Creating and Formatting e-Books
Lesson 1
A Brief History

It doesn't matter whether a book is traditionally published or independently published, editors should be aware of the electronic side of the business. The oft-cited report of the American Association of Publishers (AAP) claims that e-book sales are declining. As reported in Fortune magazine, AAP's report does not take books published by non-members into consideration.

Indications are overall e-books sales continue to rise. Author Earnings, http://authorearnings.com/ an organization that tracks publishing data, questions the claims of the reports of print books on the rise because independent publishing is not considered in much of the reporting. The information is from traditional publishers, which are experiencing declining sales overall. *

Not only is e-publishing changing the book industry, but also many newspapers and magazines are offering their products in electronic as well as print versions. In fact, many magazines are only offering digital versions. *Newsweek* suspended print editions for nearly two years due to revenue loss. E-textbooks for college, and even some high schools, are a growing trend. The *Los Angeles Times*, however, reported in February 2016 that more than 90% of students prefer print books. Libraries are now loaning e-books.

No matter what studies or statistics may seem to say, e-publishing is here and appears to be here to stay.

Micro-History
In the beginning, there was only one way to read anything electronic—on the computer. At first, there was confusion between computer brands. Windows systems (or lovingly known as PC now) wouldn't read something created with or for a Mac. The Mac computers had an aversion to anything PC.

Computer geniuses somewhere, probably in the dark, solved the problem by creating file formats that each system liked: RTF and PDF. But the problem of having to sit at a computer and read still existed. Or the reader had to print the document, which in the case of a book could be hundreds of pages. Sometimes printing it cost more than just buying the paperback book.

Then Sony came up with a better idea—the e-reader named the Data Discman. This device used books on CDs. At the time, 1992 (pre-historic in technology time) most of the books available were technical manuals. In 2006, Sony produced the first e-reader that downloaded material directly to the device. A year later Amazon released the Kindle, and as the trite saying goes, "The rest is history."

In that ancient time, about ten years ago, many of us (I do include myself) didn't think e-books would become a revolution. I didn't own my first e-reader until 2010, even though I published an e-book in 2005.

Since the introduction of the e-reader, several other companies have created their own version. Still some e-readers are still file specific; reading only their brand's files. Others like Kindle, have made applications so their e-product can be read on multiple devices and read multiple file formats.

Changes in File Formats
RTF and PDF were the first cross-platform file formats. Although RTF is still available; the PDF format has taken the spotlight. PDF files can be created from almost any computer and can be read by multiple devices. PDF files (the creation of Adobe Products) are basic and have few enhancements. It is still popular for downloadable books.

Several digital readers use EPUB format including the popular iPad. EPUB version can be read on multiple devices, including smartphones. The Kindle does not directly accept EPUB documents. EPUB files must be converted to a format readable on a Kindle e-reader. Many e-publishers make their books available in the various formats.

MOBI is another popular file type. It can be read on multiple readers including the Kindle. (Mobi is also the domain type for mobile websites.) This format was originally used on Palm devices and later the MobiReader (now owned by Amazon). MOBI is the basis for the Kindle specific AZW format. The primary difference is the AZW has a different digital rights management (DRM) scheme. It is this scheme that prevents Kindle products from being freely shared. (We will discuss file formats more fully in a later lesson.)

What does all of this mean for writers? There are more opportunities to have our product before the public.

Assignments:
        What is your e-book experience:
                When did you start using e-books?
                What device do you use?
                Have you created an e-book? Tell us about your experience. (Consider all possibilities, not just what can read on an e-reader.)
        Read the articles listed in the resources.
                What do you think the future of print and e-books is?
*Resources:
"Publishers' Sales Down at Start of 2016, eBooks Decline," Association of American Publishers, June 26, 2016

"As E-book Sales Decline, Digital Fatigue Grows," *Publisher Weekly,* June 17, 2016

"September 2015 Author Earnings Report," AuthorEarnings.com

"The Plot Twists: E-Book Sales Slip, and Print Is Far From Dead," *New York Times,* September 22, 2015

"No, e-book sales are not falling, despite what publishers say," *Fortune*, September 24, 2015

"92% of college students prefer print books to e-books, study finds," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 2016

"The Myth of Print Coming Back," Jane Friedman, March 26, 2017

"Print vs Digital, Traditional vs Non-Traditional, Bookstore vs Online: 2016 Trade Publishing by the numbers," Keynote presentation at Digital Book World 2017