

Manuscript Preparation Guidelines

I. INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed for authors who are in the process of preparing a book manuscript for publication. Adhering to the principles described herein will allow you to avoid common technical pitfalls, save many hours of time for both you and the publisher, and help your book sail through the production process.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Advancements in computer hardware and publishing software continue to streamline the process. Book production is faster and simpler than ever before, and less of a burden is placed on the author. It is no longer required (or, for that matter, desirable) to follow complex rules for margins, line spacing, and the like. The old-fashioned divisions between editing, typesetting, illustration, and pasteup are disappearing, as these steps are often performed in the same pass.

The Text File

Before you start to generate a document file, you need to understand something about how the book will be assembled by the production department. There is a big difference between preparing a document that will forever exist as a word processor (WP) file and preparing one that will be incorporated into a page layout application to produce a finished product. Your book pages will not be composed using a word processor. Instead, the production department will strip your text file back to the basics and import it into a specifically designed page layout program such as Quark, InDesign, or Framemaker, where it will be reformatted to match the publisher's own specifications. Because objects and styles created within a word processor often do not export properly, keep in mind that *simpler is better*. Do not elaborate unnecessarily, and do not expect the book layout to look like your document.

Ideally, your WP file will be made up entirely of text, with no illustrations included. Importing artwork into a WP document can change the characteristics of the art file and make it unexportable and useless anywhere else. Therefore, you should include only a citation, such as "Figure 2.3 about here" rather than placing the artwork directly into the document.

Do not submit your “final” manuscript until it is really, truly finalized. The manuscript probably will be edited in a WP, but it will then be imported into the layout program. Once this has happened, there is no going back, so it is extremely important to get it right before the conversion. You *cannot* make changes later by submitting updated WP files. This would require the production department to start over from scratch, incurring hours or even days of extra labor. See Section III for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

In general, it is best to save each chapter as a separate file. An exception would be a very short (<40,000 words) book.

Page Layout

Over the years, word processors have added many new features. Quite a few people have become proficient in generating complex newsletters, brochures, and so forth with them. This is great for companies that generate documents for in-house use, but it is a major headache for book publishers. If you can embellish your manuscript into a beautifully laid out document that looks just like a finished book, we can offer one piece of solid advice:

Don't do it!

There are several good reasons, among which are:

- Page layout and type specifications vary from one publisher to the next—and often from one book to the next, even with the same publisher. They are complex, usually covering 10 to 50 pages. They are also based on measurements and specifications that may be unfamiliar to you (e.g., picas, points, gutter margins, bleeds), so you have absolutely no chance of coming up with an acceptable page layout unless (a) that is your profession and (b) you have the publisher’s spec sheet in hand.
- You are probably working with an 8.5 × 11-inch document. The book almost certainly will be something else.
- Text flow and graphic placement will change as the book is edited, thereby destroying your beautiful layout.

It seems logical that a publisher would be happy to receive a book that has already been laid out in pages, but in reality that simply creates more work for the people who have to undo everything you have done. Resist the urge.

Illustrations, Photographs, Etc.

If your book includes photos, drawings, or other artwork, the following guidelines will prove helpful.

Line Art

You should be aware that there are two basic types of line art: *vector* (e.g., as generated in Adobe Illustrator) and *bitmapped* (e.g., Photoshop files). Vector art is generated by sending instructions to the output device (such as a laser printer) that specify, for example, where a line should begin and end, how much curve it should contain, line thickness and color, and so on. There is no reference to resolution (dots per inch, or dpi), because vector art does not specify how many dots are to be placed between point A and point B. The output resolution is determined by the capabilities of the output device. In general, vector art is preferable to bitmapped, as it is more compact and prints faster, but increases in hard drive capacity and processor speed have made it less important.

It is more likely that your graphics will be bitmapped, which, as the name implies, is generated from a table of values for each “bit” or dot in the piece of art. For simple black-and-white graphics, each bit is either a one (black) or zero (white). Because you cannot generate such a table without knowing in advance how many dots the graphic will have, bitmapped graphics necessarily incorporate a specific resolution.

Many bitmapped graphics, particularly those appearing on the Internet, are created at 72 dpi. This is unacceptably low for commercial applications. For line art, 600 dpi or better is recommended, with 400 generally being the minimum.

Your word processor probably includes some graphic capabilities. Newer versions of Microsoft Word, for example, include some fairly sophisticated illustration tools, but artwork created in Word is not easily exported to any standard high-resolution format. Likewise, charts and graphs created in Excel® are low-resolution images. It is best to use a standalone graphic application.

Photographs

Photographs should be sharp and of relatively low contrast. (The printing process always increases contrast.) Unless you are actually going to print a color book (which is usually prohibitively expensive), provide grayscale if you can. Photos should be of at least 300 dpi resolution at their final dimensions. Up to 600 dpi is desirable. As with line art, be aware that photos downloaded from the Internet are nearly always 72-dpi low-res images that *are not acceptable for printed documents*.

High-res stock photos are widely available but usually are expensive. A good source of affordable photos is www.bigstockphoto.com.

Formats, Sizes, Etc.

Consider the following when collecting and generating artwork:

- The preferred file format for all artwork is encapsulated PostScript (EPS). Tagged image file format (TIFF) is also acceptable. Save your art in one of these formats if possible. If not, the production department will convert them for you. Graphic interchange format (GIF) and Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPG or JPEG) images are fine. But avoid PICT files, which are primitive and obsolete.
- Try to avoid screen fills (that is, dot patterns). These may look fine coming off your laser printer, but printing presses use ink, which tends to spread and make the image look fuzzy. Instead, use solid black or pattern fills if possible.
- Keep in mind that illustrations in a standard 6 × 9-inch book cannot exceed about 4.5 × 7 inches. If you want to make them larger for later reduction, that is fine. But remember that any type appearing in them will be reduced by the same proportion.
- Use a sans serif font for illustrations to provide contrast with the body text. Helvetica is common. Type should neither exceed 12 pt nor be smaller than 6 pt in the final, imported and sized graphic, so plan accordingly.
- Name your art files logically so that they are easy to locate, e.g., “Fig. 2.03” for the third figure in Chap. 2.

Copyrights and Permissions

If you include illustrations from outside sources, you must obtain written permission to use them. Under most publishing contracts, this is the author's responsibility. Write to the source, identifying exactly what you want to reproduce and for what purpose. A generic permission request form is downloadable from our website (www.jkeckert.com), and you may reproduce it at will. Send copies of the completed permission forms to your publisher, and keep the originals.

You can use quite a bit of material from outside sources, but be careful. If you only paraphrase someone, it is tactful to reference the source, but no permission is legally required. But if you use more than a sentence or two verbatim, you will need to get written permission. Other publishers appreciate it when you direct the reader to their books, but not if you use so much material that it could conceivably (as determined by a lawyer) damage the market for the original.

If there is any question in your mind as to whether permission is required, play it safe. Don't count on anyone's good will—get it in writing or you may get a lawsuit instead.

Note that U.S. government documents cannot be copyrighted, so they make excellent sources of illustrations. In addition, most vendors of electronic components and systems will provide drawings and photographs of their products, free of charge, just to get the product exposure.

Equations and Special Symbols

Special symbols are readily available from your keyboard. You just need to find out where they reside. In Word, for example, use the "Insert" pull-down menu, choose "Symbol," and click on the one you want.

Later versions of Word include a limited equation editor, which is a stripped-down version of MathType. If your book contains a great deal of math, is advisable to purchase the full version from the publisher, Design Science (www.dessci.com/en/products/mathtype). Another good utility is the MathEQ Expression Editor, from LiveMath (www.livemath.com/matheq/). Equations generated with these programs are PostScript based, so they port nicely to a range of other applications.

Typefaces

Font incompatibilities were once a major headache for the publishing industry, with the battle being between PostScript and TrueType. The problem has been largely resolved by the introduction of OpenType fonts, but it is still best to avoid unusual fonts from questionable sources.

Most books are printed using Times or Century Schoolbook for text, and Helvetica for tables and figures. If you stick to these, it will make things simpler for everyone.

Reference Books for Authors

Many reference sources exist on the subjects of writing style, abbreviations, and so forth. Because professional editors are paid to take care of such details, and because standards vary considerably from one publisher to the next, the author really cannot hope to produce a “perfect” manuscript. On the other hand, a sloppy manuscript is usually taken as a sign of a sloppy mind, so you should make a serious attempt at rough compliance with some widely accepted standards.

It is not within the scope of this booklet to provide a tutorial on writing styles. We recommend the following references:

The Chicago Manual of Style
University of Chicago Press
www.press.uchicago.edu

The Elements of Style
Wm. Strunk Jr. and E. B. White
Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
us.macmillan.com

A Pocket Guide to Correct Punctuation
R. E. Brittain and B. W. Griffith
Barrons Educational Series
barronseduc.com

III. MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

So your manuscript is complete, the illustrations are done, you’ve proofed the tables and equations, and you’re ready to submit it. Well, maybe.

Go over it one more time. Pretend that the text will appear in print exactly as you see it and that there will be no more opportunities to make revisions. Before a book goes into page production, the text needs to be in its final, final form. *Late revisions are the bane of the book production process.* If you add or delete a paragraph (or even just a line or two) near the beginning of a chapter, the change is likely to affect the text flow on that and subsequent pages all the way to the end. The placement of any existing tables and illustrations will be fouled up. Hours of difficult and tedious work may be required to effect your “minor” change.

Double check the illustrations as well. Is a label bumping up against the line art? Is a photo too dark or not sharp enough? It’s much easier to fix a piece of artwork *before* it has been placed into the page layout.

As they say, “time is money,” and we’re talking about yours. Last-minute changes are known as *author adjustments (AAs)*, and most contracts limit how many you can make without being billed for the unplanned labor. If you submit “camera-ready” illustrations that do not meet the publisher’s standards, your contract probably allows the publisher to charge the cost of redrafting them against your royalty account. If the book is heavy in artwork, this can be substantial. It is extremely important to avoid nonessential corrections after the book is in production. We know of one case in which a persnickety author insisted on more than 1500 AAs, requiring three major overhauls of the page proofs. In the final analysis, the chargebacks exceeded his total royalties, and he never received any payments at all. Read your contract and remember—the large print giveth, and the small print taketh away.

When you really are ready, you can submit the book over the Internet, on a CD, or by any mutually agreeable means. Many e-mail systems restrict the size of attachments to a few tens of megabytes, so if your package exceeds the limit, you will need to compress the files or perhaps even transfer them via an ftp site. The publisher will provide instructions on how to do that. As a last resort, you can use www.yousendit.com to send files up to 100 MB in size at no charge.

And, of course, keep at least two copies of everything. Your hard drive *will* fail someday, and probably at the worst possible time.