Typesetting Accent Marks for Print and E-books

For books with accent marks or foreign characters, it's important to choose font formats that work well for both the print and E-book editions.

Many of the older Macintosh fonts have limited character sets for accent marks and diacriticals. Common characters, like acute accents over a's and e's, may be included, but more unusual ones won't. I "hand-set" them by placing the accent marks before or after the appropriate letter, and use kerning and baseline shifting for positioning.

Fortunately, there's an easy solution that also makes typesetting the print edition faster than ever.

Although far from ideal, this method works for the print editions—but not for the EPUB. When two keystrokes are used to create an accent mark in the print edition, the character will display as the two separate keystrokes in the EPUB.

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Times New Roman has a very complete character set and is often used by authors I work with to create their manuscripts. I'm not suggesting that you typeset all books using Times New Roman, but if you run into text that won't display properly in a font, try setting that word or character in Times New Roman. The font Arial works well for sans serif type.

I try to use OpenType (.otf) fonts whenever possible for print and E-books.

I try to use OpenType (.otf) fonts whenever possible for print and E-books as OTF fonts have relatively complete character sets. They also enable you to access InDesign's OpenType text features, including the very useful Fractions option.

When preparing a book for both print and E-book editions, it's important to keep the formatting as clean and streamlined as possible. I always consider the E-book edition when I'm working on the print files, but am careful not to introduce E-book formatting that might interfere with the output of the print edition. •

Book Design Strategy and Issues

When I first started typesetting books, it was a complete mystery to me how book designers came up with ideas for their designs and layouts. I was very happy typesetting books using other people's designs for many years before I had the skills to start designing books myself.

Today I design about half of the books that I typeset. I still learn and draw inspiration from other book designers. I like to think that some of my designs have inspired other people in their book design work as well.

I usually submit three or four design samples to show how a book would look in a variety of styles. I expect clients to request some modifications to my initial design samples. Some of the best book designs are the result of a productive collaboration between the designer, editor, and author.

My goal is to meet and exceed my customers' expectations and to enhance every book in ways that they weren't expecting. •

I began designing and typesetting books after graduating from the University of Michigan in 1985. If you have a project in mind, or would like to see book samples, please e-mail me at andreareider@gmail.com or call (323) 822-2830.

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