Appendix B.   Report Layout

BUILDING a
WELCOMING COMMUNITY

The Advocates for Human Rights
April 2014

The Advocates
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Because every person matters.

After completing the writing portion of a report, the next step of the process is to design the layout. If resources allow, authors may be able to hire a graphic designer to complete this task for you. Other organizations, however, may need to use in-house resources to design the layout on their own. These basic guidelines can facilitate the layout of the report and achieve a final, professional document.

Software

There are numerous software options available to assist authors in the report layout process. It is important to select and use a single software option throughout your report writing and formatting. Instead of using only a word processor, an office suite will enable you to use spreadsheets, charts and slideshow tools in addition to the word processor. Microsoft Office, Lotus Word Pro, and Corel WordPerfect Suite are some integrated options among which you can decide. The advocate should choose software with which he or she is already familiar, as it will save time re-learning the basics.[1]

Page Layout

Before beginning the document layout process, advocates should have a clear picture of what it will look like. It is important to remain aware of who the audience is for the report. Advocates will need to consider the overall document design and any set formatting requirements to the report they are creating; formatting requirements will limit the author's influence over the report's design. They also have the option of working with formatting options or templates that come with the word processor. Overall, important considerations include whether the document is oriented vertically or horizontally, single-sided or double-sided, single-spaced or double-spaced, what the margin-size will be, where the page numbers will be placed and if the report will have a header and/or footer. All word processors have simple commands to assist most of these tasks.

> Double-sided pages: Creating a double-sided document is slightly more complicated. In a double-sided document, the text is on the front and back of each page; the right and left page formats need to be mirror images of one another. This means that if the numbering choice is for the top, outer-edge of the page, the even-numbers will need to on the left and the odd-numbers will need to be on the right.[2]

> Breaks: It is important to keep in mind where the page will begin and end. If the author finds that he or she wants a page to end sooner or begin at another area, the author has the option of inserting a page break. Also, authors should keep in mind typesetting glitches, such as *orphans* and *widows*. Orphans are known as either a paragraph opening line that appears at the bottom of the page or a stranded word that ends the paragraph. Widows are known as ending lines or paragraphs that fall onto the following page. Orphans and widows are not aesthetically pleasing, because they separate lines from the remainder of their text or they create excess white space.[3]

Fonts

Since reports are formal documents, the font style should be conservative. A universally accepted standard font is Times New Roman with the use of 12 point size. A serif font and size similar to Times is also acceptable. Reports should not have more than three different fonts within the same document. Instead of changing fonts to highlight different aspects of the report, the author should use the functions of italics, bold, or a larger size. Headings are often bolded, underlined or numbered in reports while quotes are often separated from the text through a uniform

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[1] Dr. Robert Kelly, "Score a Higher Grade with a Professionally Laid Out Report or Thesis," accessed Nov. 11, 2010, http://lorien.ncl.ac.uk/ming/dept/tips/writing/layout.htm.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Jacci Howard Bear, "Save the Widows and Orphans," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, http://desktoppub.about.com/od/typelayout/a/widowsorphans.htm.

indent or by use of italics and/or bold. Advocates can use these functions for the report header and footer, as well.[4]

Tables

Word processors allow the insertion of basic tables into documents. If there are more complex tables for insertion, advocates should consider using an integrated office suite with spreadsheet capability. Spreadsheet tables can be imported into document simply by using the insert function and can furthermore be linked to the document. Links are made by inserting them into the document (using Object Linking and Embedding format), so that when changes are made in the spreadsheet, they are made in the document, as well. Word processors usually have further details on how to create links in their help sections or online.[5]

> **Practitioner's tip:** Advocates should take precautionary steps when using multiple authors working on different computer systems. Different production means and styles can create challenges when merging documents into one master version. Advocates should instruct writers on what versions of software to use, as well as other logistical guidelines, such as footnote style and headings and paragraph format.

Charts

Spreadsheets also enable the creation of charts that can be imported and linked into the document in the same manner as tables. When creating a chart, advocates should choose an appropriate model for the data. Some options include column and bar charts, line and area charts, pie charts or a Venn diagram.

> Column and bar charts are used to show simple comparison data at a given point in time. The height of the bar/column represents the measured value. Line and area charts use data that is plotted in two dimensions and represent changes or trends over time. Line graphs are the most common graph and link together the data points you plot. Pie charts are used to compare parts to a whole; each part represents a percentage of the total data set. Lastly, a Venn diagram shows overlaps between sets of data and is best used to make comparisons or contrasts with data. Each data set is represented by the circle and the degree of overlap is visually demonstrated by the degree of the circles overlap. Percentages are also commonly used with Venn diagrams.[6]

For both tables and charts, be sure to label consistently and fully. In formal documents, all images, charts, drawings and diagrams are referred to as figures. Use the abbreviation "Fig." to introduce the table or chart and include the chapter number and image number following to delineate its location. For example, if you are talking about the sixth table in chapter 4, it should be labeled, "Fig. 4.6." Additionally, use legends when necessary with your tables and charts. Legends can be helpful because they list the variables that are used within the chart and provide a visual representation of them. Therefore, all of the data can be identified clearly on the table or chart.[7]

Graphics

Authors should also consider using graphics, diagrams, maps, and pictures to enhance presentation, convey data, and illustrate the narrative. Using text boxes can be an effective way of highlighting a particularly important point, recommendation or quote. Descriptive captions can help supplement the information. When using photos

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[4] Kelly, "Score a Higher Grade with a Professionally Laid Out Report or Thesis," *supra* note 1.
[5] About.com, "Embedding and Linking to Excel Files in Word Documents," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, http://wordprocessing.about.com/od/workingwithotherprograms/l/blexcellink.htm; Dr. Robert Kelly, "Score a Higher Grade with a Professionally Laid Out Report or Thesis," *supra* note 1.
[6] Mind Tools Ltd., "Charts and Graphs," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Charts_and_Diagrams.htm.
[7] Kelly, "Score a Higher Grade with a Professionally Laid Out Report or Thesis," *supra* note 1.

and others' work, authors should keep in mind copyright rules and obtain written permission or pay the requisite usage fee if they are not the original creators of the work.[8]

Graphics are one of the most difficult items to incorporate into reports. Unless using images selected from clip-art, graphics can be difficult to acquire. To create graphics, advocates can either scan images from photographs or publications, make the needed graphics in a drawing program or sketch the graphics by hand in black and white and scan them into the computer. Again, advocates should remain aware of copyright laws when scanning published images or pictures and check the copyright or terms of use. Scanned images need to be touched up with graphics editing software before they are of printing quality. Adobe Photoshop is a good option for high quality editing. If the organization does not have access to this software, other options include Paint Shop Pro or Adobe PhotoDeluxe. When creating graphics, advocates should export the graphic file in a format that their word processors will recognize.[9]

Final Tips

Advocates should strive to maintain consistency throughout the report, particularly when using hierarchical sections, such as titles, subtitles, headers and subheads; and multiple levels of bullets. They should also aim for consistent bullet types and font sizes for titles and subtitles. Proofreading the entire document thoroughly, using spell and grammar check as a back-up, will aid readability. Advocates should be cautioned against depending on spell and grammar check to correct all of the mistakes within the report. Before sending the document to print, an additional person should proofread the document one final time for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.[10]

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[8] See Chapter 4: Additional Monitoring Tools.
[9] Kelly, "Score a Higher Grade with a Professionally Laid Out Report or Thesis," *supra* note 1.
[10] Ibid.