

The Modern Editor Podcast – Episode 10: Are Editing Conferences Worth It?

Tara Whitaker: [0:03] Welcome to *The Modern Editor Podcast*, where we talk about all things editing and what it's like to run an editorial business in today's world. I'm your host, Tara Whitaker. Let's get to it.

Tara Whitaker: [0:18] Hello, and welcome to today's episode. We are going to be talking about editing events or editing conferences. And it's important to talk about this because I am just coming off attending the ACES Accelerate conference last week, and I was just reminded how important it is to really plug into our communities in our industry. And I'm going to share a little bit about the highlights of the ACES virtual conference and give you my overall thoughts on whether you should attend industry events or not. Hint/spoiler: You should. And then I'm gonna give a few tips on how to find events for you.

Tara Whitaker: [0:18] So, let's just dive right in, and let's talk about ACES Accelerate. So, this was a virtual conference. And I'm not going to go into detail about every single session. I'm just going to give more of the overall—my general vibe of it, which was—it was amazingly put together. For those of you who don't know, I have a minor in special event meeting planning, so I know intimately how much events of this scale take. And they said that they had 1200 people registered. So not only is that a huge crowd, but then you're managing all of this stuff online, with tech, and it's, you know, ways of messing up exactly when you don't want it to. And I just think they did a fantastic job. There were some slight hiccups, which is always going to happen with a virtual conference. But they were super minor. And they did a really good job of fixing them really quickly. So, kudos to ACES on that.

Tara Whitaker: [1:58] The sessions were great. My only issue was that there were so many good ones that I wanted to attend that were at the same time, and I had to choose which one to go to. So, I was really thankful that they are giving us access to the recordings so I can go back and watch the ones that I missed. And I will be doing that here very soon. And my favorite parts of the conference: Jenny Lawson was the keynote speaker. Oh my God, she is hilarious. She's *The Bloggess*. I knew of her; I knew she was an author; I knew she owned a bookstore, but I haven't read her books or haven't watched her speak. And I'm a fan. I am going to read all of her books. I'm going to be reading her blog. She was phenomenal and had so many nice things to say about editors. And, you know, talking about how finding good editors is like finding a good therapist and just had nothing but nice things to say. So, from all of us editors, Jenny, we adore you.

Tara Whitaker: [2:58] And the other favorite thing, kind of a weird—not weird, but bigger—thing, is just talking to all the other editors at the conference. During the sessions, the chats were open, and oh my goodness, were they hopping. I almost stopped paying attention to the sessions because I was paying attention to the chat so much. But they were so good. And it was so fun to just be in the same virtual room as

other editors. And with that, ACES also put on coffee chats, so you could sign up in advance to participate in a certain chat about a particular topic. So, I did the ones about freelancing and client management. And these were the only times during the conference actually, that you had your cameras and your mics on, like, if you chose to. So, it was really nice to be able to hear and/or see people, you know, if you were able, and just have that connection. And the whole vibe was just so positive and excited, and you could tell everyone just wanted to be there. They were ready to learn, ready to grow, ready to talk to one another, ready to connect. And it was just such a great feeling. I hadn't had that feeling on that large of a scale in a really, really long time. Because when I got to thinking of it, I don't think I have been to a big editing conference before, which is wild to think about because I've almost been in business for ten years. And I've done plenty of smaller events and local events. But I haven't been to one of the bigger organizations' conferences, which really bums me out.

Tara Whitaker: [4:38] But also leads very well into my next point about my overall thoughts on whether or not you should attend editing industry events. And this is going to come as no shock, but my short version is yes, you should attend them. And I rarely say you should or shouldn't do something. If you've been listening to the podcast or know me, you know, from the **Club** or coaching or anything, I very rarely say you should or shouldn't do something because I'm very much of the opinion that you're, you know, we're all adults, you, you choose what you want to focus on. But I do say you should plug yourself into industry events. And they don't need to be big expensive ones or ones that are far away. They can be small; they can be free; they can be online; they can be in person. I mean, now, especially in 2022, there are tons of different varieties of conferences and events that you can attend at different price points, just all over the place. So, it's easier now more than ever to be able to plug in and participate in those events.

Tara Whitaker: [5:45] And I can't stress enough how invaluable it is to network with other editors. We know that freelancing can be lonely, you know, we can feel like we're on our own little business island sometimes. And, you know, just being able to hang out with other people who are like us, have similar experiences, you know, learn new things from people, see different perspectives. I mean, that's always priceless, right? And y'all know my mantra is: always be learning and growing. And what better way to do that than attending an editing conference. And I'm talking specifically about editing conferences here, but that goes for business conferences as well, or anything that relates to you, your business, your professional development—anything. I love a good conference. And I love a good workbook, too. My Club members know that very well. And so, I am—I'm—I just—the bug has got me for attending events. So, I'm going to be out on the hunt looking for more. ACES has their in-person in March; EFA, I think, is in August of 2023. So, I'm going to be looking into those for sure. And I definitely recommend you do the same, not just, again, the big ones, but any events you can find.

Tara Whitaker: [7:02] Which leads me into my next point is how to find them. So, the big—bigger industry organizations like the EFA (Editorial Freelancers Association), ACES: The Society for Editing, Editors Canada, and CIEP (the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading) all host events of different kinds. Those are some really good

ones to start with. Not necessarily, again, the big ones, but they'll have webinars or, you know, some of them have local chapters that you could do meetups and things like that. That's a good place to start. And then, like I said, look locally. Maybe your local library offers something or your local Chamber of Commerce, you know, Small Business Association. Just look any, and everywhere you can locally and then check out those four bigger organizations.

Tara Whitaker: [7:55] And how I decide to attend a conference or not, I go through a little checklist, so to speak. And I'll share that with you now if, hopefully, that helps you decide. So, the very first thing that I do when I find an event is I check out what it entails, what it's about, and make sure that it aligns with my values. Now, that's obviously going to be different for everybody. But for me, the two big things are: I make sure that the speaker lineup is diverse and that the sessions are applicable to me and my stage of business. So, at this point, you know, almost ten years in, I'm not going to be attending, you know, Freelance Editing 101 or anything that's beginner level because that's just not applicable to me. And vice versa. If you're a brand-new editor, you're not going to want to go to something that's super advanced. So, make sure you check out the page, you know, the info page they have about the event and see if it aligns with all of that. And then I read reviews, if that's a thing, if they're out there, if I can, you know, Google my way to them. Or I ask other editors who have attended what they thought and if they would recommend going again or not. We all know how much weight a testimonial holds, so what better way to figure out if you should go or not is by asking someone who's been. So, ask away. You can do that on social media. If you have an email newsletter that has other editors on it, you can ask there. And then, of course, while you're at these events, you can also ask what other events they've attended and just go from there.

Tara Whitaker: [9:26] And then, of course, the final thing is cost. So, if it's virtual, you should just have to pay for the conference fee. And that's actually probably going to be less expensive if you are a member of the organization that's putting it on. If, if there is an organization putting it on. And that's it, which makes it a very affordable option for a lot of us. And then, of course, if it's an in-person event, you're still going to pay that registration fee. Oftentimes, it's more than it would be for a virtual conference. And then, of course, you're going to have to pay for transportation, you know, to and from the conference, plus while you're at the event, if it's not walkable, or you need transportation of any sort. The hotel or lodging, Airbnb, whatever. Food while you're there and coffee or tea. We all know we need coffee and/or tea. And then anything else you want to buy. If there are speakers there that are selling their books or if you want souvenirs, you know, what have you. So obviously, the in-person events are typically much more expensive. However, on the flip side, you do get that in-person experience, and you get to visit a city that, if it's outside of your current city, of course, you know, you get to explore and travel a little bit. And that's my checklist.

Tara Whitaker: [10:41] And that's it. That's my thoughts on editing conferences. And the very, very rare occasion that I just told you, you should do something. So, remember that, you know, if I say you should do something, that I mean business. And I don't say that lightly. So, editing conferences, editing events, business events—soak 'em up. Do

as much as you can, with what you can. And you know, the longer you're in business, maybe the more you're able to attend to them. There's definitely time management in play. Because, you know, like, ACES was two full days of conferencing. And you know, that's two full days of taking off work. So, if you go to an in-person event, then you're factoring in travel time, and usually, they're, you know, more like three days for the conference. And then, of course, you have to recover because if you're an introvert like me, and you peopled—even if you've virtually peopled—you need some downtime. So, think about that when you're going. And if you have any other questions for me about conferences or industry events, let me know. Like I said, I haven't attended a lot of large editing conferences, but I've attended a ton of smaller ones and have planned them back in my previous life. So, send me an email hello@tarawhitaker.com or talk to me on Instagram. And in the meantime, keep your ear out here and your eye out on my website and my Instagram because I have got some very exciting things happening in the coming weeks. I think I mentioned it earlier, but I am celebrating ten years in business next month in October 2022. So, I've got lots of fun and lots of goodies and offers planned, so stay tuned for that. And until next time, keep learning, keep growing, and know that you've got this!

Tara Whitaker: [12:30] Thank you so much for tuning into today's episode. If you enjoy *The Modern Editor Podcast*, I would be so grateful if you left us a review over on iTunes. And as always, you can head to tarawhitaker.com to connect with me and stay in touch. We'll chat again soon.