What I Learned When Publishing a Book to the Kindle

Cliff Pickover, www.pickover.com, May, 2009

 I'd like to help writers publish their works to the Amazon Kindle. The following describes my experience during the process of publishing my 2009 book *Jews in Hyperspace* to the Kindle.

I found April Hamilton's guide titled "IndieAuthor Guide To Publishing With Amazon's™ Digital Text Platform™ and MS Word™ 2003 or Higher" to be quite useful:

> http://www.aprillhamilton.com/resources/HowToUseAmazonDTP_v2.pdf

However, I also found it useful and necessary to adjust the HTML code for the book in order to ensure that the book looked correct when using Amazon's software previewer. Alas, occasionally the previewer would show certain glitches (a blank page or a piece of HTML code) that would disappear if I jumped to a slightly different point in the book, and I hope that these glitches are not in the actual book available on the Kindle.

Starting the Process

To start the Kindle publication process, I converted the Word file for my book to HTML format by selecting "Save As Web Page (Filtered)" in Microsoft Word.

Next, I started to edit the resultant HTML code. I added a cover by editing the HTML code so that it pointed to a 450×550 pixel cover, cover-kindle.jpg, which has the proper aspect ratio. Here is the code I added near the start of the book to ensure that the cover displayed first in the book:

```
<div id="cover">
<center>
<a name="start" /><img src=cover-kindle.jpg></a>
</center>
</div>
```

Notice that the <a name="start" /> helps Kindle owners easily jump to the start of the book. Even if this is not perfectly formatted code, it seemed to work.

It is important that this cover image, cover-kindle.jpg, be placed in the same directory as the HTML file on your local disk. I also found that my other images in the book worked well in jpg format but not gif -- and that it was important to ensure that the file names of the image files were all lower-case to facilitate the "zip" process, discussed later.

I determined that the following code is useful to produce a page break, such as before chapters, the Table of Contents, and other elements of the book.

```
<mbp:pagebreak />
```

In order to create a Table of Contents in which a chapter title was a link to the chapter, I inserted the following.

```
<div id="toc">
<p>Table of Contents</p>
<p><a href="#chapt1">Jerusalem</a></p>
<p><a href="#chapt2">Chapter Two Title</a></p>
etc.
</div>
```

Notice that the <div id="toc"> helps Kindle owners easily jump to the Table of Contents.

My chapters started with code that looks like:

```
<mbp:pagebreak />
<h1><a name="chapt1">Jerusalem</a></h1>
```

I also found the following web sites to be useful. They give various tips and ideas for producing your Kindle book:

http://www.kreelanwarrior.com/2009/02/cover-and-toc-dtp-kindle/
http://www.ehow.com/how_4494481_convert-ebooks-kindle-format.html
http://forums.digitaltextplatform.com/dtpforums/entry.jspa?externalID=21&categoryID=9
http://www.patdoyle.com/publish-an-ebook-in-amazons-kindle-book-store/

Zip file

If you have images in your book, or if you want to include a cover image, you will need to create a zip file. To ensure that the several images would be displayed in the book, I made a zip file, kindle.zip, that included the html file for the book text, along with the several jpg files. I uploaded kindle.zip to Amazon,com.

Here is the Amazon link for authors who want to publish to the Amazon Kindle: https://dtp.amazon.com/.
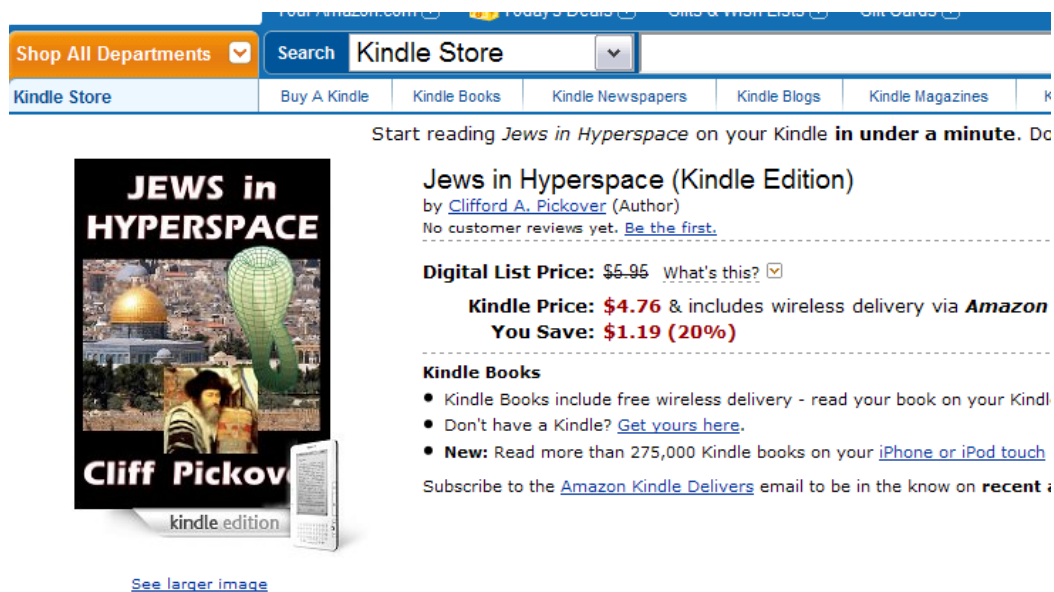
Possible frustrations that I encountered: It was difficult to re-upload a re-edited kindle.zip file, when I discovered errors. The upload button was grayed-out if I reselected kindle.zip. To get around this problem, I browsed to another file on disk, and then I browsed back again to kindle.zip. As I said, I seemed to see certain anomalies when the book was viewed in the software preview application at Amazon.com, and I don't think that these anomalies are actually in the book, because they disappear by pointing to a slightly different line number. It is hard to know.

Once I uploaded the book to the Kindle and selected the "publish" button, the book appeared in the Amazon on-line catalogue within 24 hours, but without the product description. The product description requires additional time to appear.

 Note that the Kindle edition can also be read on the iPhone and iPod Touch, giving the author additional exposure.

Notice that although I set the price at $5.95, Amazon reduced it to $4.76. I believe that the author receives 35% of the list price for each sale.

According to April Hamilton, you can log back into your DTP (Digital Text Platform) dashboard anytime you want and click on the "My Reports" tab to see how many copies of your book have sold, and what your cumulative author royalty total is to date. She also indicates that you can re-upload and re-publish revised versions of your files at any time. This may be useful if you or your readers spot typos that you wish to correct.

Changing the Price of Your Book After It's Published

Within a week of publishing *Jews in Hyperspace*, it was listed as the fifth best-selling book in the Kindle category of Judaism. I wanted to see if more sales could be encouraged by reducing the book price. My task was to reduce the price by about a dollar.

At first I was confused about how to change the price. To accomplish this, I returned to the dashboard

https://dtp.amazon.com/mn/dashboard

and I selected "My Shelf." (I found that my Firebox browser worked better for redisplaying my book characteristics than the IE browser.) I then selected my book and changed the price. Once I changed the price, I selected "Save Entries." I then selected the "Publish" option at the right of the screen. It can take many hours for the new price to be displayed at the Amazon page.

The next step is to determine if any Jewish Blogs would be willing to mention the book at their blogs.

April Hamilton conducted an interview with me regarding the Kindle and *Jews in Hyperspace* here:

http://www.publetariat.com/think/interview-cliff-pickover-mainstreamindie-author

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Please let me know if you found these tips in my document to be useful. Thanks. – Cliff

Clifford A. Pickover is the author of over 40 books on such topics as computers and creativity, art, mathematics, black holes, human behavior and intelligence, time travel, alien life, religion, physics, medical mysteries, and science fiction. Pickover is a prolific inventor with over 50 patents. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University. His website, www.pickover.com, has received several million visits.