

Livewire Publishing

Publishing solutions for the new millennium



How to produce a book for submission

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The feature article in Livewire Newsletter – September 2000 described how to work in individual chapter drafts and the reasons for doing so.

This article focuses on how to assemble the final drafts into a submission document. It also provides some hints about submitting your manuscript to a publisher.

Let's assume you've written your novel and have completed six (6) drafts of say fourteen (14) chapters. These are in individual documents named ##### Draft 6. You may have kept count of the number of words in each chapter on a Word Count form so you're aware of approximately how many words your final manuscript will contain.

You can use your master chapter document as the basis for the final manuscript document. Just copy it into a new document that reflects the story title and the fact that this is the final manuscript – eg Chasing Jonathan – Final mss.

Note: The following example is for MSWord. Other word processing packages may have a similar function and you will need to investigate how this operation is achieved in that package.

Assembling your chapters into one manuscript document ...

- Open the Master Chapter document open, proceed as follows:
- Save the Master Document as “Final – Chasing Jonathan” (your novel’s name).
- Change the footer to reflect that this is the final manuscript. This involves changing the date and including “Final mss” instead of “Draft 6”.
- From the Insert menu, select the file “File” option.
- A dialog box opens and you can select the first document to assemble into your new final manuscript (eg. Chapter 1 Draft 6).
- Click on the insert button and the text from the selected document is inserted.
- Press CTRL+Enter to insert a hard page break.
- Repeat the insert procedure until all chapters of the novel are assembled into the new document.
- Adjust the header so that the document numbers through from Page 1 to Page ####.
- Print the document for proof-reading purposes.

Note:

This is still a working document. The next task (proof-reading) is very important and must be completed before you even think about submitting your manuscript to a publisher. You should leave the footer on the final working copy until you’re ready to print the manuscript for the publisher. This will be after you’ve corrected any minor errors you find during the proof-reading process.

Proof-reading your manuscript

Here are two rules for successful proof-reading:

- Never underestimate that importance of proof-reading your manuscript.
- Never proof-read your manuscript on the computer screen.

Getting published is such a competitive exercise, you can't afford to submit a sloppy manuscript to a publisher. It ruins your professional credibility and lessens your chances of becoming a published author.

Don't proof-read on the computer screen

Proof-reading on the computer screen is not an efficient way to do the job. It allows your eyes wander all over the place and become distracted by the story you've written. There is also the temptation to make some more editing changes and you lose concentration with the task at hand.

Proof-reading is not editing

Proof-reading is not editing. By this stage, all editing and re-writing should have been completed. You are now looking for other mistakes such as words you've used incorrectly (like "to" instead of "too" or missing quotation marks around dialogue. Missing words are also one thing to look for, and all those little things that will make your manuscript as perfect as you can possibly make it.

Most writers will tell you no matter how careful you are, no matter how much editing and proof-reading you do, there will always be the "odd mistake" that slips through the net. One or two mistakes are acceptable to a publisher. But numerous errors will stand out and make you lose professional credibility.

Proof-reading tips

The best way to proof-read is on paper. This is why you should always print your work for this phase of the manuscript production. Another tip is to take a piece of coloured paper and cover all but the line you are reading. This forces you to concentrate on the words and punctuation in that line only. It stops you getting re-involved in the actual story. By now you should have that exactly as you want it.

Mark any errors in red pen. Take a break every so often as this task is tedious and time consuming. Take as much time as you need to do the job without hurrying.

Once you've finished, give the manuscript to a trusted friend or relative and explain how they should proof-read (eg. coloured paper). Two passes should highlight the mistakes in the manuscript.

Final changes

When you go back to make the changes found in the proof-readings, print the pages you've worked on and re-check that your edits have been correctly executed.

Keeping the evidence

Once you are satisfied that there are no mistakes in your manuscript:

- Save the changes.
- Save the document into another filename (eg Final – Chasing Jonathan Publisher). This is because the copy you send to the publisher doesn't need the footer with the date in it, but you still need to keep the dated version for your own records.
- Remove the footer, save and re-print the manuscript for submission.

Sending it off

Package it with your submission letter and title page, kiss it goodbye, then forget about it and get on with your next writing project.

Summary

All this may sound like a lot of work. You may even think, “all this isn’t really necessary”.

If you’re working on one project at a time, you will find it fairly easy to manage. But if you’re into multi-tasking, you need to be able to keep track of each project. I can’t even begin to think about trying to sort through “My Documents” with hundreds of files and drafts, all named with no particular sequence. And the idea of overwriting each draft with new (and often inferior writing) is just too horrible to contemplate.

If you are serious about your writing career, you need to put in place efficient work practices and follow them to the letter. Leave no room for error. Leave no stone unturned.

The Livewire Publishing feature articles are designed to assist writers to work efficiently, adopt a professional attitude to their craft and produce work that is visually as close to perfect as possible.

We can’t write your books for you, but we can assist you with our commonsense feature articles that investigate and suggest efficient work practices.

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