



NRC Submission Guide

by Paul Swearingen, Publisher, NRC's *DX News*
(A how-to for those contributing columns or articles to
publications for the National Radio Club)

Once upon a time, when transistors were unheard of and tubes (or valves) were the main components in radio receivers, the typewriter was king. *DX News* was composed entirely upon typewriters by editors who silently (perhaps) cursed mimeograph stencils and correction fluid. After transistors entered the DX world, offset printing replaced the mimeograph. But the typewriter (use a fresh fabric or carbon film ribbon, keep the keys clean) was still king.

Eventually, the publisher, editors, and contributors turned to the computer to generate articles and contributions and all publications for the NRC. Computerized Desktop Publishing (DTP) was now the king - but not everyone had mastered its intricacies.

This guide is intended for both the experienced and the new user of DTP software for production of articles and columns intended for all NRC publications. If you have been writing for the NRC, you already have demonstrated an expertise in your own technical area, but you may not be aware of efficient desktop publishing practices. If you'll follow these simple guidelines, you'll find that when you write for the NRC, your own job will be simpler, too, and our readers will more easily be able to read and utilize your submissions.

A word or two about practices and policy

Because of space limitations, submissions to NRC publications are not always published automatically; non-DX items are seldom or never published; and in line with NRC practices and policy, the publisher makes the decisions as to what submissions are included in the pages of DXN. Some submissions are modified, and all are subject to copy fitting, editing, and formatting to fit into page layouts. This guide is more about form than content, however.

Parameters for DXN

The maximum margins for each DXN layout page (which uses 8.5-inch by 14-inch paper) are a half-inch at top and a quarter-inch on the bottom and sides. The critical margin is on the sides, as if we do not fill an eight-inch-wide space, we are wasting a significant amount of space in DXN. Submitted hard-copy graphics should be large (up to 8 inches by 10 inches) and clear, as they will be scanned electronically. If you hand-draw diagrams, use a fine-tip, black nylon-tip marker, roller ball pen, or even India ink; NEVER use a ball-point pen or pencil. Keep in mind that your copy will end up on pages which have a print area thirteen-and-a-quarter inches long and eight inches wide if you incorporate diagrams to be placed within your text. (And don't use phrases like "in the

diagram below"; use reference numbers instead, as "in Diagram 1". Graphics most likely will end up in different positions than where you originally place them.)

Parameters for NRC Publications (other than *DX News*)

NRC Publications uses a standard 8.5-inch by 11-inch format. In general, the margins are determined by the binding that is used. Currently, those who wish to submit books or book ideas to NRC Publications should contact Wayne Heinen, Director of New Publications, with proposals. From there, a suitable submission and publication format can be determined. Those articles published in *DX News* and suitable for reprints or posting on the NRCDXAS web page are sent directly from the publisher to Ken Chatterton at the NRC Publications Center and need no further action from the author.

Typewritten copy

If you do not have access to a computer and have to typewrite hard copy, we can scan it and convert it to electronic form with OCR (Optical Character Reader) software. Use Courier type or at least a non-script type. Type on one side of sheets of white paper only, and make sure that your keys are clean and the ribbon is fresh and black. If your ribbon is gray, photocopy the original copy to darken the type, and please use white correction fluid to remove any spots on the photocopy that you submit.

Electronic copy

Electronic copy, that is, copy typed on a computer and transmitted via disk or e-mail attachment, is the preferred method for submission. When you submit copy for the first time, include documents in both an original word processor format and in .rtf (Rich Text Format), or at least plain text, and if you must use anything but high-density, 3.5-inch disks or e-mail attachments, contact us first for compatibility.

For DXN, a Macintosh is used to prepare layouts. The publisher can utilize almost any PC and Mac word-processor document submitted via e-mail attachment or on disk, plus as well as most graphics documents (however, .pdf documents do not "translate" and do not reproduce well on paper; please avoid using them for material intended to be printed.). Please do not submit articles in the body of an e-mail (although though most DXN editors prefer loggings to be submitted in e-mails rather than as attachments because of fear of PC viruses; we Mac users don't worry about viruses, plus most e-mail programs strip formatting and add soft returns at the end of each line). Contributors who acquire a new word processor or who haven't successfully submitted a document for publication are strongly urged to transmit a test file before sending the final copy of an article.

If you can type at all, check with your local thrift shops or at garage sales (or even with the publisher!) for used computers, which, in some cases for as little as \$20 (or even for free!) will provide you with a perfectly acceptable word processor. If you hand-write

copy, or heavily correct typewritten copy with pen, there will be an obvious delay while we search for a volunteer to type your copy for you.

Finally, include the title of your submission and your full name at the top of the document, not just in the accompanying e-mail. You'd be surprised at the number of submissions we received that are unidentifiable as to origin when separated from the original e-mail.

Do's and Don'ts of Electronic Submission

Let us break this to you straight: the stuff on your screen is not going to appear the same as the stuff on ours when we lay out our publications, and although we know you mean well when you try to format your text to make it look as it does in DXN, as for example by adding spaces to line up columns, by doing so you'll add unnecessary hours to prep time (yours and ours). Keep it simple!

A computer guru by the name of Robin Williams has written terrific little books on computer typesetting: *The Mac Is Not A Typewriter* and *The PC Is Not A Typewriter*. If you want to become a typesetting expert, these little books will certainly set you on the right track. But if you just want to make your job and ours easier, you can follow the following suggestions. Even if you are thoroughly familiar with DTP practices, please study the following sections, even if we haven't "complained" to you about problems in your submissions. You'll probably find a technique that will save all of us valuable time and effort.

A side note: if you provide copy for reproduction in more than one publication, you should send each publication copy which meets its unique needs and never copy which is a compromise for both.

Columnar text

Examples of columnar text include "DDXD", "IDXD", "AM Switch", "Professional Sports Nets", "Geomagnetic Indices", "Confirmed DX'er", "DDXA", and "IDXA", where some or all of the text is in columns, or fields, lined up by tabs, rather than in paragraph form.

Never use spaces between columns in an attempt to align them; never use characters (\, |, *, +, - , _ , etc.) to divide text blocks either horizontally or vertically. Instead, use tabs to align text so that white space is used as the separator. If possible, first delete all default tabs in your word processor, and then set up your document with only the tabs you need for each column. Some word processors, most notably WordPerfect, default to a tab every five spaces, which can be a nightmare for us to deal with if your copy includes columnar text which is to be formatted differently from other portions of the text. Most importantly, always add a tab to the left of the first, or left-hand, column, if this column includes frequencies. That way, we can use a right-hand tab so that freqs line up as any column of numbers should, on the right side. Finally, if you have to hit the tab key more

than once between columns to line them up, you're doing something wrong unless a field contains no entry; please fix your setup.

Paragraphed text

Never use tabs or spaces instead of indenting text (at the beginning of each paragraph); use your word processor's automatic indent feature instead. If your word processor lacks the indent feature, just don't indent. We can add indents with a couple of keystrokes; much easier than deleting each tab for a paragraph. Never use Microsoft Word's Format features to prepare heads or sections of your copy, as anything you've done will probably revert to plain text when formatted for publication. Instead, highlight and boldface, italicize, or underline manually. Use one font and one size in your copy, as all will be converted to 13-point Palatino, anyway, for publication in DXN, and different fonts and type sizes will simply disappear when re-formatted. However, if you have a special desire for an unusual font or size (like the headers in GYDXA, for example), send the publisher a hard copy sample (with the names of the fonts you want) and he'll try to find the equivalent Mac font for use in the column.

Do not add a line of space at the end of each paragraph, or between a head and the following section; use one, and one only, return to separate paragraphs. If your word processor allows you to turn on the feature that shows each keystroke with symbols ("Show Paragraph" or "Show Invisibles" or other toggles in various WP's), you might want to do so. You'd be surprised at the number of extra, unnecessary spaces and returns which crop up in your text, especially if you cut-and-paste copy from e-mail contributors to your column.

Never use all-caps, and save underlines for emphasis. Always use italics for names of magazines (including DXN and other DX publications) and titles of books and movies (use quote marks for plays, DXN columns, etc.). Never use all-caps, except perhaps for one word at a time, or of course call letters; text in all-caps is much harder to read than lower-case type (old wire-service copy excepted, perhaps); use boldface instead. If you do use underlines, italics, boldface, etc., for variety in your text, be consistent in your usage. Did you catch on that we don't want you to use all-caps?

Use accent marks and other diacritical marks when possible. We can add accent marks and tildes to Spanish words and a few other diacritical marks to well-known proper names, but if your copy includes non-Spanish words that need diacritical marks added, you should include a list of words for us to correct at the end of the text. If nothing else, the proper use of diacritical marks in our copy makes us look as if we REALLY know what we're doing!

Abbreviations

Avoid using non-standard abbreviations unless you provide a legend with your copy, or at least use the same abbreviations in the legend that Bill Hale provides with DDXD. Don't use the ampersand (&) or other symbols. When in doubt, just stick with full-word

text. Be consistent with numbers, also; for numbers under twenty, use text; 20 and over, use numerals. And the abbreviation for “United States” is U. S., or U. S. A., with the spaces; never “US” (and be careful with the term “American”, which properly refers to the entire Western Hemisphere and can easily offend some of our readers when misused; keep in mind that publications from the NRC make their way around the world, including into some countries with which we’ve had less-than-cordial relations). Although space is at a premium in DXN, readability is more important; we often get complaints from new and experienced members alike who can't decipher abbreviated text. Did we say not to use all caps? Editors: if you are still getting submissions from DX'ers who use arcane abbreviations or blatantly do not follow your format, deal with them personally, via e-mail or letter. We no longer communicate with each other via a telegraph key, and we should not use in DXN abbreviations that hinder communication.

General suggestions

Make your copy unique. Even though the appearance of DXN columns is somewhat uniform, you should still use your unique style so that the reader can discern your personality through your copy. Use special copy formatting (see DDXD for effective use of boldface and italics, for example), quirky comments (readers love it when you speak directly to them, or other individuals); and even mascots (Buffalo K. Foonman would frown if she knew we call her a mascot).

Be opinionated. NRC'ers are looking to you as the authority on your subject, whether you're writing a very technical article or general copy. Give your unique viewpoint. Be careful about going on the attack, however; attack ideas, never individuals. Libel, personal attacks, and non-DX material are quickly excised from all NRC publications. If you find that you have to deal with material that might be on the fringe of our acceptable practices or policies, check with the publisher or board chairman first before making statements which could be taken as NRC policy.

Everything in all NRC publications should be of use to the DX'er. Prepare every submission so that our readers will get the maximum use of it, as broadcast band DX'ers. You can certainly be entertaining, but keep in mind that the purpose of our publications, and club, is to disseminate DX information for their use, not to sell your product nor to provide a forum for your opinions. Our publications do not accept paid (or unpaid) advertising, although space may be provided for information about new products or services of use to DX'ers, generally no more than once per year.

Much of the information available through NRC Publications was first published in the pages of DXN, so it makes sense that proper preparation of copy for DXN will also make others' jobs easier, also.

We've tried to provide you with suggestions to improve your copy, shorten the time you take in preparing it, and increase its readability for our subscribers. What happens if you don't follow our guidelines and plow right ahead, doing what you've always done? Well, bottom line is that someone, either you or a publisher, has to bring the copy up to an

acceptable standard, and we'd rather that you'd share the work load. *DX News*, and all NRC Publications, must be attractive in appearance, easily readable, and packed with useful information. You may be temporarily inconvenienced if you have to change your copy prep habits, or even offended if we eventually have to ask you directly for your cooperation, but our readers, and we, will certainly appreciate your efforts to keep the quality of *DX News* and all other publications from the NRC as high as possible.

Thanks for reading through this, and especially thank you for following this guide.

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