

Ok, time to gripe. I've been following things for some time now, done some books myself, proofed some, re-formatted some etc. A few items that I personally don't like. YMMV, as they say.

1) RE-FORMATting IN GENERAL

I.e. changing the original from format X to format Y. Unless the text has been improved, I see no reason to release a 'new' version.

This is a minor gripe but makes keeping track of improvements slightly more difficult.

This doesn't mean people who actually improve the original (Layout/Proofing) and in the process change the format of the original. My personal preference is HTML, so if I proof something the improved version is very likely to be released as HTML.

1.1) RE-FORMATTERS/PROOFERS ETC, WHO REMOVE REVISION HISTORY

In the process they also remove the original version info, thus making it very difficult to trace back the updates or distinguish between versions that might be from two different sources. The end result is one v1.5 from a shitty scan which is actually a lot worse than a v1.1 where the original was carefully proofed in the first place.

This is a MAJOR gripe.

PLEASE RETAIN THE EXISTING REVISION HISTORY WHEN YOU 'MODIFY' THE DOCUMENT. CLEARLY MENTION WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO THE PREVIOUS VERSION TO JUSTIFY THE VERSION NUMBER INCREASE.

- LAYOUT (chapter breaks, scene changes etc.)
- PROOFING (OCR errors, spelling mistakes, missing pages)
- FORMAT (If for some reason overpowering urge makes you release a 'new' version, at least indicate that the contents is exactly the same, just the file format was changed)

1.2) RE-FORMATTERS/PROOFERS WHO SPLIT FILES

There's this perfectly good single file in format X and suddenly it's split into several HTML files. The re-formatter then smugly updates the version number and thinks they've made everyone a great favour.

What if I'd like to get it back into one piece? Sheesh, I have only 30 separate files to stitch together. Unless you're mr. Clueless from Land of No Clues Living Here, you should know that you can link within an HTML document and also keep the CSS in there. Result is ONE (1) file, not 30.

This is a minor gripe, but annoying nonetheless.

1.3) RE-FORMATTERS WHO DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A CLUE

There's this one fellow who adds five to six times the same document with different names plus several color and b/w scans of the book cover into a release. What's the point? Why the extra files? Why the color vs. b/w cover scans? Hello? Why?

A minor gripe, but confusing.

2) GRAPHICS IN GENERAL

Kudos to those who add cover art to their releases. Admittedly, it's not worth much but still a nice addition. If you release a book that's hard to find etc. please go through the trouble of adding cover art as well.

A very minor gripe, but it's nice to see the cover art :)

2.1) FILE SIZES IN KBs AND PIXELS

I'm constantly surprised how clueless some of the people who scan books are. They haven't got the slightest idea about how to scan and save graphics in a suitable format. I've seen maps in thumbnail size whose usefulness is quickly approaching zero. Then there are the cover art scans that reach astronomical proportions in size.

a) BLACK-AND-WHITE MAPS ETC -> GIF

GIF is an ancient format but still very good for black and white drawings etc. A GIF will actually be smaller in kb than a JPG[1] if you're scanning maps or something similar.

[1] IN B/W, NOT GRAYSCALE. There's a difference (in scanning software terms the difference is usually stated as 'line art' versus 'Black and white photo').

b) COVER PAGES, PHOTOS ETC -> JPG

Pay attention to the file sizes. I've seen several releases where the cover page of the book is 300-400kb and the actual text around 150kb. Ok, a picture is worth a thousand words but in that 150kb, there's definitely more than a thousand words. Adjust your picture size (no sense in scanning a 2000x4000 pixel cover, 300x500 is more than adequate and the result is a 50kb image).

Conclusion:

- Pay attention to picture size in KB. No sense releasing a 15kb book with 400kb cover image that can be downloaded from Amazon.

- Pay attention to picture size in pixels. If you want a scan of a map to be useful, make sure that it's also readable.

And: EXPERIMENT. You can spend 15 minutes playing around with different scanner and file saving options to get the optimal result. Do this a few times and you'll instinctively know what format is the best for which type of graphic.

A minor gripe but an occasional thumbnail-size map makes life that much more unbearable.

