12. MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

Once your book appears in print, your publisher will return your manuscript as "dead matter." At that point it's of interest only to future Ph.D. candidates.

But when it first arrives in the publisher's office, it ought to look as inviting, clean and professional as you can make it. You want to make sure it's as readable (and correctable) as possible; don't give the editor an excuse to reject you because you make her eyes hurt, and she can't even find room to insert proper spelling.

Ideally, you'll submit your manuscript in laser-printed form. If you can't afford that, then use an inkjet printer (used with good bond paper, it's almost as good as laser).

Consider your choice of font. A sans serif font like this is legible but not readable—that is, you can recognize a word or phrase quickly, but reading page after page would be exhausting. A boldface font like this is even worse. A serif font like this is more readable, so by all means choose one for the body of your manuscript text. Point size is also important. This is 11-point Book Antiqua, which isn't bad, and as you can see it lets you put a lot of text on one page. But compare it with the 14-point Times in the sample page following.

Paper should be standard 8.5x11, 20 lb. white bond. Give yourself a margin of at least an inch top and bottom, and an inch or an inch and a half on the sides. Double-space your text. Do not put an extra double-space between paragraphs, unless you want a similar gap on the printed page to indicate a change of scene or passage of time. Indent each paragraph about half an inch. If you are using a font like this one, with letters that take up variable amounts of space, a single space after a period is enough. If you are using a typewriter or a monospace font, two spaces are better. Either way, a single space should follow every comma, semicolon, and colon. Use an "em dash"—like these—with no spaces between the dash and the surrounding words. Two hyphens--are an acceptable substitute. <u>Underline</u> text only if you cannot *italicize* it.

Do not use a right-justified margin like this paragraph! It may look tidy, but it creates gaps between words that make reading hard. Avoid hyphenations. Also avoid "widows and orphans"—that is, a paragraph that begins on the last line of a page, or a paragraph that ends on the first line the following page. Most word processors can kick such paragraphs onto the next page. This may create huge lower margins, but it's better than breaking a paragraph.

Be sure that each page displays a plain Arabic numeral in the upper right-hand corner. Otherwise, don't bother with a header. On the next page is a manuscript passage from my novel *Greenmagic*. (I blush to admit that the original ms. was in a sans serif font. We learn something every day.)

From Write a Novel (http://crofsblogs.typepad.com/novel/), a resource created by Crawford Kilian, Communications Instructor at Capilano College, North Vancouver BC.

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