

## In-House Style in Commercial Publishing Industries

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### Abstract

This work was discussed about publishing industries. It gives the details about the requirements that brings publishing into existence. Also discussed about how publishing emanated. Publishing house style was also discussed to know different kinds of styles to be adopted to the success of the publishing industries.

**Keywords:** in-house, style, commercial, publishing, industries.

The word “publish” came into existence between 1300 and 1350. It originated from the Latin word “publicare” (which means to make public) which in turn was derived from another Latin word “publicus” (meaning public) (Wikipedia, 2018). Various definitions of publishing abound in literature. Ugocha (2014) defines it as the transformation or creation of intellectual activities of a man into a portable format for easy dissemination to its users. Hornby (2000) defines publishing as the profession or business of preparing and printing books, magazines, CD-ROMs and so on, and selling or making them available to the public. A commercial publishing industry is therefore, an industry that engages in the transformation or creation of intellectual activities of a man into a portable format for easy dissemination to its users.

Before the invention of printing in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, what is known as modern publishing was not albeit, in existence. Distributed intellectual properties such as books were copied manually by monks who lived in monasteries. Publishing became possible with the invention of writing, and became more practicable upon the independent invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg between 1440 and 1450AD. Before this period, publishing was neither a trade, commercial venture nor a profession because it was not yet known.

It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, after the introduction of inexpensive paper, steam power and typesetting that publishing became a substantial trade in term of financial success and effect on society (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998). Printing therefore, with increasing levels of literacy, increasing complexity of life and concomitant need for information of all kinds accounted in large part for the continued expansion of the publishing industry which led to the birth of many publishing houses.



So, publishing as the activity that involves the selecting, preparation and marketing of printed matter has grown from small and ancient beginnings into a vast and complex industry responsible for the production and dissemination of all manner of information materials. That development as it is wont to do, led to scrambling or competition for market among various commercial publishing firms, each looking pre-eminence and quality assurance as a way of outsmarting and beating competitors. This eventually led to the adoption of various styles of undertaking certain publishing activities by various publishing houses. Such styles, now commonly known as in-house style is an integral part of book design.

House style is a compound word made up of “house” and “style”. While house in the context of this paper simply refers to a business firm, the New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2013) defines styles as the conventions of typography, design etc, observed in a given printing office. Granted that house is already known here as a publishing firm, in-house style can therefore be defined as a convention of typography or design adopted and strictly observed by a publishing firm. According to Nordquist (2017), the expression ‘house style refers to the specific usage and editing conventions followed by writers and editors to ensure stylistic consistency in a particular publication or series of publications such as newspaper, magazines, journals, websites, books etc. Ugocha (2014) defines it as a set of instructions regarding fonts, pagination, spellings, justification, level of headings, margins, quotations etc, to which both the author and the editor have to conform. According to him, the essence of a house style is to ensure consistency and good quality in order to promote the image of firm. In support of the argument for consistency, Hicks and Holmes (2002) uphold that variation that has no purpose is distracting. They argue by keeping a consistent style in matters of details, a publication encourages readers to concentrate on what its writers are saying. According to Elaine (2015), house style is important for several reasons. The most important is consistency – ensuring that all written communications... use the same formatting. It looks tidy, makes copies easier to read and promotes qualities of credibility, dependability and trustworthiness – subconsciously suggesting to the reader that you can be relied upon to deliver consistently.

To that end, different publishing firm adopt different house styles with a view to rolling out products that will not only meet the standards of international best practices but at the same time meet the admiration and needs of their market audience. That in essence implies that house style varies from one publishing house to another, each formulating rules that enable people to know where they are, creating in effect ‘localized’ versions of a standard language.

If writers do not for any reason follow the dictates of a publisher’s house style, editors, sub-editors’/copy editors, printers and proof readers usually make the necessary changes.

The responsibility of producing a house style for a publishing house is usually that of the copy editor. He gives proper attention to minute details in order to ensure consistency in practice and avoid any form of guess work or indecision that might lead to double standards (Williams, 2012). At the end of the day, whatever rules a commercial publishing firm adopts as its house style are usually contained in a document that is made simple for distribution and consultation which is variously called style sheet, style guide or style manual (Encyclopedia.com, 1998).



## FACTORS THAT DETERMINE A HOUSE STYLE

The type of in-house style adopted by a publishing house will depend on the following:

- ✓ **The Targeted Readership:** Different categories of audience have different expectations from publishers. For books meant for nursery school pupils (i.e. children) for instance, the font size, the quality of the paper, the level of the language as well as the level of the illustration will not be the same with those of a book that is meant for undergraduates (i.e. adults).
- ✓ **The Type of Publication:** There are different types of publications such as periodicals (such as newspapers and magazines), textbooks academic journals, novels etc. The type of publication a work is also helps to determine the type of house style to be adopted for it. The font type and size of the caption of a newspaper or magazine article for instance will not be the same with those of the caption of an article in an academic journal. This is especially so when it involves the captions of major events in a newspaper or magazines.
- ✓ **The Purpose of the Publication:** The style adopted for a given publication is also a function of its purpose. For example, a publication that is to be distributed free may have a different style from the one that is to be sold. Even when a publication is to be distributed free, if its intention is to launder the image of the publishing firm, it will also affect its style.
- ✓ **The Reputation of the Publishing Firm:** The quality of a publisher's work will define how that firm will be popularly perceived or regarded. Fourth Dimension for instance cuts a reputable image among publishing firms in South Eastern Nigeria. So, a reputable publishing firm will always strive to adopt and maintain an in-house style that will add colour to its public profile.

## AREAS OF PUBLICATION USUALLY AFFECTED BY A HOUSE STYLE

The sequence of the contents of a publication, pattern of pagination, font type and size, margins, headings, use of italics, use of bold characters, use of punctuation marks, use of ellipsis, text area, paragraphing, margin of indentations, justification, spaces between lines, alignment of captions, location of chapter headings, pattern of spellings, arrangement of references, quality of paper and paper size.

- ✓ **Sequence of the Contents of a Publication:** The arrangement of the contents of a publication differs from one type of publication to another. For example, the arrangement of the contents of a typical journal publication will not be the same thing with the arrangement of the contents of a typical textbook.



Journal Publication	Textbook
Cover	Cover
Note for contributors	Fly leave
Title page	Bastard title page
Editorial board page	Title page
Editorial brief	Copyright page
Table of contents	Foreword
Body	Preface
	Acknowledgements
	Table of contents
	Body of text
	References

- ✓ **Pattern of Pagination:** The pattern of pagination of preliminary and main pages; whether the preliminary pages are to be numbered or left unnumbered, whether page numberings are to appear at the bottom or top of the pages, the pattern alignment of the numberings (left, right or centre) etc, are all questions to be carefully and distinctively answered by the house style. However, preliminary pages are usually numbered with Roman figures while the main pages are numbered with Arabic numerals.
- ✓ **Font Type and Size:** House styles normally have different fonts and sizes for different publications as well as aspects of different publications. Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria, Arial and many others are different fonts that can be used. The size of the fonts is usually measured in points. The font size of font chosen for a particular publication should be the one that suits the readership of the publication.
- ✓ **Margins:** margins define the text area on the various pages of a publication. According to Ugocha (2014), the margins that produce a good text for A5 paper are 2.1cm left, 2cm top, 3.4cm bottom and 3.1cm right. However, for convenience of use and longevity of a publication, margins that fall along the spine of a book should always be larger than other margins at the other ends of the book.
- ✓ **Heading:** Fonts and font size for part or section headings chapter titles, sub-headings, sub-sub-headings and the main text are usually determined by the house style.
- ✓ **Use of Italics:** House style also defines how special kinds of writings such as italics are to be used in publications emanating from a given publishing firm. In referencing for instance, titles of books, journal publications and newspapers can be written in italics, e.g. Abdul-Hameed, T. A. & Badrudeen, A. A. (2010). *Fundamentals of Digital Electronics and Computer*. Agege-Lagos: Akab Publishers.  
indented quotations are also written in italics.
- ✓ **Use of Bold Characters:** Publisher's house styles also determine the parts a publication whose characters are to be written in bold characters. Such areas usually include chapter titles, section headings, sub-headings as well as sub-sub-headings. Captions of illustrations at the bottom of illustrations are also written in bold characters.



- ✓ **Use of Punctuation Marks:** Special considerations are usually given to the use of quotation marks. House styles defines the use of either double quotation marks (“”) or single quotation marks (‘’) and where both are to be used, how they are to be used distinctively. For example, main quotations can go with double quotation marks while quotes inside quotations go with single quotation marks.
- ✓ **Use of Ellipsis:** Ellipsis simply refers to the use of three consecutive dots (...) in writing. House styles determine the use of ellipsis (...) in publications. They are used to indicate omission in quotations and in conjunction with et al... in referencing to indicate that a book or article is authored by more than three persons.
- ✓ **Paragraphing:** A paragraph is a short passage in a written or printed discourse which contains a unit of sense and usually begun on fresh (and sometimes) indented line. The house style also defines the types of paragraphing to adopt for different kinds of publications; indented or block paragraphing.
- ✓ **Margin of Indented Quotations:** Quotations made up of more than 40 words are usually indented on both sides. House styles define the space of such indentations in centimetres.
- ✓ **Justification:** Apart from first lines of a paragraph, the body of a text is usually justified.
- ✓ **Space between Lines;** A house style also defines spaces between letters and spaces between lines. In recent times when most publishing and printing presses use computers for typesetting, space between letters in a word are already taken care of. Normal line spacing is usually 1.0. however, children’s literature may have wider line spacing than adult literature.
- ✓ **Alignment of Captions:** This has to do with chapter titles, section headings, sub-headings and sub-sub-headings. The house style should naturally define the alignment pattern of these parts of various publications; whether it is right, left or center. In some house styles, specific bullets are used for sub-sub-headings instead of numbering.
- ✓ **Location of Part/Section and Chapter Headings:** Conventionally, part/section as well as chapter headings start on fresh pages. However, a house styles stipulates where part/section headings and chapter headings are to appear in a book. Some house styles may allow part/section headings to situate specifically on either rectos or verso and chapter headings to fall on the next fresh page following the end of a previous page whether it is a recto or a verso. There are yet some house styles that will maintain specifically that chapter headings will be located on either fresh rectos or fresh versos. In addition to the above, some publishers may have styles that allow spaces of about two inches on a page before their chapter headings.
- ✓ **Pattern of Spellings:** This particularly has to do with the English Language which has versions; the British and American versions whose spellings of certain words differ, e.g. colour = color, programme = program, encyclopaedia = encyclopedia, centre = center and so on. A publisher’s house style specifically defines the pattern of spellings to use according to the version of the English Language it adopts.
- ✓ **Reference Style/Arrangement of References:** A house style should define the type of referencing to use; whether APA; MLA or others. Where a publisher does not concern



itself with a specific area of knowledge, the house style will also define the style of referencing to be used for different areas of study.

- ✓ **Paper Type:** where a publishing firm engages of different types of publication and for different classes of audience the house style will also define the quality of paper for different kinds of publication. For example, the type of paper used for newspaper publication will not be the same used for textbook publication. Again children rough-handle books, so the quality of paper used in publishing literature for children will not be the same with that use in publishing for adults. It is therefore the duty of a house style to define the quality of paper to be used for different publication and for different classes of audience.
- ✓ **Paper Size:** the determinants of paper size are economy and type of publication. Newspapers, magazines, novels and textbooks are for instance published on different paper sizes. For books however, A4 and A5 are more economical because they generate little or no off cuts leading to less wastage.
- ✓ **Numbers:** the standard is to write one to ten words and 11 or more in figures.
- ✓ **Times and Dates:** 1 January or January 1<sup>st</sup>? Third or 3<sup>rd</sup> century? 1980s, 80s, '80s, sixties or Sixties?
- ✓ **Weights and Measures:** A house style defines whether you abbreviate measures and if you do, will you use capitals and spaces? Two litres, 2L or 2l? 30 SQ FT, 30sq ft or forty square feet?
- ✓ **Hyphenation or Non-hyphenation:** A house style dictates whether it should be dining room or dining-room; makeup or make-up, one-off or one off.
- ✓ **Compounding:** A house style decides whether it should be newsletter, news letter, or news-letter.
- ✓ **Inclusive Language:** When it comes to inclusive concepts and languages, the house style also decides the pattern of usage: whether for instance it should be chairman, chairlady or chairperson; and whether it should be businessman, businesswoman or businessperson.

## CONCLUSION

House style are basically guides to personnel of publishing firms as well as authors. While it is essential that publishing firms should make their style guide easily accessible to their staff and users, authors should at all times endeavour to scrub their manuscripts according to a house style sheet. This when done, is will not to reduce unnecessary work on both the side of the author and that of the publisher.

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