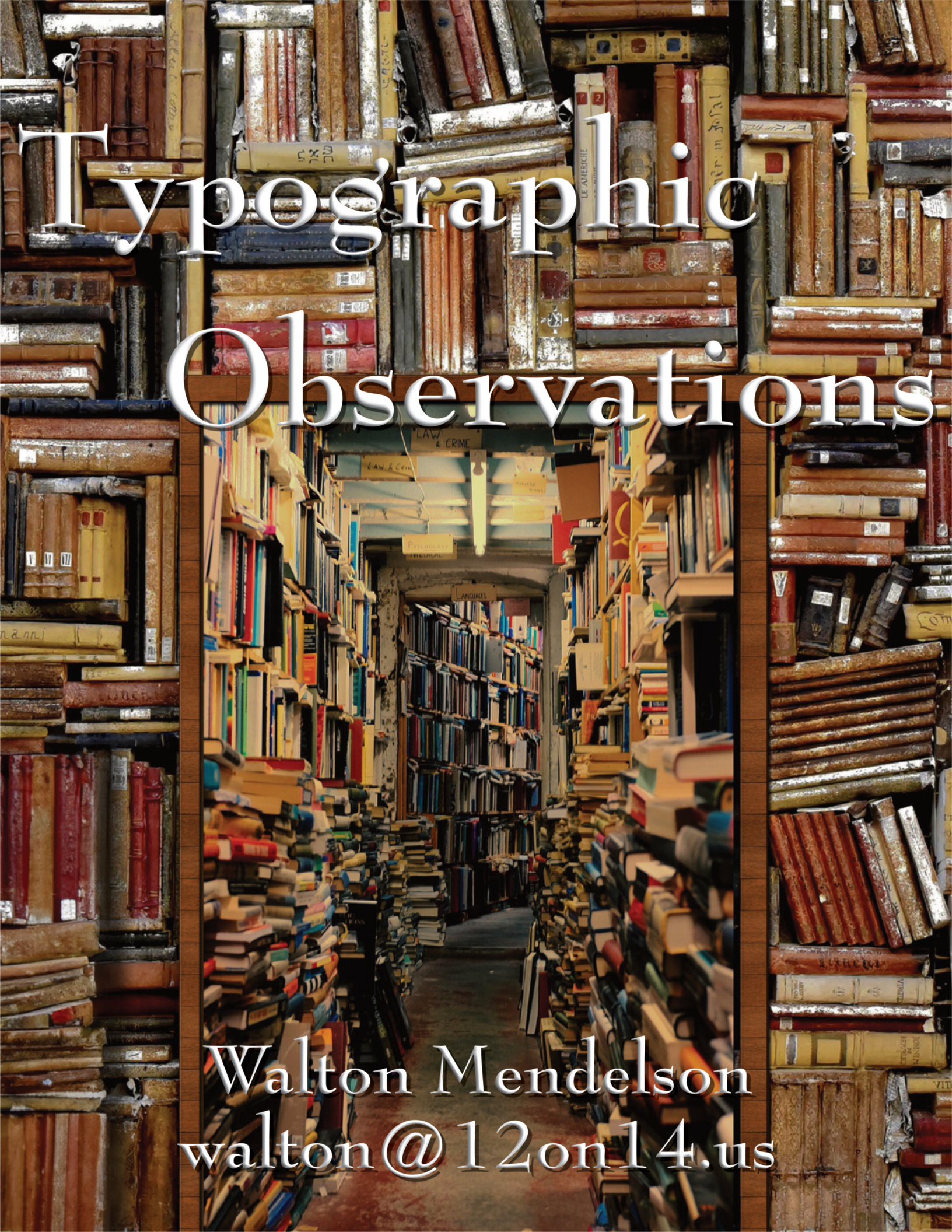




Typographic Observations

Walton Mendelson
walton@12on14.us

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Because of questions raised in a number of book related forums, some years ago, I went through several hundred books on the shelves around me. These were all published by traditional publishers, from 1900 to the present day. Also, these were mostly hardcover books, novels and non-fiction (histories, biographies, etc.)—no children's books, poetry or text books. I had a check list of things I was curious about. For the type size and leading, I used a type gauge. For books published, let's say, before 2000, the gauge worked easily enough. However, with digital typesetting, fonts and leading can be fractional sizes, so there was some guesswork, and I rounded things to whole numbers.

Copyright notice: in the US, always on the verso of the full title page. Where the notice is positioned varies. In earlier days, the entire notice block was 3–5 lines. Now it can include as much as an entire page of LoC numbers, miscellaneous publishing information, notices, etc. But one can still feel where the notice is positioned. Roughly:

Bottom	20%
Middle	37%
Top	43%

Half title: has only the title on it. It is generally set smaller than on the full title page. It can be called the bastard title. This may be a regionalism, but I tend to think of the half title as preceding the full title page, and the bastard title preceding the text. Not all books have these.

Half title	68%
Bastard Title	44%

The first text page: can start with several different page numbers. Page three usually has a preceding bastard title page, followed by a blank page. Page X indicates that the page number generally starts from the full or half title page; although rarely they start elsewhere in the front matter.

1	36%
3	35%
X	29%

Page number prints on the first page/chapter opening page: whatever is done for chapter one, is done consistently throughout the remainder of the book.

Yes	72%
No	28%

Table of Contents: the majority of both fiction and non-fiction have a table of contents. Sometimes the listed chapters are significant (e.g., 7. Transfer of Power, England: 1902–11); sometimes they are trivial (e.g., Chapter 1).

ToC	65%
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Chapter openings: The first chapter consistently starts on the right hand, odd numbered, recto page. After that, there are three ways chapters are presented: 1) where they fall, left hand or right hand pages, 2) right hand pages only, and 3) inline (i.e. they open within a page, not separate pages).

Right & Left	71%
Right	28%
Inline	1%

Section breaks: these must be distinguished from Section Breaks used in formatting. Not all books have section breaks. These are divisions within a chapter, generally setting off a shift

in time, place, point of view, etc., but not enough, however to be a new chapter. When a blank line space is used, it is usually 1–3 lines, with 2 lines being the most common.

Space	62% (1–3 spaces)
Asterisk	5% (1–3 asterisks)
Dot	1%
Flower	5%
Number	9%
Text/Title	14%
Other total	4%

Section break following paragraph: the paragraph after a section break is an opening paragraph. I have broken the treatment down to indented and block paragraphs. None had a raised or drop cap. A few used large caps or small caps. Some had extra wide indents.

Indent	45%
Block	55%

Chapter opening paragraph: is almost always different from other paragraphs. The variations are too numerous to list in detail. Raised and drop caps are often used with small caps or large caps—one word, several words, or the entire line. Sometimes just small or large caps. Hanging caps are rare; I have maybe three books that use them.

Raised Cap	26%
Drop Cap	23%
Indent	7%
Block	44% (no special treatment otherwise)

Type size and leading: although I know I have books with 9 pt text and some large print books with 20 pt text, none of them came up in my survey. I had to round up or down fractional settings, e.g., 12.5pt or 2.2pt leading. The range was 10/10 to 14/16. The most common sizes, accounting for 65% of the total, were:

11/11	8%
11/12	11%
12/13	13%
12/14	20%
12/15	13%

None of the remaining combinations were more than 4% of the total; most, about 30 combinations of type size and leading, represented 1% or less.

Ragged right: None of books in the survey were set ragged right. However, a few years ago, I went through the first 50 books on book design on Amazon that 1) had a Look Inside the Book feature, and 2) were, as best I could tell, designed by the author. In total, I looked at 106, to get 50. Thirty-eight were set ragged right. While one might call these books *text books*, they were far more artful and creative than the average text book—they were design books. In other words, most book designers like ragged right. I had a client who insisted

on setting two suspense thrillers ragged right. I fought it, but ultimately conceded. To my surprise, the ragged right added to the feeling of suspense: it worked! However, it was much harder to set well compared to justified text. I don't know if I will use it again, and I noticeably did not use it here; not because I don't like or don't approve, but because with the hanging paragraphs and differing levels of indenting, it was simply too busy.

Ragged right 76% of books on book design by book designers (38 out of 50 books total)

Ragged right 0% novels, histories, biographies, etc.

The rule: be consistent. From the above, it is obvious that a lot of things in book design are flexible—there are very few nevers, except perhaps never have widows—but whatever you do, try to be consistent throughout the book. If you vary something, have a good reason. Styles are a great way to maintain consistency.