

The Writers Network News, March 2018

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for notices of local (but sporadic) meetings today! Send your name and email address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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CHANGING YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

If your address changes, you must sign up again with your new address. We cannot change your address for you, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Go to www.zebraeditor.com, click on the yellow box, and sign up with your new address.

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Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from [www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com), a free service that converts long links to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"The writer does the most who gives his reader the most knowledge and takes from him the least time." —Charles Caleb Colton

Wikipedia says this about Colton:

Charles Caleb Colton (1780–1832) was an English cleric, writer, and collector, well known for his eccentricities. His performance of church-related functions at both locations was erratic: at times conscientious and brilliant while at other times cursory and indulgent. He left formal church service, and England, in 1828. Contemporaries believed that he had fled from his creditors, who took out a legal docket against him, identifying him as a wine merchant. For two years Colton traveled throughout the United States. He later established a modest residence in Paris. There he invested in an art gallery and had a large private collection of valuable paintings. Other pastimes included wine collecting and partridge shooting. He also frequented the gaming salons of the Palais Royal and was so successful that in a year or two he acquired the equivalent of 25,000 English pounds. He continued gambling, however, and lost his French fortune. At the time of his death, Colton was living on funds received from his immediate family. When an illness required surgery, Colton killed himself rather than undergo the procedure.

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One: From the editor's desk: A Cause for Flaws

Dear Fellow Writers:

I read the following quote recently and wanted to expound on it. Here's the quote: "The absence of flaw in beauty is itself a flaw."

Havelock Ellis, a physician, writer, and social reformer who died in 1939 wrote that quote, and it triggered a truth in me. When I edit books for authors who have also asked for feedback, not strictly line editing, I study the characters in the book. Some authors make the mistake of making protagonists all goodness and light with nothing but good intentions and respectable actions. In contrast, the antagonists are the bad guys through and through. They have no redeeming qualities. Readers rarely feel connected to characters that are pure saints or pure evil. Even the worst guy in the world should have a soft spot or a good trait. The same holds true for the nicest protagonist you ever wrote. Even the pope, for example, should have a flaw, something that isn't perfect. Flaws make characters human, and without a flaw in the characters, the story itself becomes flawed.

Think about the characters you've liked the most. Let's look at Dorothy in THE WIZARD OF OZ. What was her flaw? She wasn't content, even though she had all she needed at home, so she longed for an escape. After it happened, she eventually came to realize that she was happiest at home. Without her longing for an escape, where would the story have gone? Nowhere, and certainly not to the wonderful world of Oz.

I didn't mean to turn this letter entirely into a lesson on creative writing. Instead I thought even further about the quote that drew my attention. What about the people around us, the real characters? There are people I love and people I don't care to be around. The ones I don't care to be around are not all evil, though. Somewhere there is a shining point of light, for sure. When I considered one or two of the folks I avoid, I mentally uncovered the good in them. When I did, my heart felt lighter. No longer did I get a dark feeling about those people. Oddly the experience lifted me and freed me from my unpleasant thoughts about them. I still choose not to associate with some people, but I no longer hold resentment or a strong need to avoid them. In doing so I also worked on my own flaw—my occasional lack of forgiveness. I can't say I removed my flaw entirely. I am human, after all, and we all have flaws.

Come to think of it, if we didn't make mistakes, I would not be able to make a living repairing errors—in manuscripts, anyway.

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com)  
Author of two editions of *WRITE IN STYLE*, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

Two: ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR

Designing and Self-Publishing a Book

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I am trying to decide how to lay out my nonfiction book. The book will be six by nine. Can I use a .75-inch margin (top, side, bottom, and spine) throughout the book? What font should I use? Some say Times at twelve points. Do I single space the lines?

What layout elements do you recommend?

A: First I must say that professional book designers know much more about preparing a book for publication than most of us writers. We may be familiar only with programs such as Microsoft Word. Although Word is great for word processing, it is not the best program for book layout and design. The pro designer with experience and the right design software can be much more creative than we can be with just a word-processing program. Professional book designers do charge a substantial fee for their service, though.

If you are determined to perform the layout of the book yourself, I can give you a few pointers, although my background is primarily editing. I did take enough design courses to be able to tell good design from bad, but I am far from a professional designer.

Caveats aside, for design standards I looked at *The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition (CMOS)*, to see how it is designed. After all, it is the ultimate resource on how to edit and produce books.

The CMOS book is about six by nine inches. Each page has an ID at the top of all content pages. The subject number and chapter name are on the left side of the even pages, and the subject name and section number are at the top right on the odd pages. Even pages are on the left and odd pages are on the right. All pages are numbered at the bottom, at the outside edge, so that even numbers are at the far left on the left-side pages and odd numbers are at the far right at right-side pages. The pages feature margins of about three-quarters of an inch on the spine, bottom, and right sides. The top margin, however, from the top of the page to the page ID, is a little less than half an inch.

CMOS differs from some reference books, because it uses a numbering system to identify subjects. For example, chapter one, titled *Parts of a Book*, starts with item 1.1 and ends with 1.117. An index tells the subject of each numerical section. Still, the overall design is open and easy to read, and if anyone knows about books, it would have to be the folks at the University of Chicago Press, who literally wrote the book on producing books.

Although CMOS appears to use eight or ten-point Times New Roman, it's a huge book of more than a thousand pages. It would become even larger and more unwieldy if printed in twelve-point type. I like twelve-point type, myself, and Times New Roman is easy to read and highly recommended. Certainly shy away from cute fonts or sans serif fonts such as Helvetica, which are better for headlines than for body text.

Yes, the lines in a book should be single-spaced, with no extra spaces between paragraphs except to indicate a scene change or, in the case of nonfiction, a change in subject matter.

In the end, design often comes down to what you like. Go to a bookstore or check your bookshelf for a relatively new nonfiction book. Be sure it comes from a major publisher; that is, not an indie or self-publisher. Look it over and see if you find it easy to read and pleasant to the eyes. Study its design elements.

Ask yourself these questions and see if you want to follow the same design. Does each chapter have a special symbol or other design element at the beginning? Does the end of each chapter have a symbol or slug (sometimes called a dingbat) at the end? What is the font size? Is the type justified (straight on both left and right sides), or is it ragged right (each line ends wherever it ends and is not stretched out to meet an imaginary straight line on the right)? Make your choices for your book design based on what you like and what worked for you when you studied the look of other books.

Q: Ever heard of [printer name deleted]? They gave me a great price and seem to know what they're doing. Do you have any printers you recommend?

For my first printing I want to produce only 500 to 600 copies in case I notice errors or want to change something. The book will have a hardcover and ten illustrations.

Do you have any advice on the actual printing process?

A: I haven't heard of the printer you mention, but I have a favorite, the one that printed the second edition of my award-winning book on creative writing, *Write In Style*. Send me a private email, and I'll send you the name.

No matter who you choose to use, each printer has its pluses and minuses. One company may have a great price for printing but may be too far away from you, so shipping costs would eat up your savings, for example. Some printers may cost a little more but are great with customer service and communication, which could actually save you money by avoiding mistakes and misunderstandings.

The internet allows us to find printers all around the globe as well as customer comments about those companies. Be sure to research your potential printers and see what past customers have said about their experiences with that printer.

New print-on-demand (POD) technology allows us to print fewer copies at a time, and we don't have to stockpile hundreds of books in a climate-controlled warehouse to protect our investment. Unless you have presold hundreds of copies, remember the rule of thumb: self-published books often sell no more than one hundred copies. The books that sell the best are the ones written by speakers, well-known personalities, and other strong self-promoters with a built-in audience.

If you know you will have to warehouse copies for an indefinite time, POD might be a better choice. With POD, you can buy as few copies as you need, sometimes as few as one, and as you said, if you find errors in the first copies, you can easily fix the flaws before printing the next small batch.

The drawbacks of POD are that many POD printers offer only paperbacks, not hardbacks. In addition, the cost per copy is often higher than traditionally published paperbacks. The advantages, though, are that you don't have to warehouse large numbers of books and don't invest in inventory that may sit in storage for years. Because paperbacks cost less to produce than hardbacks, your cost is reduced, a fact that may keep your selling price within a more acceptable range and help you sell more copies. You can see there are ups and downs to the POD process, but POD has become quite standard for self-publishers.

Because you've chosen to produce hardcover books, you may have to produce hundreds of books before you can get a price break based on volume, but please be sure you can sell the volume you choose to produce. There's an adage that goes "The last one with the merchandise loses." You don't want to lose by having hundreds of unsold books getting moldy in storage.

No matter what your decision, you are wise to order only a few books at first, for the reason you mention—you may want to make changes—and because you won't be left with thousands of unsold copies if something happens and the books don't sell as well as you expected.

As far as the actual printing process, ask for samples from the printer you are considering. Not only may you get some interesting books, but you can also compare those samples to samples from other printers. Ask for the names of past clients. Call those self-published authors and ask about their experience with the printer.

At some point you have to trust you've made a good decision and commit, but don't do it until you are armed with as much information as you can find.

Bobbie Christmas, book editor, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions, too. Send them to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com). Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com).

For much more information on these subjects and hundreds of others of vital importance to writers, order *PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS*, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

Bobbie Christmas's award-winning second edition of *WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing* is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

MEMBERS WRITE...

About last month's Ask the Book Doctor column regarding single and double quotation marks and other punctuation marks, Jane Lael, an American living in Ecuador who is a writer and editor wrote this:

To me, this sentence should be punctuated like this: Donald told me, "My sailor friend says, 'Once a Navy plane, always a Navy plane'." How come that is not standard publishing style? When I edit books, I use the above style."

I responded this way:

Unfortunately Chicago, the style preferred by American book publishers, dictates that the end punctuation almost always goes inside the quotation marks. There is a rare occasion when it does not, but you can rarely go wrong by putting the end marks inside the quotation marks."

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My letter from the editor's desk mentioned that eating a tablespoon of mustard halts my leg cramps when they hit, and several folks responded.

W. D. Evans (Wayne) wrote, "I loved the mustard story and the fact that if you have a problem and found a solution, write about it. Great tips."

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Ruth White wrote, "Mustard? Who would have thought? Glad you found a cure that I am sharing with a friend who has leg cramps. Thank you!"

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Mary Ellen Gavin wrote, "I love this tip, Bobbie, and will use it myself. God help all of us when that cramp seizes us. Here are two more tips you may want to print:

1. Friends who drink a lot of alcohol should know they've lost a lot of salt and take a swig of either pickle or olive juice before they go to bed.

2. I sometimes get hiccups that speed up to the point that I cannot breathe. A man dipped a spoon into a sugar bowl, gave it to me, and said to eat it dry. It was no easy trick to swallow dry sugar. He then gave me a glass of water to drink, and the hiccupping stopped.

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MORE MANUSLIPS

In my Manuslips file I keep a list of errors I find that either tickle my fancy or prove a point about clear writing. I use quite a few manuslips in WRITE IN STYLE too. Read the example below a few times and determine if you saw any errors and then read my explanation.

While traveling, my house was without power for two days.

When I read the above manuslip, I wondered where that house went when it traveled. The problem is that "while traveling" does not refer to any person named in the sentence, and the only noun mentioned after "traveling" is "house." For that reason, "traveling" refers to "house." In other words, the sentence as written says that my house was traveling without power. To repair the sentence with the missing modifier, it could be rewritten this way:

While I was traveling, my house was without power for two days.

Have you ever found any errors in your own work? If so, share them with me by email. If I use them I won't use your name, should you wish to remain anonymous.

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#### MORE CHANGES TO CHICAGO STYLE

In prior issues of The Writers Network News I've explained some of the changes in the newest edition of THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE.

Here are two more things that differ from earlier versions of the book that sets the standard for the book publishing industry:

CMOS now says that generally no comma is needed when the adverbs "too" or "either" are used in the sense of "also."

Examples:

You can buy a book, but you may want to buy a bookmark too.

We aren't going to the movie or dinner either.

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Etc. should be preceded by a comma, but it should be followed by a comma only if required by the surrounding text.

Example:

Because of the weather, I wore the usual raincoat, galoshes, hat, etc. that walkers wear in a driving rain.

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LITTLE-KNOWN OLYMPIC FACT

Maribel Vinson, a revered name in American figure skating, was a three-time Olympian, a bronze medalist behind the gold medalist Sonja Henie, and a coach who trained hundreds of young talents. She had another distinction, though. She was the first female sportswriter at The New York Times. Read the full article here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8ysphqe>.

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#### COMING SOON: AN EVEN BETTER WAY TO SAVE THOUSANDS ON EDITING

The latest edition of PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS—the sixth edition—is in the works. I am busily updating it to comply with the latest edition of THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE and adding even more entries than before. Anyone who orders the fifth edition at this time will get a notice that the book is on backorder while it is being updated to the sixth edition. Until the sixth edition is released, however, anyone who orders now will pay only the price of the fifth edition. Once the new edition is published, the new book will increase in cost.

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction. Get information on grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and more than 500 subjects.

Editing is costly, because editors must charge for their time and expertise. What if an editor put all her time and expertise into a book that allowed you to edit your own book? You could save thousands of dollars using such a book. PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, is that book. In fact it's the resource that many book editors use.

Order the sixth edition of PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS today at fifth-edition prices by clicking here: <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>. The information will say you are ordering the fifth edition, but you will receive the sixth edition, not the fifth, as soon as it is hot off the press.

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GARRISON KEILLOR DENIES SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Garrison Keillor described several sexually suggestive emails he exchanged with a former researcher who accused him of sexual misconduct as "romantic writing" that never resulted in a physical relationship, and the writer and radio host rejected the idea that because he was her boss—and the driving force of a hugely popular radio program—it could be sexual harassment. Read the full ABC News story here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybjk9gyb>.

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#### BOBBIE'S BLOGS

In my Write In Style blog, you'll find tips on creative writing. For my latest blog on some of the Oscar nominees, see <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

Neurotica: Crazy Stories of Love, Lust, and Letting Go—If you like relationship stories, I've got a ton of them. Some are funny, some a little sexy, and all true. I reveal some of my stories at <https://neuroticastories.blogspot.com>.

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EDITOR'S PET PEEVES

SCARE QUOTES

The term "scare quotes" refers to quotation marks intended to alert readers that a term is nonstandard, slang, ironic, or some other sense. As THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE says, "Like any such device, scare quotes lose their force and irritate readers if overused."

I read an obituary years ago, obviously written by a relative rather than a journalist, with almost every other word in scare quotes. After reading it I felt that the author meant nothing that he or she said about the deceased. While I can't resurrect the exact obit, it went something like this:

We "all" "loved" her. She will be "truly" "missed."

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BECOME MY FRIEND ON FACEBOOK

Follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>

FOLLOW ZEBRA COMMUNICATIONS ON FACEBOOK

Get news, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff for writers. Like and follow Zebra Communications at <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

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CMOS ONLINE Q & A

Someone wrote to the Chicago Manual of Style Online to ask the following question:

Q: Do we italicize a ship's name in quoted dialogue? My client says it should be italicized generally, but not in dialogue.

To get the answer to this question and many more based on Chicago style, go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE sets the standard in book publishing for issues such as punctuation, capitalization, whether to spell out numbers or use numerals, and much more. If you write books, you will want to know more about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style. The seventeenth edition was just released, changing some old issues, so be sure your editor is familiar with the seventeenth edition of Chicago style, rather than an older version.

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WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing

My book on creative writing titled WRITE IN STYLE has won seven big awards. Copies are selling fast on Amazon, but please order it here, directly from the publisher: <http://tinyurl.com/zeq6z5g>. WRITE IN STYLE is not about grammar. It teaches writers how to find their fresh voice. If you want a book on grammar, order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter.

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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

WRITING A NOVEL? CONSIDER SUBMITTING AN EXCERPT

Thirteen literary journals that accept novel excerpts can be found here: <http://www.authorspublish.com/thirteen-literary-journals-that-publish-novel-excerpts/>

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FOLIATE OAK LITERARY MAGAZINE  
University of Arkansas-Monticello  
Arts & Humanities  
562 University Dr.  
Monticello AR 71656  
[www.foliateoak.com](http://www.foliateoak.com)

The Foliate Oak Literary Magazine is an online student-run magazine accepting hybrid prose, poetry, fiction, flash, creative nonfiction, and artwork. We love previously unpublished quirky writing that makes sense, preferably flash fiction (less than 1,000 words). We are eager to read short creative nonfiction also. We rarely accept submissions that have over 2,700 words. We enjoy poems that we understand, preferably not rhyming poems, unless you make the rhyme so fascinating we'll wonder why we ever said anything about avoiding rhymes. Give us something fresh, unexpected, and will make us say, "Wow!" We're not interested in homophobic, religious rants, or pornographic, violent stories.

To submit see <https://www.foliateoak.com/submit.html>.

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WHIMSY LITERARY AGENCY, LLC
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Contact: Jackie Meyer

Whimsy Literary Agency LLC, specializes in nonfiction books and authors that educate, entertain, and inspire people.

"Whimsy looks for nonfiction projects that are concept- and platform-driven. We seek books that educate, inspire, and entertain."

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PURPLE DRAGONFLY BOOK AWARDS

<https://www.dragonflybookawards.com/purple-dragonfly/>

In 2009, the Purple Dragonfly Book Awards were conceived with children in mind. Not only do we want to recognize and honor accomplished authors in the field of children's literature, but we also want to highlight up-and-coming, newly published authors and younger published writers. One book contest winner will be chosen from all entries to receive the grand prize. The grand prize winning book must be outstanding in content, readability, entertainment value, and overall production. The grand prize winner will receive a \$500 cash prize, a certificate commemorating the accomplishment, and more.

All first-place book contest winners of all categories will be put into a drawing for a \$100 prize. In addition, each first place winner in each category receives a certificate commemorating their accomplishment and more.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com.

Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting www.zebraeditor.com and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Be sure to research all information and study every stipulation before you enter a competition, pitch or accept an assignment, spend money, or sell your work.

To access past issues of The Writers Network News, click here: http://live.ezine.com/feeds/ezine/886_2.

The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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