was still outstanding and as a consequence, it was not yet possible either to confirm the final set of images or to know what restrictions would be placed on their reproduction. We also looked closely at the balance of text and image and worked through potential difficulties.

We agreed that such a complex work had an overriding need for editorial and design simplicity; that is, in whatever ways were possible, we needed to make the mode of communication transparent. Captions should be streamlined to contain only the following details: artist, work, date, medium, dimensions. Credit information was to be removed and placed at the back. (This would mean a certain amount of chasing and cajoling of art institutions on my part to convince them to waive the requirement of placing the credit on the same page as the image. In the end, there was just one lonely holdout.) Footnotes were to renumber quietly at the beginning of each chapter, but images would number in a single sequence. To give the designer maximum flexibility, I was to request from the art sources bleeds if necessary, but not necessarily bleeds. I would also ask about minor cropping and use of details. Naturally, most art institutions and artists would refuse, and very few bleeds

Table 7.2
Production schedule, with colour

| | Projected | Colour work | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Manuscript transmitted | 1-Apr-12 | | |
| Manuscript cleaned up | 15-Apr-12 | | |
| Manuscript to copyeditor | 16-Apr-12 | | |
| Manuscript from copyeditor | 9-May-12 | | |
| Manuscript to author | 19-May-12 | | |
| Manuscript from author | 11-Jun-12 | | |
| Manuscript to typesetter | 2-Jul-12 | | |
| 1st proof from typesetter | 30-Jul-12 | | |
| 1st proof to auth/proof/ index | 2-Aug-12 | 7-Aug-12 | Colour placement and size approved |
| 1st proof from auth/proof/ index | 30-Aug-12 | 14-Aug-12 | Colour to printer for scanning |
| 1st proof to typesetter | 13-Sep-12 | 8-Sep-12 | Colour scans ready |
| 2nd proof from typesetter | 27-Sep-12 | 11-Sep-12 | Colour corrections to printer |
| 2nd proof to typesetter | 9-Oct-12 | 25-Sep-12 | Final colour scans ready |
| 3rd proof from typesetter | 16-Oct-12 | 5-Oct-12 | Corrected colour placed on disk |
| Files to printer | 24-Oct-12 | | |
| Books in | 3-Mar-13 | | |

or crops or details can be found in *The Trickster Shift*. The handful it does contain, however, provide punctuation and emphasis. Miraculously, we were permitted to place one image over a full spread. The designer was to find a clean and clear typographical means to show the alternation of speakers/writers. I was to break the appendix of interviews into units, and suggest logical placement through the narrative – to find conceptual ways to bring these voices into the story – but to avoid the chorus becoming a cacophony, we also needed a design solution that would permit them to be read fully separately from the main narrative. This was another aspect of hypertext, as Ryan labelled it, at a time when readers were not as familiar with the concept as they are now.

As well as working through the conceptual approach and its practical implications, the three of us dealt with some of the nuts and bolts. I



put forward a schedule (table 7.2). In addition to the usual timetabling exigencies, a heavily illustrated book using colour imposes another cycle in the production process if the scanning is being done by a third party, in this case, the printer. The schedule must therefore be drawn up in close consultation with the designer, who is the person most affected. We also covered the outstanding permissions issues. Some artists were culturally opposed to the whole notion of written contracts, and this added a layer of complexity. We needed clear permission and clear conditions of reproduction for all the artwork as soon as possible. Ryan had personal relationships with many of the artists so he would tackle contacting them, and I would tackle asking the institutions for exemptions to credit restrictions. As the publisher's representative, I was responsible for tracking all the administrative issues and keeping them up to date, a task that applied throughout the life of the project. Vaitkunas would make a thorough technical assessment of the artwork received to date and all new pieces as they arrived, to ensure that they were suitable for reproduction.

With the issues identified, the route laid out, and at least most of the pieces in hand, the editorial work could begin.

## The Edit

All the expected skills and sensitivities an editor marshals for every project apply as much to the illustrated work as to any other. Of course, the text must be subjected to the same stylistic scrutiny. The concept of play, almost of call and response, was a little dazzling in *The Trickster Shift*, and the text needed to be quietened down somewhat. The reader was occasionally sent madly off in all directions, with references to earlier pages in the text and notes where they were not necessarily the most obvious way to deal with a point. I removed some of the cross-referencing and suggested merging notes from time to time or moving a note to the text and making it part of the main discourse.

These were primarily structural concerns. In addition, the standard strictures of house style applied. 'I know you had to rearrange a few things to conform to a UBC Press stylistic format,' said Ryan.[7] This process does not differ fundamentally from the copyediting associated with the purely textual scholarly work, but a broader range of tasks exists because the illustrated work has additional textual elements and considerations. The index for an illustrated book, for example, is more complex to edit than for a work without images because specific forms

of reference are conventional. Captions, credits, and callouts add to the list of editable elements.

In terms of line-by-line stylistic editing, however, my work was light. Ryan was a song writer before he became an academic, and that background was evident. Typical academic authors are not first and foremost writers so much as subject matter experts, and their interest in language as art can vary widely. Some craft their narratives meticulously; others are less engaged with form and more likely to rely on the editor's judgment. Ryan's style was unusually concerned with imagery and rhythm, and he was deeply conscious of his own mode of expression. When I asked him about the experience of being edited, he noted, 'Sometimes editors will make a word change that disrupts the rhythm, forcing me to ask them to restore it to the original version.'[8] Clearly, the editorial task in this particular work had an aural dimension to match its conceptual and visual challenges.

Various editorial tasks are essential with respect to illustrations, and the editor's remit is exactly the same as it is for text: clarity, consistency, correctness. How will the text refer to the image? Will it mention each one specifically, and is a callout, or catch, positioned immediately after the first such mention? Will it call the image by a number? a name? a position? 'The figure opposite/above/below' might work in some contexts, but with such a variety of directions for the gaze already present in *The Trickster Shift*, that seemed unwise. How will the images be numbered, if at all? The 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2 of the typical academic text was perhaps a little stiff, and as I mentioned, we decided on a single, fluid sequence, but that of course would all have to be reworked if an image was omitted or added. At what point would the final number sequence be imposed and in how many places would it need to be changed? *The Trickster Shift* did not have a plate section, but for books that do, the editor must be concerned with fitting the number of images to the plate section. The publisher can afford eight / sixteen / thirty-two glossy pages; an image deserves a full page / should not be more than a half page / is central to the discussion but aesthetically a misfit. What about maps or graphs? Will they number with the photographs or separately? What would be most intuitive, most unobtrusive, for the reader? The editor helps to make the jigsaw pieces fit, not all by herself, but certainly she plays a pivotal role as the gatekeeper of the content. Some of these considerations must seem to border on the mundane, but they're crucial. In the service of the transparency we sought for the reader in *The Trickster Shift*, such considerations had



to be determined and implemented – and unnoticed. How interesting that the machinery of the illustrated book, even more than that of the purely textual work, must ultimately be invisible. It must get out of the way of the reader.

As well as ensuring consistency of reference with respect to the illustrations themselves, the editor must treat captions with the same scrutiny. The content, style, length, inclusion or exclusion of credit, and typographical format are all worthy of discussion with the designer. Does he want each element on a separate line with a hard return? Does he want small caps marked? How? Will credit information be run up the side of the image, separately from the main caption, and if so what is the most efficient way to prepare the file?

The editorial attention that an illustrated work requires is thus a mix of the conceptual (Is the structure functioning well and is it transparent for the reader?); the stylistic (Is the language nuanced and powerful?); the conventional (Are standard style choices applied consistently?); and the technical (Are the files prepared and marked up appropriately?).

## The Relationships

Producing an illustrated book, it is evident, involves several types of engagement beyond the fundamental one between author and reader: between text and image on the page, between editor and designer, between publisher and art institution, to name only some. The editor is at the nexus of these associations and must appreciate the nuances involved. Editors can be found in all fields of book publishing, for example, who believe that the designer's job – a bit tacked on to the end of the process – is to carry out the intentions of the author and the editor. The normative hierarchy implied in this approach is debatable for any successful project but especially so for the illustrated book, for which collaborative and communicative relationships between author and editor, author and designer, and editor and designer are essential.

### *The Designer and the Editor*

How do designers and editors help one another? One way has to do with the logic of the content. As Richard Hendel notes, 'The designer cannot properly address a text until an editor has understood and clearly dealt with the *physical* aspects of the content: how chapters and chapter titles are arranged, how subheads are dealt with, kinds of extract, etc.'

(175, this volume). This is what Vaitkunas refers to as 'the formidable task of organizing all the raw content.' He concurs with Hendel:

> I rely on the editor for a number of things, including a summary of the key themes of the manuscript as well as indication of any parts of the manuscript that require special attention, provision of rough manuscript and sample images for preliminary design purposes . . . and well-marked final manuscript.[9]

These tasks are clearly helpful to the designer, and especially so when dealing with a complex illustrated book, but is the editor primarily an administrator? I think that in the most successful projects, the relationship is multifaceted.

As a collaboration, the editorial–design exchange can be a source of collegial incentive. I find that any designer whose work and process I admire will prompt me to monitor my own professionalism. One designer, for example, routinely asks me to copy fit on book jackets. My instinct the first time this occurred was that the text should have primacy – but why? A jacket, after all, is primarily a visual instrument. And after getting over my presumption that the words should get pride of place, I realized that the design principle of less-is-more applied equally to editorial concerns, especially when dealing with the concentrated impact of a jacket. My copy got better as a result, and the designer now gets the space he needs to make a jacket work. No one is going to read the back of a book if it is crammed with tiny text.

When I asked Vaitkunas about collegiality, he responded, 'I rely on the editor for motivation. When I see that the editor is going the extra mile in preparing material professionally and in a timely way, I am inspired to reciprocate.' There is of course a difference between one role supporting another and two roles offering mutual support. As Vaitkunas noted, the roles of editor and designer

> inform and influence one another through the considerable dialogue that usually occurs from the outset of a project. Further, many of the decisions made by the editor regarding the final manuscript, such as the hierarchy and length of headings, the length of a title, or details of punctuation, have an impact on the look of a book. Likewise, the look of a book conveys ideas and meanings, thereby adding content of a secondary variety.[10]

Form and content really do inform one another in an exchange that cannot be separated into constituent parts.



As a resource, a good designer will contribute invaluable visual information to a project. The designer who informs himself closely about the subject matter of a project earns my respect quickly. It's not just about good-looking pictures. I have, for example, worked repeatedly on military history titles with a particular designer because he knows far more about the discipline than I do. He knows the difference between a First and a Second World War German army helmet, a distinction that escaped the cover designer of one recently published trade book. He knows that one flag flying above another at the stern of a ship signifies victory for the possessor of the uppermost flag. That might seem arcane, but it was key to a highly effective cover design for one project on naval history (fig. 7.2). It is especially important for the scholarly book to be visually accurate as well as textually accurate, and the designer may have visual knowledge that the editor doesn't, or even the author doesn't.

As a mediator, the editor can filter and smooth the designer–author relationship. In thinking about the triad of designer, author, and editor, I asked Vaitkunas whether it helped or hindered to have his relationship with the author mediated by an editor. He responded:

> While I usually enjoy direct contact with authors and value their feedback, there are times when it can become difficult. Scholarly books are often the culmination of years or even decades of toil and their authors can have strong views and preconceptions regarding design. In these cases I am most appreciative of the editor's diplomatic capabilities.[11]

With respect to *The Trickster Shift*, as noted, Ryan had already worked out a potential text layout. With a background in graphic design, he had some clear ideas about how he wanted the book to look. Vaitkunas

> found a different solution which presented the main text above the commentary with the latter shifted along a horizontal axis. This made both texts more inviting to read and reinforced the notion of 'shifting' central to the author's thinking about humour in Native art. The horizontal shifting was also applied to other typographic elements, including the title page and epigraphs. At first the author wasn't so sure about the solution but, *after some explanation and support from the editor,* quickly came around to appreciating it.[12]

In other words, the editor can be the designer's advocate, and this works far better than being the designer's 'boss.'

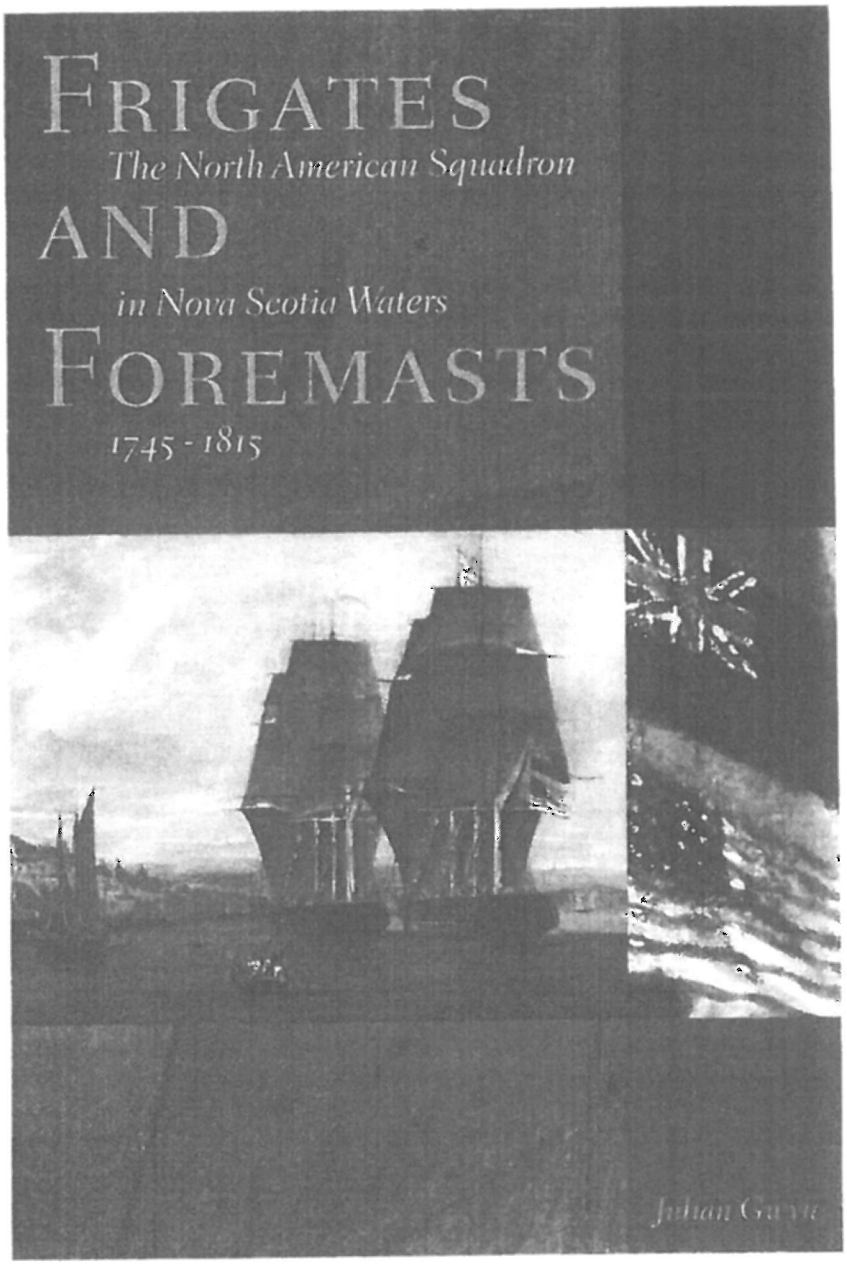


Figure 7.2: Cover design for *Frigates and Foremasts* (courtesy UBC Press)



As an evaluator, the editor can help to assess the visual content, both technically and conceptually. While an experienced scholarly editor knows that a table or a graph requires as much editing as a narrative – often more – most of us have no training in how to look at a photograph. We need to learn from the designers we work with. I now won't waste a designer's time by passing along an image that's one-inch square with evidently insufficient resolution or a copy of a newspaper print that will moiré badly. These are rudimentary technical assessments, but useful. Further, I will detect the unsuitability of an 8 × 10" print showing one key person in a large group, none of whom will be large enough to identify when the image is placed in a 6 × 9" book. By listening to designers, I've learned to notice whether the background of an image is distracting or the foreground is cluttered with extraneous detail. At the same time, I must let the designer do his job. An editor doesn't have to, and shouldn't, take on alone the job of paring twenty images down to three or four. I can provide the designer with the options and explain how many are needed (and why). Conceptually, what is the primary purpose of the image? A photo section will encourage the reader to focus on the images and enjoy them for their own sake – not necessarily a good idea if they are poor and used only to convey essential visual information tied closely to the text. Scattering images throughout the text, conversely, emphasizes their role of textual support.

These are editorial decisions, but they are *visual* editorial decisions. It is essential to understand that a designer is an editor, too. He can assess what role the images are capable of playing. I need to inform him, and I need to get out of the way.[13]

*The Author and the Editor*

> I very much appreciated your integrity and sympathy/empathy from the beginning, and your desire to make my voice as articulate as possible. *I felt we had a necessary trust from the start.*[14]

Here, Allan Ryan pinpoints the heart of the author–editor relationship: the necessary trust. The editor must function as trusted advocate for the author of the illustrated work as well as advocate for the designer. If the wheels are in motion as they should be, these functions are not in conflict, but misunderstandings are still possible. A photograph may have impact and presence, but it may not serve the author's purpose. I learned this lesson when working on a book about the business of

couture fashion. The author, who was a curator of fashion and textiles, brought to the project a trove of professionally shot photographs of all sorts of gorgeous haute couture dresses and an open mind about how they were to be handled. It was a rare moment of freedom for the designer. We were permitted cross-overs of full-colour images spread from one page to another. We were allowed details. The designer did an initial layout, and among others, one lush image of a dress detail seemed worthy of a full page; the close-up of the fabric alone deserved the space. The author took one look at the proposed layout and said no. The close-up of the arm and side torso of the dress, she explained, served one purpose: it was a prime example of pit rot.[15] No one in the fashion business would want a full page on the consequences of sweating. Perhaps I couldn't have foreseen that one, but it was my job as editor to understand the import of each image as closely as I understood the text. If I had informed myself, and thus the designer, more fully, I could have anticipated that misunderstanding, and the art log I monitored would have had a note about the appropriate and inappropriate use of the image in this case.

What if the work is illustrated but the author is not a 'visual thinker,' to use a phrase of Ryan's? 'Not all writers who include illustrations are visual thinkers. Some academics, for example, may have no interest in how the book looks, their primary focus being on the text/history/analysis – that is, the ideas that reference the illustrations.'[16] Such cases are the visual equivalent of those in which the academic functions as subject matter expert rather than writer per se, and the editor becomes more closely involved with the text as a result. In such cases, I will work closely with an author to understand what she or he sees as the point of each image and discuss whether that point is truly communicated to me, the lay reader, by the image in question. I will ask the author to categorize the images into must have / nice to have / don't have to have, and discuss the rationale. Very often the content imperatives, when considered closely, will weed out the most unsuitable images early on. The designer's assessment will further weed out the aesthetically poor ones.

When I asked Ryan what skills he thought essential for the editor of an illustrated scholarly work, he interpreted the question as having a textual focus. He was less interested in the editor's ability with respect to the principles of visual assessment and organization that I've identified above and more interested in the implications for the editor of a text whose *subject* is the image:



> What I do think you need to edit an illustrated book is an aesthetic sensibility (as opposed to a purely visual sensibility), a facility for using metaphor and poetic language, to represent a range of human emotions . . . The editor should have command of language that can reflect, if need be, the nuances of the artist's thoughts and reflections on practice, or those of the author – especially if the editor needs to suggest alternate wording or sentence structure. So it is command of literary/visual/emotional language that is needed, as opposed to objective/scientific/informational language. The objective dispassionate approach has not gone totally out of fashion, but the purported objectivity of such writing is now regularly questioned. It is best to have a full linguistic palette in hand.[17]

I found this a fascinating premise: that the editor must approach the illustrated work differently first and foremost because of its language. Certainly this is another editorial dimension of the fine art publication, in which content and form are even more closely meshed than in other illustrated works.

I also asked Ryan about the nature of the author–designer–editor nexus from his point of view. Was it collaborative? Did he feel included and respected? Was there any sense of one aspect dominating another? Again, he pinpointed what I think is key to the issue:

> I guess whether the project is a three-way collaboration or a designer–editor collaboration depends on how assertive the author is about what the book should look like, or how involved he/she wants to be in the process. Or how much input the press allows (or tolerates). *It is in their best interest to have a happy author.*[18]

I agree. It is always in a press's interest to have a happy author, while keeping the needs and realities of the project at the forefront. It is also always part of the editor's role to ensure that this is so. With an illustrated work, it's just more complex.

### *The Institution and the Editor*

What about the interests of the press? I asked Peter Milroy, former director of UBC Press, what he sees as the role of the illustrated book in terms of the mandate of a scholarly press and the nature of the editorial task. His assessment was very mixed:

> While I have a number of colleagues who would strongly differ with me on this, over the last decade I have concluded that illustrated books are not necessarily an appropriate enterprise for scholarly publishers . . . Illustrated works can certainly make a substantial contribution to the lists of university publishers. Some illustrated books – particularly in the fields of fine arts scholarship – make a direct scholarly contribution to the study of visual works. But other works that provide a visual element to intellectual work that is primarily about ideas are of a more questionable nature.[19]

Can illustration actually detract from scholarly merit? Yes, if it is treated as window dressing. Milroy approaches from an institutional perspective the point that Ryan raises about academics who are not 'visual thinkers.' If the non-visual thinker creates a visual work, how strong can its intellectual value be? I'm not convinced the question must be answered with a rule, although I agree that it must be asked. A university press must justify its publications on the basis of their intellectual worth, whether measured by words alone or by words and pictures together. The same rigour of assessment must be applied, and illustration should serve an intellectual purpose as well as an aesthetic one. The academic author who is not primarily a visual thinker may need more editorial and design support to ensure that the illustrated work has value, but that does not mean the inclusion of illustrations is unwarranted.

Scholarly merit is a key issue for the institution, and scholarly independence is related to it. Milroy identifies a significant potential problem in this respect:

> While sharing some characteristics with trade books, the kinds of illustrated books that are usually published by university presses have relatively small markets and thus lack economies of scale that make them viable. Thus they need very large subventions. As a result of their tremendous financial needs they are principally the product of institutional agendas and are entirely dependent on the financial commitment of institutions. Thus the independence of the project is in many ways prescribed by the sponsor.[20]

Producing an extensively illustrated scholarly work is expensive. The small or medium-sized press must seek out publishing partners such as other presses or museums and galleries, or sponsors such as art foundations. And the interests of a museum or a gallery do not always



coincide with those of a university press; scholarship may need to be downplayed in the quest for a broader audience. As an example, Milroy noted, 'the level of referencing that is expected of a scholarly book can be an impediment and some kind of middle ground has to be established. A scholarly publisher with a broad publishing agenda . . . is in a unique position to find this balance.' More particularly, the editor may need to suggest ways to prune the documentation, make the language less 'academic' and more accessible, and minimize the scholarly apparatus by working closely with the designer to ensure that it is structurally and visually unobtrusive.

I asked Milroy what he saw as the role of the editor in bringing an illustrated scholarly work to fruition. Did she or he need any exceptional skills or qualities from the perspective of a press? He identified two aspects of the job beyond the specifically editorial: the ability to control costs, and the ability to mediate among the parties involved. The role of editor-as-diplomat is especially vital to the multi-institutional work:

> Certainly the skills of a production editor working on such a project are more demanding than those required for other types of projects. The complexities and costs entailed in every aspect of the production are key, and the editor must play an intermediary and interpretive role between the designer, the typesetter, any junior or freelance editorial staff involved and the author – and frequently the institution that is supporting the project. Such projects demand very tight scheduling and cost control and leave little room for error.[21]

*The Trickster Shift* had a relatively simple institutional context: the secondary press, the University of Washington, placed very few demands on the producing press, the University of British Columbia, other than requiring a shared imprint. But one aspect of the project did involve negotiation. The original subtitle was *Humour and Irony in Contemporary Canadian Native Art.* Washington did not want to include the word 'Canadian,' on the rationale that American outlets would be more likely to stock the book without such a designation. That marketing decision was negotiated between the two press directors and the author, but for other projects, the need to navigate the institutional maze can affect the editor more directly.

Two examples illustrate the point, one successful, the other not. Both projects were initiated by museums, and both had sought publishing partnerships with a university press. I acted as copy and production

editor in both. For one, the publication was to accompany an exhibition and had been written by the two curators. One had an academic background and her writing was conventionally scholarly. The other came from the community that was the subject of the exhibition and had extensive contacts there. His writing style was conversational and featured interviews and anecdotes. These two aspects of the subject worked when the text was presented in short, self-contained units in an exhibition setting, but it did not function as narrative. The manuscript was a disparate collection of text pieces in support of imagery. This was the opposite of illustration-as-window-dressing. It was essentially text-as-window-dressing. Fortunately, the museum had decided that the press would have full control of production. The museum reserved cover approval for itself, but it did not provide any of the editorial or design expertise. The press was able to put together a project management team that it knew and trusted, and to produce the work in an uncompromised way. We evaluated the needs of the project and the way to meet them, and the museum gave us free rein. Editorially, the example makes the point that the sum of the illustrated scholarly work must be greater than its parts: text and image must form a seamless whole. Institutionally, it makes the point that complex illustrated projects need focused management: business collaboration is one thing, production/creative collaboration another.

The other example is another museum–press partnership. In this case, however, the museum had a publication department of its own. The decision was made to use the editorial resources of the scholarly press and the design resources of the museum. The result was a project management team with very different working styles and assumptions. Despite best efforts, communication was poor. The project had many challenges inherent, and competing ideas about the needs of the work so hampered progress that it was eventually shelved. That failure, while unusual, highlights that heavily illustrated scholarly works are complex, difficult to produce, and ultimately stand or fall on the ability to bring a wide range of interested parties together: authors, editors, designers, artists, curators, administrators, scholars. And those parties, crucially, must understand and respect one another's roles.

As readers we still believe that our culture, our civilization, lies 'as in magic preservation in the pages of books.'[22] The material aspects of the book remain central to the editor's work, and piloting the illustrated scholarly book on its passage to publication is perhaps the most fulfilling editorial task I can conceive of.



I know of more than one editor and more than one designer who will, on at last receiving from the printer the object, the thing itself, immediately smell it. That new book smell. The visceral pleasure of the object has not disappeared from our lives as readers, and the successful academic editor – grammarian, stylist, administrator, intellectual, diplomat, (sometimes) martinet – understands that good books engage us not only by what they say or how the words express it but by how they smell and feel and look.

## NOTES

1 I had originally called this chapter, rather prosaically, 'Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts,' but while it's undeniable that the textual, graphic, and typographic elements of an illustrated work combine to form a greater whole in terms of meaning and emotive effect, this doesn't capture their equally important function of providing direction through the reading process, whether transparently or overtly. We need the physical conventions and signposts of the reading experience to be intelligently handled. Or as the voyaging characters in *The Hunting of the Snark* more succinctly debate, 'What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators / Tropics, Zones, and Meridian Lines? / So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would reply; / "They are merely conventional signs!"' (Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*, II. st. 3).

2 The use of typographic play and distinctive page treatment in the service of meta-textual commentary is of course nothing new in non-scholarly publications. Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67) comes to mind, with its all-black page of mourning, blank page for the reader to insert her own drawing, dashes of varying length, and deliberately skipped pagination (not to mention the generous, though uncredited, incorporation of other voices – Robert Burton, Francis Bacon, and Rabelais, among others). It seems entirely fitting that Martin Rowson's contemporary reworking should have taken the form of a graphic novel (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 1996). Children's literature has innumerable examples of textual play, notable among them the concrete poem in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) that forms not only the typographic tail of the mouse but also a tale within the tale, another voice in the text. More recently, Nick Bantock's *The Griffin and Sabine Trilogy* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1991–93) revived the epistolary novel to great effect with removable letters and postcards, taking the classic

multi-vocal genre to another level of visual expression. Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007) turns some fifty pages into a typographic flipbook, in which type forms the figure of a shark slowly approaching through the ocean of the white page. Less a work of distinctly separate narratives, it nonetheless uses such visual techniques to represent ideas come to life, or perhaps multiple versions of the self. Examples abound, but we are more used to seeing visual forms of textual multiplicity in literature designed primarily to entertain. Playful scholarship is rarer.

3 Allan J. Ryan, *Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 1999), xiii.
4 Allan J. Ryan, personal communication, 18 February 2009.
5 *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*, 16th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3.21.
6 Sadly, meetings in person have become less and less possible with the outsourcing of editing and design services, so I recognize here that the meeting is very likely to be virtual.
7 Allan J. Ryan, personal communication, 23 July 2009.
8 Ibid., 23 July 2009.
9 George Vaitkunas, personal communication, 1 July 2009.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., emphasis added.
13 Let's compare this ideal for a moment to another project, about which I must maintain a certain diplomatic reticence. There was no professional editor for this particular scholarly publication, the authoring institution having determined that a collection of archival documents didn't need one. After all, the original text spoke for itself. These documents were a fascinating part of Canadian history, correspondence over the course of the last century that revealed the evolution of a political world view. At the outset, there was no thought that illustration was necessary. After some persuasive efforts, the commissioned designer managed to win the day on the idea that readers would gain from *seeing* some of the subjects under discussion as well as reading about them. Imagery could punctuate the text, creating breathing spaces that would provide historical flavour and context. The project was rightly expanded to a full-blown illustrated scholarly work, but no budget was allocated for mediation between text provider and designer: no editorial, organizational authority separate from the (institutional) author. The result was a dismaying lack of structure and a process that took three times longer than originally estimated. The authoring institution made unguided decisions about organization,



flow, coherence, and selection and placement of illustrations; the designer was forced to assume the tasks of a text editor and had no advocate for the design role. When one piece is missing from that essential triangular relationship – author, editor, designer – both process and product can be compromised.

14 Allan J. Ryan, personal communication, 23 July 2009.
15 Alexandra Palmer, personal communication, June 2001.
16 Allan J. Ryan, personal communication, 23 July 2009.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 23 July 2009, emphasis added.
19 Peter Milroy, personal communication, 24 July 2009. Milroy is right to note that his opinion here is contentious. It may also be more relevant to the Canadian context than the American one, in which the mandate of many state presses, in particular, includes regional work that often benefits from illustration. Books on the flora, fauna, or geography of a region, for example, will necessarily involve a fairly complex illustrative component. UBC Press itself has historically had a similar mandate in its institutional relationship with the Royal British Columbia Museum, which has authored works of natural and regional history requiring extensive illustration.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Thomas Carlyle, 'The Hero as Man of Letters,' in Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, six lectures (New York: J. Wiley, 1859).