complete form and in the style of that publication. In this way, it will be processed smoothly, and fewer questions will arise that require an editor to contact you. When an editor does call you, this list of editors helps you understand what responsibilities he or she has. — Sandra Masse, Senior Clinics Editor, W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, PA (215) 238-7864.

READERS ASK

Query Letter Response

Question

I sent a query letter to a nursing journal editor describing a potential article and its content. The editor accepted my article idea and said to send her the article. Subsequently the article was rejected with comments that the material was too basic for their readers. I am frustrated because I thought the editor said she wanted the article. How can I prevent this problem in the future? — Marie Biancuzzo, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Strong Memorial Hospital, Rochester, NY.

Response

The first thing to realize is that the editor who replies positively to a query letter is only indicating an interest in reviewing a manuscript on the topic you have suggested. There is no guarantee that she or he will buy the finished product, but only that the subject area is of interest.

There are some ways to minimize the chances that your manuscript will be rejected, though. For instance, the more detail you provide in your query letter, the better idea the editor has on whether or not your manuscript will meet the journal's needs. Had you clearly indicated in your letter that the article would be aimed at beginning practitioners, the editor would probably have rejected the query.

Also, the more detail you give, the more opportunity you give the editor to help you tailor a manuscript to that journal's needs. Let's say the information you provided let the editor know your manuscript would be too advanced for the journal's readers because it would cover an aspect of the topic that was beyond the reader's normal level of practice. The response might have been a rejection of your original proposal, but with a request for a manuscript on an aspect of the topic that the readers would need to know about.

You should also be sure you are sending your query to the right journal. You do not indicate in your question, but if you were querying a specialty journal, the editor would have automatically expected you to be addressing the more advanced needs of specialists certified in the field.

Finally, once you get a go-ahead on a query letter, please

write the manuscript you described in that query. I can't tell you the number of manuscripts we get that bear little resemblance to the manuscript we thought we were going to get. — Marianne Dekker Mattera, Editor, *RN*, Montvale, NJ, (201) 358-7470.

BOOK SHELF

CompareRite™: The Instant Redliner, Version 4. Jurisoft™ Mead Data Central, Inc, 955 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02139.

This is an extremely useful program for nurses who work with multiple revisions of documents and manuscripts. CompareRite™ compares two documents to graphically show in a third document what has been added or deleted from one version to the next. Because the program is very versatile, you can change the settings for how the comparison copy looks. For example, I like a line through the deleted material because it looks like it has been taken out and bold for the added material to emphasize the new points.

The program runs very quickly. Comparison of the original and edited version of a 20 page nursing article took me only a minute to run. You can either print the comparison or check it on screen.

Unlike the comparison features built into some word processing programs, this is a dedicated program with the main purpose to display changes in documents. One of the greatest advantages of this program over the ones within a word processor is that you can change the level of analysis. This means you can have the changes noted in words, phrases, or longer sentences. For example, Table 1 shows an example of how the same change might look using "pinpoint" option instead of the normal setting. Pinpoint comparison shows changes word by word, while the normal setting shows them in phrases.

I have found this program to be especially useful in several nurse author or editor roles. As a nursing leader, this program saves my time in proofing changes and revisions to the numerous written documents, guidelines, protocols, papers, and letters which I see daily. The program does not proof for me, but it helps me put my proofing time in the right places. I can read the old material quickly and slow down to proof in detail the new material. There are so many "updated" versions of written material in nursing that this is a tremendous time saver.

As a nursing author, this program helps me to improve my writing. Some nursing journal and book editors now use computers for editing. When they send my document back on computer disk, I can compare the edited version with the original manuscript and get a copy with highlighted changes. This helps me to develop editing skills by