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# Corporate Style Guides: Understanding and Construction

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# **CORPORATE STYLE GUIDES: UNDERSTANDING AND CONSTRUCTION**

by

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree**

of

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**Professional and Technical Communication  
in the Department of English**

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## **Abstract**

### **Corporate Style Guides: Understanding and Construction**

Style guides have existed for many years and yet there is almost no information concerning how to write one. Since corporations are so different from one another, each could have its very own style guide. Most, however, use an existing style guide and fill in any gaps with customer specific information. One such corporation is the Utah State University Research Foundation (USURF). To answer the question “how to write a style guide,” this paper compares five style guides with similar content to what would appear in a USURF guide. The paper then discusses interviews from USURF’s technical writers to determine the needs of the individual organization. The latter half of this paper is the actual style guide presented to USURF management as a standard.

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# Corporate Style Guides: Understanding and Construction

## INTRODUCTION

Style guides have dictated my entire life. In middle school and high school, I was taught the fundamentals of the Modern Language Association style guide. Papers were written in a static format, with a certain style of citation, and then tailored to whatever specific instructions the teacher saw fit to impose. MLA was so strongly used in my primary education that I didn't realize the abundance of style guides until I entered college. Things dramatically changed when I was told to use the APA manual. It was an editing class that sparked my interest in the rationale behind style guides, and I began to apply that to other parts of my life. My employer, a major (though small) entity in the aerospace industry, the Utah State University Research Foundation (USURF) did not have a style guide. At the time, it was my job to go through Quality Assurance documentation and update the documents' content and visual aesthetics. Each document was so different that I began to develop a style sheet that I could reference. This document eventually led me to believe that I could write a style guide for USURF that could be adopted to the entire company. However, as I researched, I found that there is almost no information on writing a style guide. I could find information about what they should include, why they don't work, and dozens of other topics, but the question: "How to write a style guide" remained answerless.

My project then became two distinct parts. Part one was to figure out what style guides look like, how they operate, and what they really contain. For this I determined to conduct a comparison of existing style guides. I also needed to find out what USURF needed in particular,

information that could only be gleaned from people who would be using the style guide: USURF technical writers.

Part two of the project was to write the style guide. Developing a completed guide would take several revisions with the technical writers, management, and other groups, making a wholly completed guide too extensive a project for the duration of this research. The style guide that I have completed is an acceptable revision to be presented to management for suggestions and improvement.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of a document with the purpose of controlling and directing style is not new. Style guides are a common feature of many organizations, both professional and academic. Each style guide is unique in what it chooses to stipulate for its writers and how it organizes those stipulations. Hours of time and thought are put into each style guide to come up with the most effective, desirable solutions, but the actual process of getting a style guide to its finished state is an area that has been left virtually unexplored.

### **Internal Components**

There are many areas of style guides that have been explored and several of these have been explored in great detail. These areas include the following: internal components, the rationale behind a style guide, how to revise and improve an existing style guide, reasons why a style guide might fail, and the writing style that is appropriate. The first of these areas that appears to have a fair amount of research behind it is the components of a style guide.

A portion of the article “Building a Better Style Guide” by Whitney Quesenbery offers some insight into what should appear in a corporate style guide. In discussing a user interface style guide, the article reads, “[many] style guides focus on rules for presentation elements,

including visual design elements such as color, logos, fonts or icons; page or screen layouts including spacing, justification and common items; and the correct usage for stand controls such as buttons, drop-down selections, radio button or check boxes.”<sup>1</sup> This article discusses several various areas of the “style guide” question, but it does so entirely focusing on the uses of a user interface guide. Although many of the concepts can be reworked to fit a standard document style guide, there are some things that don’t relate. Printing guides aren’t needed in a user interface guide, and details about Java Script aren’t needed in a document guide. There has been no clear line drawn between the two.

Questions that might arise from this article include: Are the components of style guides the same when comparing user interface guides and document guides? Does there need to be a line drawn between user interface guides and document guides? If so, how should it be done?

### **Rationale**

Another area that provides a lot of detailed insight is in determining the rationale behind a style guide. Why should an organization adopt a style guide? A portion of this answer is given in the article “Save Money with a Corporate Style Guide.” The title of this piece provides an answer. Why? To save money. This article, by Paul R. Allen, offers some insight in the problems facing corporate writers. The main one is lack of time, and three specific things are contributing to this crunch on the seconds in the working day.

- “Today’s corporate environment demands a quick turnaround in document generation.
- Corporate reorganizations, often synonymous with downsizing, have increased the workload for today’s corporate writer.

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<sup>1</sup> Whitney Quesenbery, “Building a Better Style Guide,” (2001): <http://www.wqusability.com/articles/better-style-guide-paper.pdf>

- A proliferation of meetings, conferences, and other interruptions denies the corporate writer continuous writing time.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition to this information, Allen indicates that, while it may be the least cited reason for an organization to adopt or create a style guide, saving money is in fact the “predominant reason why corporations should develop style guides.”<sup>3</sup> An additional four sub points offer additional reasons why style guides prove beneficial. Style guides create consistency in documents, style guides promote a professional image, style guides train new employees, and style guides define document generation. All of these things have the potential to save an organization money. Though the article is very insightful, it stops short of venturing into “how.” How does an organization go about choosing a style guide that it wishes to incorporate? How does that organization know what to look for to determine what is going to work best? Should that organization adopt an existing guide? Write one of their own? Or work out a combination of the two?

### **Improvement**

Another area of research that has been well covered is style guide improvement. Looking back to the article “Building a Better Style Guide,” Quesenbery points to the concept of writing goals.

Understanding the goals of a style guide helps to understand why the guide was created in the first place. “Without knowing what problem the guide was intended to solve, it is impossible to structure the information effectively, or to plan the process of creation, review and implementation.”<sup>4</sup> Quesenbery gives three sample goals. The following table (Table 1) is represented in the text.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul R. Allen, “Save Money with a Corporate Style Guide,” *Technical Communication* (1995):284-289.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Quesenbery, “Better Style Guide.”

*Table 1: Usability Goals for Corporate Style Guides*

<b>Usability Characteristic</b>	<b>Goal</b>
Efficient	Improved Quality: the time required to design the user interface will be reduced because basic guidelines are clearly documented, tools are shared, and best practice guidance is available for other decisions.
Effective	Improved Process: User interface will be able to work together better because shared design guidelines are available. Initial designs will be more effective, with less re-work to solve usability problems required.
Satisfying	Improved Usability: The user experience will be improved, both for the designers and users. Designers will have the satisfaction of creating excellent interfaces, while users will benefit from increased usability. <sup>5</sup>

Quesenbery's article gives a section concerning the consideration of who uses the guide.

Designers, writers, developers, modifiers, quality, and dozens of others are all "users" of the style guide. Each of these persons must keep the other users in mind as they contribute to the creation and continual improvement of the style guide.

There are three things that Quesenbery suggests to the improve structure and organization of a style guide:

- Put it online
- Write for hyperlinks
- Design for reference<sup>6</sup>

Doing these things saves money, time, and allows you to avoid repetition within a document.

These methods for improvement and revision could very easily be adapted to the original

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<sup>5</sup> Quesenbery, "Better Style Guide."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

creation of writing a style guide. However, the research that has been conducted only applies them in terms of revision. In the task of writing a style guide, it would be very beneficial to enact these methods before one ever starts writing.

### **Failure of Style Guides**

A third area of considerable research is devoted to why style guides fail in corporate settings.

The article “Guidance on Style Guides: Lessons Learned” by Chauncey E. Wilson includes a list of reasons why many style guides fail. Some of these reasons are as follows:

- The style guide is too big.
- Managers are not fully aware of the benefits of the guide.
- There is no easy way to resolve conflicting principles within the guide.
- There is no good way to distribute updates to the style guide.
- The style guide has poor usability.
- There are too many words.<sup>7</sup>

Wilson offers some insight into how to fix these problems by including tips such as “Don’t get wordy. It is useful to explain the rationale between a rule, but don’t go into too much detail.”

However, it would be very difficult to go about correcting all of these things in a single guide.

How does a person know which of these problems is going to be the most likely cause of a style guide’s failure? In other words, if a writer’s style guide has multiple issues, and he or she only has the ability to fix one of the problems, how does that writer determine which problem would be the most beneficial to fix? Although it may appear to be a daunting task, I feel that the simplest of these problems to fix is “conflicting principles.” It doesn’t take much to go through a style guide and pick one or the other of a detail such as using the serial comma or not. While this

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<sup>7</sup> Chauncey E. Wilson, “Guidance on Style Guides: Lessons Learned,” *Usability Interface*, (2001): 7 no. 4

standardization might be more difficult to get other writers to put into practice, I feel that with time, this will take care of itself. Another issue that can quickly be taken care of is to make the document available digitally. Whether this is over a network server or a website, the style guide should be available as an electronic document. Whether electronic is defined as a PDF or as HTML code is another matter, but a document that is available on a writer's computer is going to have a much better chance at success.

### **Writing Style**

Finally, a last area in which there appears to have vast amounts of research is the issue of writing style. The book *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph Williams gives dozens of examples of how to write clearly and concisely. Chapters of the book include Cohesion and Coherence, Concision, Emphasis, Shape, Correctness, and Elegance. All of these concepts draw the most understanding into the smallest word count. Being able to write this way greatly improves the chances that a style guide will be useful the first time it is published and will remain useful throughout its lifetime.

My area of research is in the process. Answering the question “how is a guide written,” (specifically how is an in-house guide written being based off the Chicago Manual of Style) is an area that appears largely untouched by the current research that exists about corporate style guides. That current research shows that it is largely understood what goes into a style guide, how to improve existing guides, why they fail, and the importance of understanding style.

## **METHODS**

I took a mixed methods approach to this research question. The first part of the project, the style guide comparison, involved quantitative data. The data gathered for this research came from five different style guides, the APA manual, the AP manual, the Northrop Grumman guide, the NASA History online guide, and the US Air Force's Tongue and Quill. The determination of these guides is outlined below. Through researching these guides, I determined to look at five areas of comparison: length, readability, citations, revision, and contents. The goal of this comparison was to determine a middle ground to which the USURF style guide should be written. Another goal was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the various guides and try to gather those strengths together.

The second means of collecting data was through interviews. These interviews were done with current technical writers working for USURF focusing on the experiences they deal with every day, how they would use a style guide, and what information specific to USURF would need to be included in the style guide. The goal of these interviews was to gain insight into what the users of this document want and need. The exact contents were formulated based on the results of these interviews.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Part one of my project was to conduct a style guide comparison. I chose to compare five style guides. The American Psychological Association (APA) Manual of Style, the Associated Press's (AP) Manual of Style, a copy of the Northrop Grumman internal style guide, the NASA History Author's Online Style Guide, and the US Air Force's Tongue and Quill. My purpose in choosing these style guides was that each one has something to do with the USURF organization. USURF relates to the sciences and many science fields follow the APA manual. Working for the

Aerospace industry, USURF often deals with the media and as such they must function around the AP style guide. USURF is often contracted by NASA for work and while the History Author’s guide is written for a different audience, many of the writing regulations are similar. Northrop Grumman is a company that USURF works with and against, and their organizations are very similar. Finally, I chose the Tongue and Quill because USURF often is at work with Hill Air Force Base in Ogden, Utah.

Since these companies and organizations are similar in function or are related to one another, I decided that many of the features should be similar and that those similar features could be adopted in the style guide I wrote. I looked at five characteristics of each style guide. Those characteristics were length, readability, citations, revisions, and content. The information is contained in tables below.

**Length**

*Table 2: Length*

	<b>Under 100 Pages</b>	<b>101-300 pages</b>	<b>301+ pages</b>
APA		X (272 pages)	
AP			X (409 pages)
Northrop Grumman		X (122 pages)	
NASA History	X (20 pages)		
Tongue & Quill			X (383 pages)

While this has no bearing on the actual length of a style guide to be produced, it is helpful to view the size of style guides that are currently in use. This is helpful in determining the magnitude of the guide that will be created and help to mentally prepare the writer for the size of the project.

From analyzing the five guides (AP, APA, Northrop Grumman, NASA History, and the Tongue and Quill,) I determined that my style guide would fall within the range of 15-30 pages. This guide is not meant to be as extensive as the Northrop Grumman guide, (USURF already has procedures covering much of the extraneous information,) but it needs to be more detailed and structured than the NASA History guide. The reason I have chosen a page number range of 15 to 30 pages for the style guide I am writing is because this guide is based on the Chicago Manual of Style. Anything that is covered in that manual does not necessarily need to be repeated in the in-house guide. Also, this guide is not meant to teach a writer how to punctuate or improve his or her grammar unless the organization has specific desired rules that would not be immediately assumed by a writer. The in-house guide is meant to fill the gaps in the Chicago Manual specifically related to USURF and be a quick reference guide.

## Readability

*Table 3: Readability*

	Below Flesch-Kincaid 10	Flesch-Kincaid 10.1 to 15	Above Flesch-Kincaid 15.1
APA	9.9		
AP	8.8		
Northrop Grumman			17.3
NA SA History		10.7	
Tongue & Quill		12.4	

I used the Flesch-Kincaid reading “grade-level” scale because it is a commonly accepted method of calculating readability via grade level. The Flesch-Kincaid is calculated by taking the average number of words per sentence and the average number of syllables per word. The average number of words per sentence is multiplied by 0.39 and added to the average number of

syllables multiplied by 11.8. 15.59 is then subtracted from the result. The formula appears as follows:

$$\text{FKRA} = (0.39 \times \text{ASL}) + (11.8 \times \text{ASW}) - 15.59$$

where FKRA is Flesch-Kincaid Reading Age, ASL is Average Sentence Length, and ASW is Average number of Syllables per Word.<sup>8</sup>

Reading level was useful in determining the voice and tone of the style guide to be written. Looking at the reading level of the five guides indicated the composition of their individual audiences. The broader the audience, the lower the reading level. This was insightful to realize that my audience is a group of highly-trained, specialized engineers and technical writers. This allowed me to pick up the reading level of my document. I determined that my document could appropriately fall within the 10-12 Flesch-Kincaid Reading Levels; this falls in approximately the middle of the five guides studied. After calculating the actual Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level of my style guide, I found that it measures to 10.8.

Readability is often overlooked as an asset in determining how to write any genre of document. I feel that choosing the correct reading level is imperative to the success of a style guide. In some cases, the reading level might be too high for the intended audience. That audience will not benefit from the document. It is likely that they will not use the document and instead opt for other options of communicating style. This would render the document worthless. While it may be difficult to get the reading level too high for an audience of highly educated individuals, getting it too low could be equally as detrimental. If the audience feels like a document has been simplified too much, it may be taken as an insult. This would also render a

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<sup>8</sup> Reading formulas, "Flesch Grade Level Readability Formula." Accessed November 22, 2011. <http://www.readabilityformulas.com/flesch-grade-level-readability-formula.php>.

document useless. It is important to strike the right balance between being easily understood and playing to your audience’s education.

Readability is often confused with usability, another important aspect of documentation. It is important to understand the difference between the two terms. Readability can be defined as “the ease of understanding or comprehension due to the style of writing.”<sup>9</sup> Usability on the other hand, can be defined as “the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use.”<sup>10</sup>

## Citations

*Table 4: Citations*

	AUTHOR, DATE	AUTHOR, PAGE	FOOTNOTE/ENDNOTE
APA	X		
AP	REPORTER’S PRIVILEGE – Branzburg v. Hayes		
Northrop Grumman			X
NASA History			X
Tongue & Quill			X

I looked at citation format more out of curiosity than out of necessity. USURF follows the Chicago Manual of Style as an over-arching guide. Of particular interest in the above comparison were the AP Manual and the concept of “reporter’s privilege.” While most guides adapt to an existing style of citation, the AP Manual presents an interesting conundrum. Though this is not entirely applicable to writing style guides, it broadens the view of the importance of citation and using credible sources. A broad definition of reporter’s privilege could be that

<sup>9</sup> DuBay, William H. "The Principles of Readability." ( 2004.) <http://www.impact-information.com/impactinfo/readability02.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Usability Net, "What is Usability?" (2006.) [http://www.usabilitynet.org/management/b\\_what.htm](http://www.usabilitynet.org/management/b_what.htm).

journalists are allowed to refrain from exposing their sources in order to protect those sources. However, it is also important to understand that there are limitations on reporter’s privilege. The Supreme Court case *Branzburg v. Hayes* states that news reporters are required to appear and testify before state or federal grand juries if there is a “compelling” and “paramount” state interest.<sup>11</sup> This is important to my style guide because USURF is often interviewed for information by the media. It is important to recognize that if USURF’s information is ever compromised by a “compelling” state interest, a reporter will have to disclose information.

Understanding limitations on reporter’s privilege and other citation formats is also important because USURF will be held liable for all information published with in the form of journal articles of media press releases. Guidelines on this will be incorporated into the USURF style guide.

## Revision

*Table 5: Revision Dates*

APA	2010 brought updates to the 6 <sup>th</sup> edition published in 2009, this revised the 2001 version.
AP	Major revisions: 1977, 1986, and 2008
Northrop Grumman	June 14, 2007; October 10, 2008 – yearly updates?
NASA History	Last updated November 19, 2007. Website
Tongue & Quill	Existed for nearly 40 years, most recent revision August 1, 2004

Something I felt was of particular importance was the frequency of revision. However, as I discovered in my research, this information wasn’t easy to find. While this information may be privy to the individual corporations, I felt that it can easily tell a user how valuable the corporation feels this information is if the document is reviewed and updated every five years. If

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<sup>11</sup> “BRANZBURG v. HAYES,” *The Oyez Project at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law*, accessed 16 October 2011, [http://www.oyez.org/cases/1970-1979/1971/1971\\_70\\_85](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1970-1979/1971/1971_70_85)

a user feels that a document was created once and is not being kept up with changing standards, then the style guide is more likely to be disregarded even if the guide is kept up to date.

As I went through the documents, I found that the documents with wider audiences seemed to have information more available about revisions. Specifically the AP and APA manuals were particular about their revisions, often titling their documents with the year it was revised. Since I have determined that this information is useful, I feel it is important to integrate a schedule for revision into the document. It is then up to the organization to review the contents of the document and adjust the material as needed. In the creation of my style guide, I will include a number of years that the style guide will be reevaluated. This will ensure that the guide is kept up to date with current trends in the industry or within the organization itself.

## Contents

*Table 6: Contents*

	Grammar	Ethics	Document Control	Terminology	Format and Structure
APA	X	X		X	X
AP	X	X		X	
Northrop Grumman	X		X	X	X
NASA History	X			X	
Tongue & Quill	X	X		X	X

This evaluation really gave insight into what should be in a corporate style guide. There were many commonalities amongst the guides, and there were also many differences. Each style guide has a very personal audience and purpose and therefore caters to the needs of that audience. For example, the Northrop Grumman guide was the only guide to include information on the processing of their documents. USURF already has a procedure dedicated to this purpose and therefore, the information does not need to be repeated in a style guide. Specialized terms

were different for each guide as the organizations that each arise from are geared toward different fields of study and production. The exact contents of the style guide that I have decided on are an introduction, guidelines for revision, reference documents, formatting (with subsections for USURF, SDL, EDL, Quality, and Miscellaneous documents), clarity and professionalism, USURF jargon, the Chicago Manual of Style, and ethics.

### **Results from Interviews**

I conducted interviews with Katie Bennion and Heidi Landfair, two technical writers currently employed at the Space Dynamics Laboratory, a unit of the Utah State University Research Foundation. The goal of these interviews was to determine how the style guide would be used. I also hoped to discover which things were important to the technical writers and which things were less important. The interviews yielded several interesting results. The most compelling of these was the need for a complete list of acronyms. It was important that the technical writers pointed this out because in my year of employment, I have grown accustomed to using acronyms without a second thought. It has been pointed out to me that there is a list of acronyms on the USURF intranet, but it is incomplete.

Other interesting results from the interviews included that there should not be separated guides for the different units of USURF (the Energy Dynamics Lab and the Space Dynamics Lab). The suggestion was that both entities should conform to a single guide and that any specific differences for the two organizations should be spelled out in the guide. The technical writers also specified that as this is a starting document, it will likely be most useful starting out with just the technical writers focusing on it. As the writers get more accustomed to it, it might then become more appropriate to extend these guidelines to the rest of the company including engineering and others. However both Katie and Heidi stated that this sort of document should

not be limited by availability. Katie and Heidi recommended that this document be kept on the USURF intranet for access to whoever may be looking for it, but not to impose it upon all entities at first.

When asked about incorporating a revision timeframe into the style guide, Katie Bennion stated that this should be “As needed. I don’t think there’s a specific time frame that should be followed. You might need to change something in 6 months; maybe it will be 5 years. Hard to tell.”<sup>12</sup> I agreed with this statement and decided that it would be best to make a regulation so that the guide does not fall out of use, but can also be updated whenever necessary.

## **CONCLUSION**

Writing a corporate style guide is a very complex practice and there are virtually no guidelines on how to do it. My research has concluded that modeling a guide off other guides will be helpful, but cannot complete the process. My interviews with USURF Technical Writers Katie Bennion and Heidi Landfair have helped me to understand that it is vital to coordinate with the users of the guide to meet their needs. Completion of this research has left me prepared to attempt the actual writing of a guide for the Utah State University Research Foundation. This style guide is included as the second piece of this research project.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Katie Bennion.

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**UtahStateUniversity**  
RESEARCH FOUNDATION

# USURF Style Guide

Process Owner: Communications Manager

Utah State University Research Foundation  
1695 North Research Park Way  
North Logan, Utah  
84341

Document: TBD  
Revision: Original Release  
Date: December 16, 2011

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## 1.0 Introduction

This document is meant to stand as a guide for individuals when they are writing and designing the appearance of a Utah State University Research Foundation (USURF) document. This includes documentation which will remain internal and documentation that will be publicized.

The purpose of this document is to provide greater standardization for USURF documents. This will increase:

- The professional appearance of the organization
- USURF's ability to win contracts and maintain professional relationships
- Organization within USURF and all of its business units
- Clarity among similar terms and acronyms

Many document types have pre-made formats which can be found as templates throughout the USURF intranet. This document also catalogs those templates. All documentation should adhere to the USURF Quality Manual (QM0201) and should be processed by the Document Control Procedure (QP0501) as appropriate.

## 2.0 Revision

This document should be subjected to revision every five (5) years or whenever is deemed necessary due to changes within the Quality Management System or USURF as a whole. Changes should be authorized by Communications management and approved by other management as needed.

## 3.0 Reference Documents

QM0201	Quality Manual
QP0501	Document Control Procedure
QF0504	Template for Quality Procedures
QF0505	Template for Quality Work Instructions
QF0201	Program Implementation Plan Template
QF1704	USURF Internal Quality Audit Checklist Template
	USURF Templates
	SDL Templates
	EDL Templates

## 4.0 Formatting

There are some general guidelines for formatting documents. All documents (unless directly specified) should adhere to a 1 inch page margin.

Default font choice should be Times New Roman 12 pt. or Arial 11pt. However, some documents may require specialized fonts. This will be determined by USURF graphic designers.

### Creating Quality Documents

There are several types of quality documents. These include Quality Forms (prefix “qf”), Quality Work Instructions (prefix “qw”), and Quality Procedures (prefix “qp”). The templates mentioned in this section can be found in Document Control.

#### Quality Work Instructions

Quality Work Instructions are designed by following the *Template for Quality Work Instructions* (QF0505).

Additional Instructions for using the Work Instruction Template:

*Process Owner:* The Process Owner should be written as a title not a name. For example, “Quality Assurance Manager” should be written in place of “Shelley Dyer.”

*Footer:* Be sure to fill the footer on both the Table of Contents page and the page beginning “Introduction.” These footers belong to separate sections and are not linked.

*Italics:* Things written in italics are information about the template that should either be deleted or replaced with pertinent information to the Work Instruction being constructed.

*Numbering:* All paragraphs should be numbered. The beginning of an example is shown in the template. If it is necessary to go further with subparagraphs or lists, please use the following numbering scheme

- 1.0 *Heading One*
- 1.1 *Heading Two*
- 1.1.1 *Paragraph One*
- 1.1.1.1 *Subparagraph One*
- a. *Subparagraph Two*
- i. *Subparagraph Three*

#### Quality Procedures

Quality Procedures are designed by the *Template for Quality Procedures* (QF0504).

All additional information regarding use of the Quality Procedure Template can be found under section 5.1 of this document, Quality Work Instructions.

#### Quality Forms

Quality Forms are perhaps the most varied form of Quality Document. Often these documents are written to suit their purpose. Functionality and usability is vital to the success of a form. Many forms are digitally interactive using Microsoft Macros functions or Adobe's interactive PDFs, and they incorporate the Adobe Acrobat "Distribute" function to avoid unnecessary printing.

Consult a Technical Writer or Quality Assurance (QA) if you have questions about creating a Quality Form.

To view examples of functional Quality Forms, view QF1601 and QF0502 on the Document Control Master List.

### **Program Implementation Plans (PIPs)**

PIPs are currently designed by the *Program Implementation Plan (PIP) Template* (QF0201). An online "Quick PIP" template is in progress.

QF0201 includes blue italics to direct a user on the content of the document. Follow these instructions. If parts of the template do not apply to your particular program, indicate it (e.g. type N/A).

If you have questions filling out the PIP Template, contact a Technical Writer.

### **Internal Audit Checklists**

As USURF expands, it may become necessary to add additional Audits to those currently in practice. Each new Audit demands a checklist. These Internal Quality Checklists are designed by the USURF Internal Quality Audit Checklist Template (QF1704).

The checklist template leaves areas to write questions that are applicable to the process being audited. To write these questions, thoroughly study the necessary Quality Process or Work Instruction. Discover the core fundamentals of the process and focus on these ideas when writing questions.

For help in writing a Quality Internal Audit Checklist, contact QA or a Technical Writer.

### **Creating USURF Documents**

USURF documents represent the entire Research Foundation and Utah State University. Templates mentioned in this section can be found on the Communications, Logos and Templates page of the USURF intranet.

The following templates are available to USURF employees for external communication:

- USURF Fax
- USURF General
- USURF Letterhead
- USURF Memo
- USURF PowerPoint

The Communications page also includes templates for Commercial Enterprises external communication. They include the following:

- CE Fax
- CE Letterhead
- CE Memo

### **Creating SDL Documents**

There are several templates for SDL external communication. They include:

- SDL Fax
- SDL General
- SDL Letterhead
- SDL Memo
- SDL PowerPoint

### **Creating EDL Documents**

There are several templates for EDL external communication. They include:

- EDL Fax
- EDL General
- EDL Letterhead
- EDL Memo
- EDL PowerPoint

### **Miscellaneous Documents**

Press Releases and any miscellaneous documentation, such as reports, formal correspondence, etc., shall be placed on the appropriate letterhead or general template.

Note: Information that is given to journalists in confidence (such as an agreement that the Utah State University Research Foundation, the Space Dynamics Laboratory, or the Energy Dynamics Laboratory will not be cited) is not confidential. Due to the Supreme Court case *Branzburg v. Hayes*, reporters can be required to divulge their sources if there is a compelling state interest.

## **5.0 A Note on Clarity and Professionalism**

Font Choice: Unless otherwise specified choose one of the following three font formats

- Arial headings and body text (e.g. this document).
- Times New Roman headings and body text
- Arial headings and Times New Roman Body Text

If a font has been specified for use on a particular document, be sure to use the mandated font. On newsletters, brochures, etc. the **title** of the document may often benefit from the choice of a decorative or modern-style font.

*Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph M. Williams gives succinct guidelines on clarity and professionalism. The following are some suggestions:

- As much as possible, write in active voice. (Subject then Verb)
  - Use passive voice to draw attention to the action instead of the subject.
  - Use passive voice to replace a long subject with a short one.
  - Use passive voice if it gives your readers a coherent sequence of subjects.
- Rewrite long compound noun phrases
  - Change “We discussed the board candidate review meeting schedule” to “We discussed the schedule of meetings to review candidates for the board.”
- Begin a sentence with information that your readers are already familiar with.
- Through a series of long sentences, keep your topics short and reasonably consistent. This will increase coherence.
- Use the end of the sentence to introduce long, complex, or otherwise difficult-to-process material, particularly unfamiliar technical terms and new information.
- Use the stress position at the sentence’s end to emphasize words that you want your readers to hear emphasized in their mind’s ear.
- Use the stress of a sentence that introduces a pass to announce the key concepts that the rest of the passage will develop.

Williams states that the following are wants of the reader:

- They want sentences to get to the subject of a main clause quickly, so avoid opening more than a few sentences with long, complex phrases and subordinate clauses.
- They want sentences that get past the subject of a main clause to a verb quickly, so:
  - Keep subjects short and, if you can, concrete.
  - Open sentences with familiar information
- They want verbs that name specific actions, so do not bury actions in abstract nouns.
- Readers deal with complexity more easily at the end of a sentence, so put there information that they will find least familiar, most complex, and most difficult to understand.
- Readers may get confused when, in a series of long sentences, each opens with a different subject, so through a passage, focus on a few topics that define what the passage is centrally “about.”

## 6.0 USURF Colloquialisms and Specialized Language

\*Note: Some acronyms have multiple interpretations. These are listed as two separate lines in this section. The meaning of these acronyms, when in use, shall be interpreted by the context in which they lie.

### List of Acronyms

AC	Alternating Current
ACO	Administrative Contracting Officer

ADC	Analog-to-Digital Converter
AEDC	Arnold Engineering and Development Center (Arnold AFB, TN)
AFRL	Air Force Research Lab
AGP	Advanced Graphics Port
AIM	Aeronomy of Ice the Mesosphere
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
AOI	Angle of Incidence
ARCH	Advanced Reconnaissance Compression Hardware
ARM	Absolute Radiance Measurement
ARS	Angular Rate Sensor
AS&T	Advanced Systems and Technology Directorate
ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
ATARS	Advanced Tactical Air Reconnaissance System
ATDP	Advanced Threat Detection Processor
ATK	Alliant Techsystems
ATP	Authorization to Proceed
ATR	Acceptance Test Report
BMDO	Ballistic Mille Defense Organization (renamed to MDA)
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
CADS	Control and Display Station
CAF	Calibration Analysis File
CCP	Contamination Control Plan
CDL	Common Data Link
CDL-N	Common Data Link – Navy
CDR	Critical Design Review
CDRL	Contract Data Requirements List
CE	Circular Error
CE	Cognizant Engineer
CFE	Customer Furnished Equipment
CFFTS	Cascaded Filter Fourier Transfer Spectrometer
CGM	Computer Graphic Metafile
CHBDL	Common High Bandwidth Data Link
CIB	CDL Interface Box
CIR	Contract Initiation Review
CMS	Control and Monitoring System
COB	Close of Business
COR	Contracting Officer Representative
COTS	Commercial, Off-the-Shelf
CSO	Closely Spaced Objects
CVCM	Collected Volatile Condensable Materials

DAQ	Data Acquisition Unit
DC	Direct Current
DCGS	Distributed Common Ground System
DCGS-MC	Distributed Common Ground Station – Marine Corps
DCGS-N	Distributed Common Ground Station – Navy
DCRsi	Digital Cartridge Recording System
DDR	Double Data Rate
DDR&E	Director of Defense Research and Engineering
DIB	DCGS Integration Backbone
DLA	Drive Letter Access
DMP	Data Management Plan
DN	Document Notice
DoD	Department of Defense
DPAS	Defense Priorities and Allocations System Program
DPLH	Direct Productive Labor Hours
DPPBA	Digital Precision Strike Suite
DPSS	Digital Positioning Data Base
DRACC	Data Router and Command Controller
DSS	Digital Storage System
EDT	Embedded Desktop
EMI	Electro-Magnetic Interface
EO	Electro-Optical
ESD	Electrostatic Discharge
ESE	Electrical Support Equipment
EDL	Energy Dynamics Laboratory
FFS	Forward Framing Sensor
FLHER	Funds and Labor Hour Expenditure Report
FOV	Field of View
FPA	Focal Plane Array
FTP	File Transfer Protocol
FTS	Fourier Transform Spectrometer
GB	Gigabyte
GEO	Geosynchronous Earth Orbit
GFE	Government-Furnished Equipment
GHz	Gigahertz
GIDEP	Government-Industry Data Exchange Program
GIFTS	Geosynchronous Imaging Fourier Transform Spectrometer
GMTI	Ground Moving Target Indicators
GN2	Gaseous Nitrogen
GOTS	Government Off-the-Shelf
GPS	Global Position System

GSE	Ground Support Equipment
GUI	Graphical User Interface
HAES	High Accuracy Extended Source
HBA	Host Bus Adapter
HIPPI	High Performance Parallel Interface
HIS	Hyperspatial Imagery
Hz	Hertz
IA	Imagery Analyst
ICAT	Image Category
ICD	Interface Control Document
IMU	Inertial Measurement Unit
IPA	Intergovernmental Personnel
IPL	Image Product Library
IQ	Image Quality
IR	Infrared
IRIG	Inter-Range Instrumentation Group (a standards organization)
IS&R	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
IT&L	Integration, Test, and Logistics
IU	Interface Unit
JBOD	Just a Bunch of Disks
JITC	Joint Interoperability Test Command
JPEG	Joint Photographic Experts Group
JPL	Jet Propulsion Laboratory
KSPIF	Kirtland Spacecraft Integration Facility
LAEO	Low Altitude Electro-optical
LAN	Local Area Network
LMISS	Lockheed Martin Integrated Systems & Solutions
LM-MS	Lockheed Martin Mission Systems (renamed to LMISS)
LN2	Liquid Nitrogen
LSV	Light Source Verification
LVDT	Linear Variable Differential Transducer
LWIRCS	Long-Wave Infrared Calibration Source
MAEO	Medium Altitude Electro-optical
MB	Megabyte
MDA	Missile Defense Agency
M-EVENT	Marked Event
MGRS	Military Grid References System
MIC3	Multi-Function Infrared Calibrator 3
MITOCA	Multiple Images Table of Contents Field
MSTI	Miniature Sensor Technology Integration
MSX	Midcourse Space Experiment

MTC	Motion Control Rack
MTF	Modulation Transfer Function
MTI	Moving Target Indicator
MVE	Mission Verification Equipment
NAS	Network Attached Storage
NAVIS	Navy Input Station
NCR	Nonconformance Report
ND	Neutral Density (filter)
NEFD	Noise Equivalent Flux Density
NEI	Noise Equivalent Irradiance
NER	Noise Equivalent Radiance
NFIRE	Near Field Infrared Experiment
NGA	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NITF	National Imagery Transmission Format
NRL	Naval Research Laboratory
NSN	NRL Sensor Node
OMB	Office Management & Budget
ONR	Office of Naval Research
OOB	Out-of-Band
OSHA	Occupational Safety & Health Administration
PCFP	Peripheral Component Fusion Processor
PCI	Peripheral Component Interface
PCO	Procuring Contracting Officer
PDR	Principal Design Review
PDR	Preliminary Design Review
PFPS	Portable Flight Planning Software
PGM	Portable Gray Map
PID	Proportional Integral Derivative
PIP	Program Implementation Plan
PM	Program Manager
POP	Period of Performance
PPM	Portable Pixel Map
PRBS	Pseudo-Random Bit Sequence
PTW	Precision Targeting Workstation
QA	Quality Assurance
QAM	Quality Assurance Manager
QMS	Quality Management System
QTH	Quartz Tungsten Halogen (lamp)
R/RW	Write/Rewritable
RAID	Redundant Array of Independent Disks

RAM	Random Access Memory
RAMOS	Russian American Observational Satellites
RGA	Residual Gas Analyzer
RGB	Red, Green, Blue
RMM	Removable Memory Module
ROM	Rough-Order-of-Magnitude (proposal)
ROM	Read-only Memory
RSO	Relative Spectral Output
RSR	Relative Spectral Response
RVTM	Requirements Verification Traceability Matrix
SABER	Sounding of the Atmosphere using Broadband Emission Radiometry
SAR	Synthetic Aperture Radar
SAS	SHARP Archive Station
SBIRS	Space-Based Infrared System
SCIF	Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility
SCRAM	Synchronous Dynamic Random Access Memory
SCSI	Small Computer System Interface
SDE	Support Data Extensions
SDL	Space Dynamics Lab
SDL-XR	SDL Transfer Radiometer
SDRL	Supplier Data Requirements List
SDS	SHARP Display Station
SHARC	Squadron High-vis Advanced Reconnaissance Computer
SHARP	Shared Reconnaissance Pod
SITA	Selected Image Target Area
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SNL	Sandia National Laboratories
SNR	Signal-to-Noise Ratio
SOAR	Simulator or Analyzer/Router
SOFIE	Solar Occultation for Ice Experiment
SOW	Statement of Work
SPAWAR	Space & Naval Warfare System
SPE	Screeener Processor Element
SPIA	Standards Profile for Imagery Access
SPIRIT III	Spatial Infrared Imaging Telescope III
SQAP	Software Quality Assurance Plan
SRMS	SHARP Reconnaissance Management System
SSR	Solid State Recorder
STANAG	NATO Standardization Agency (NSA) Standardization Agreement
STE	Surface Terminal Equipment
SVD	Software Version Description

SWIR	Short Wave Infrared
TACRECCE	Tactical Reconnaissance
TARPS-CD	Tactical Airborne Reconnaissance Pod System Completely Digital
TARS	Theater Airborne Recon System
TER	Test Exit Review
THAAD	Theater High Altitude Area Defense
THOR	Thermal and Optical Research Chamber
THUGS	Tester for HiFES User Ground Station
TIM	Technical Interchange Meeting
TIS	Tactical Input Segment
TMB	Theater (or Tactical) Ballistic Missile
TMD	Theater Missile Defense
TQCM	Thermoelectric Quartz Crystal Microbalance
TRD	Technical Requirements Document
TRE	Tagged Record Extension
TRR	Test Readiness Review
TVAC	Thermal-Vacuum Chamber
TWR	Thompson Ramo Wooldridge
UARC	University-Affiliated Research Center
UPS	Uninterruptable Power Supply
USD (AT&L)	Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics
USURF	Utah State University Research Foundation
UUT	Unit Under Test
WESS	Web Enabled Sensor Service
WFE	Wavefront Error
WISE	Wide-Field Infrared Survey Explorer
WMS	Web Map Service
WYSIWYG	What You See Is What You Get

## 7.0 The Chicago Manual of Style

Refer to the Chicago Manual of Style for all stylistic concerns. The Chicago Manual of Style online (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>) provides detailed information about what Chicago style includes and how to use it. If you have concerns about using the Chicago Manual, consult a Technical Writer.

### Citations

Although Chicago offers two styles of citations, USURF uses the “Notes” style. This means that citations are written as footnotes (mainly for White Papers) to be included in a final bibliography.

The following are some typical examples of citations in Chicago style. Use number 1 as the footnote for the first time a source has been used in a document. Use number 2 for any subsequent reference to the source and include the final citation as the bibliographic citation.

**Book: One author**

1. Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 99–100.
2. Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma*, 3.

Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

**Book: Two or more authors**

1. Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 52.
2. Ward and Burns, *War*, 59–61.

Ward, Geoffrey C., and Ken Burns. *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945*. New York: Knopf, 2007.

**Article: Article in a print journal**

In a note, list the specific page numbers consulted, if any. In the bibliography, list the page range for the whole article.

1. Joshua I. Weinstein, "The Market in Plato's *Republic*," *Classical Philology* 104 (2009): 440.
2. Weinstein, "Plato's *Republic*," 452–53.

Weinstein, Joshua I. "The Market in Plato's *Republic*." *Classical Philology* 104 (2009): 439–58.

**Article: Article in an online journal**

Include a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) if the journal lists one. A DOI is a permanent ID that, when appended to <http://dx.doi.org/> in the address bar of an Internet browser, will lead to the source. If no DOI is available, list a URL

1. Gueorgi Kossinets and Duncan J. Watts, "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Social Network," *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (2009): 411, accessed February 28, 2010, doi:10.1086/599247.
2. Kossinets and Watts, "Origins of Homophily," 439.

Kossinets, Gueorgi, and Duncan J. Watts. "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Social Network." *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (2009): 405–50. Accessed February 28, 2010. doi:10.1086/599247.

**Thesis or dissertation**

1. Mihwa Choi, "Contesting *Imaginaires* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008).

2. Choi, "Contesting *Imaginares*."

Choi, Mihwa. "Contesting *Imaginares* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty." PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008.

### Website

A citation to website content can often be limited to a mention in the text or in a note ("As of July 19, 2008, the McDonald's Corporation listed on its website . . ."). If a more formal citation is desired, it may be styled as in the examples below. Unless the website is common enough that it could be found using a general "Google Search," include a formal citation. When in doubt, create a formal citation. Because web content is subject to change, include an access date or, if available, a date the site was last modified.

1. "Google Privacy Policy," last modified March 11, 2009, <http://www.google.com/intl/en/privacypolicy.html>.
2. "McDonald's Happy Meal Toy Safety Facts," McDonald's Corporation, accessed July 19, 2008, <http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/about/factsheets.html>.
3. "Google Privacy Policy."
4. "Toy Safety Facts."

Google. "Google Privacy Policy." Last modified March 11, 2009. <http://www.google.com/intl/en/privacypolicy.html>.

McDonald's Corporation. "McDonald's Happy Meal Toy Safety Facts." Accessed July 19, 2008. <http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/about/factsheets.html>.

## 8.0 Ethical Behavior in Writing

No matter the results of research conducted, it is important that all USURF employees are honest and ethical. In the following list are some simple guidelines to ensure ethical writing.

- Be honest in your work
- Don't substitute speculation for fact
- Double check your facts
- Don't hide truth with ambiguity
- Don't use the ideas of others without giving proper credit, through clear citations
- Don't violate copyright laws
- Don't lie with statistics
- Don't inject personal bias into your reports
- Be accurate in your work

## **Author Biography**

### **Riley Ann Ashcroft**

Riley Ann Ashcroft was born and raised in Cache Valley, Utah. She determined to study Technical Writing when a creative writing high school teacher informed her that her edits and reviews were better written than her actual stories. After graduating from Sky View High School in the spring of 2009, Riley was accepted to Utah State University. Throughout her studies, Riley has served as the Vice President and President, respectively, of the Society for Technical Communication. She was also awarded the A-Pin after receiving two consecutive 4.0s. Riley graduated from her Technical Writing program in December 2011 supplemented by Departmental Honors in English.

Riley plans to work for the Space Dynamics Laboratory at the Utah State University Research Foundation while her husband finishes his degree at USU.