Stylebot

USC Case #2019-132

Market Opportunity:

Copyediting is the process of ensuring written material is grammatically and stylistically cohesive. While newsrooms historically have maintained physical copy editing desks to manage these issues, the recent push toward online-only publications and budget constraints in physical offices have forced copy desks to near-extinction. Despite this, information typically provided by copy editors is still crucial to the integrity of a publication. This burden now falls directly on the writers themselves, who are required to research and maintain formatting standards independently. The lack of a centralized, easy-to-access copyedit formatting platform both confuses and slows the modern-day publication process.
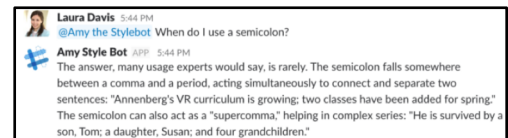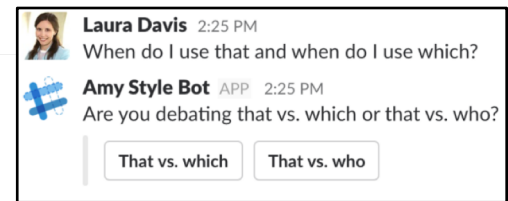
USC Solution:

To help transition copyediting into the modern era, researchers at USC have developed a method to digitize the copyediting process. Researchers first created a list of common copyedit questions and rules based on their years of experience in journalism. These rules can readily be deployed as an interactive, user-friendly chatbot that answers copyediting questions in real-time. USC's version of the chatbot, called "Stylebot," is embedded into the popular messaging app Slack. Users interact with Stylebot directly either by asking a question or by searching for specific keywords. Underlying machine learning capabilities can be incorporated so that Stylebot learns from these interactions and is able to continually recognize broader inputs and provide more helpful answers. By digitizing the copyedit process, researchers have developed a powerful tool that is both easy to use and instantaneous.

Value Proposition

- *Responsive, easy*: The rules that support Stylebot respond to full questions in natural language and simple keyword searches.
- *Quick*: If embedded into a chatbot, users receive copyediting help instantaneously.
- *Informative*: By analyzing trends, bot owners can identify the particular topics users most struggle with.

Keywords:

Chatbot, copyediting, machine learning, natural language processing

Laura Davis 2:25 PM
When do I use that and when do I use which?

Amy Style Bot APP 2:25 PM
Are you debating that vs. which or that vs. who?

[That vs. which] [That vs. who]

Laura Davis 5:44 PM
@Amy the Stylebot When do I use a semicolon?

Amy Style Bot APP 5:44 PM
The answer, many usage experts would say, is rarely. The semicolon falls somewhere between a comma and a period, acting simultaneously to connect and separate two sentences: "Annenberg's VR curriculum is growing; two classes have been added for spring." The semicolon can also act as a "supercomma," helping in complex series: "He is survived by a son, Tom; a daughter, Susan; and four grandchildren."

Applications

- Newsrooms
- Classrooms

Stage of Development

- Working prototype
- Ongoing training via machine learning

Intellectual Property

Status:
Copyright

Key Publication:
Laura Davis and Jenn de la Fuente. "Introducing Amy the Stylebot." *Medium*. Web. 2017.

Contact Information

Kate Rodriguez
Licensing Associate
(213) 821-0943
katerodr@usc.edu

USC Stevens
Center for Innovation
Maximizing the translation of USC research into products for public benefit