

# Two Articles on Exporting to ePUB

## deDANAAN GRAPHIC DESIGN

# “EXPORT TO EPUB”: FOCUS ON THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DESTINATION

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Sales of eBooks have gone through the roof lately. In the case of Amazon, perhaps I should say through the jungle canopy. If you need a briefing on the news, Amazon recently announced that their Kindle books are now outselling their print books. With the massive changes in consumer reading habits, many individuals are excited to publish eBooks themselves and sell them through Amazon, Apple iTunes, Barnes & Noble, Smashwords, and other online retailers. Small publishers are realizing that they need to get new books into eBook format and they are looking at backlist titles and realizing that there is a new market they can reach with their older books.

If you're an individual, chances are that you are writing in Microsoft Word or Pages (the Mac alternative to Word). These programs are capable of exporting to EPUB, the most popular eBook file format. The Amazon Kindle stands apart as the biggest exception to the rule by using the mobi file format. Not to worry, conversion of EPUB to mobi for Kindle is both possible and painless with a number of software options such as Calibre.

If you take the straight export route to EPUB, you'll have something that you can share with friends who have e-readers, but you'll have a hard time getting a quality book that's ready for market. By ready for market, I mean something that validates and satisfies the iTunes quality police (and they are tough cops, those folks at Apple). The EPUB file should also have consistently styled headings, graphics, image captions, etc.

If you're a publisher you are probably using Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress to produce your book. I can't speak to the latest versions of QuarkXPress, since I no longer use it, but InDesign has very robust (but far from complete) eBook features.

The two main keys to using any of these EPUB export features are

1. Formatting all of your text with paragraph styles and character styles, and
2. Thinking far ahead about the fact that you are going to eventually need an EPUB and what the “Export for EPUB” menu will and won't do for your book.

By using paragraph and character styles consistently, you will be able to ensure consistent text displays across the variety of reading devices, and more importantly, you will have a good handle on refining the way your styles look after you've exported the EPUB. If you eventually need to edit the EPUB file directly, the style names you choose become the style names in the EPUB CSS style document. If you're familiar with CSS and Web design, you know how powerful and necessary a well-written CSS style sheet is to making changes to the presentation of your content. The more complex your book layout, the more important it is to use paragraph and character styles and use them smartly. Find a thorough book, eBook, or video on the software of

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choice and take a close look at what it has to say about paragraph and character styles.

By thinking ahead about eventually needing an EPUB, you can make decisions early about how to structure your document. This can save a lot of time re-doing things that shouldn't need re-doing. For instance, you may want to split your book into different InDesign chapters to facilitate how InDesign generates the table of contents for the EPUB when it comes time to export. You'll then have to use InDesign's advanced book features to organize the chapter files and create a table of contents. Additionally, you may want to anchor all graphics in the text of the InDesign document if you're using InDesign CS5. InDesign CS5.5 has an Articles Panel that helps get around the need to anchor images, but this may not always work for your particular needs.

## The Workflow

Creation of the eBook doesn't begin when you select "Export to EPUB." From very early on, think about these points:

- Decide on the relative priority/appearance of your heading 1s, 2s, 3s, body text, footnotes, and any other text in your document.
- Work out how they appear relative to each other, then **create and use paragraph and character styles** using the style sheet function of your word processing and layout software. Your choices will carry over into the EPUB CSS Rules, which can be further refined if necessary.
- Apply those styles consistently.

If you are using Word and want to export from there, you can. If you want to carry the manuscript over from Word to Adobe InDesign CS5 or CS5.5, you will have much more control over how the final EPUB file is created (provide links to export features). You will also have considerable control over how your styles from Word are implemented by InDesign.

If you are lucky, you won't have to edit the EPUB file, at least not much. There are many tools available to do this if needed. Here is a sampling:

- [Springy](#) or a Zip archiver/unarchiver
- [Sigil](#), an EPUB editor
- [Dreamweaver](#), [TextWrangler](#), [SimpleText](#), or [TextEdit](#) (depending on your budget and comfort level with HTML/CSS/XML).

If you are luckier still, your EPUB file will validate, and you will be able to successfully upload it to the retail site of your choice such as iTunes, Amazon, or Barnes & Noble.

One final note. The best single resource I've found on the topic of creating EPUB files is [EPUB Straight to the Point: Creating ebooks for the Apple iPad and other ereaders](#), by Elizabeth Castro and published by my favorite publisher for creative people: Peachpit Press. She covers EPUB thoroughly and tells you what you need to know for Kindle as well.

# A LIST OF EBOOK MANAGEMENT AND EDITING SOFTWARE

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eBooks have made self-publishing a book easier than it has ever been, and it has also transformed the concept of what a book is. Whatever type of author you are, you can publish in the form of an eBook. This can be a great way to sell your content or market yourself, your company, or your brand.

Consider eBooks, not only if you are an author of fiction, non-fiction, or children's books, but even if you are managing content on a Web site or writing e-newsletters every month. You can reach a very broad audience through iTunes, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other major book retailers if you rethink and refashion it as an eBook. Links included in the body of your eBook can drive traffic back to your Web site where you have further opportunities to engage your audience.

## Yes, I know, I know. ... How do I get started?

The eBook files you put on your ereader — those that are available for the most popular ereading platforms — are based on HTML, CSS, and XML: the basic language of the Web. If you are not familiar with these technologies, producing your own eBooks that are ready for the major retailers can be a challenge. If this is the case you may want to look into having an eBook aggregator such as [Smashwords](#) create your eBook files and market your title for you. You will still have to produce a Word document to their standards, but their automated process can save you quite a bit of time and effort, and their distribution of your eBook will be very thorough and will include the major retailers mentioned above. Compare services, though, to figure out what works best for you, as the terms of agreement will be different. You can [compare services by checking out this PDF from Gravity Switch](#).

If you are producing your own eBook, Word and InDesign are good starting points for simpler books, but even InDesign with its improved eBook features in CS5.5 falls short of being a complete solution. You may need to do some editing of the EPUB document if you are a perfectionist or have some more advanced goals in mind such as keeping certain items together on the same page or making sure that a heading doesn't occur at the bottom of an ereader page.

And, of course, my company, [deDanaan Graphic Design](#), offers a complete set of services from book design and layout for print, plus conversion of the print-book files to EPUB and mobi/Kindle format. If your workflow takes into account both print and EPUB from the get go, you'll save a lot of wasted effort when publishing to both print and electronic media.

Ready? Go. Here is a list of software and links that can be very useful to you in editing your ePUB and getting it ready for marketing through the major retailers. These tools range in price from free to very low cost (about \$30).

## Resources

You'll want to know how the EPUB file format works and how the different ereaders will interpret it. The best single resource I've found is

- [EPUB Straight to the Point: Creating ebooks for the Apple iPad and other ereaders by Elizabeth Castro, published by Peachpit Press.](#)
- [Threepress online EPUB validator](#)
- [Lynda.com](#), a subscription-based training-video Web site has excellent videos on Adobe InDesign CS5.5 and its new features for creating eBooks.
- [Gravity Switch Guide to Comparing Services for Publishing eBooks to iPad](#)

## Software

- [Springy](#): utility for opening, extracting, and replacing pieces of an EPUB
- [Sigil](#): an EPUB editor
- [Calibr e](#): An EPUB application with a host of features including creating, organizing, and converting EPUB files to other ereader formats such as mobi for Kindle
- [Kindle Previewer](#) (plus other Kindle utilities)
- Don't forget a basic image editor. In addition to the industry standard and costly Adobe Photoshop, there are a number of free image editors out there.

Some of these tools duplicate the functionality of others, so you won't need all of them. But if you are just learning, experimenting with any of them will be very enlightening. With a Word or Pages file in hand, I move to my standard production tools of InDesign, Springy, Dreamweaver (as a code editor), and Calibre.

As eBooks become more popular and the demand for creating them grows, I expect to see more complete and usable eBook creation software. Until then, enjoy exploring and experimenting with the EPUB format!