

Let's Create an eBook



Michael MacLeod

A simple step by step guide

Let' s Create an eBook

By

Mike MacLeod

Let's Create an eBook
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Other books by the author:

Technical:

Constructors Mate

Introduction to Capacitors

The Lost Art of Loudspeaker Design

The Ultimate Loudspeaker Design

Crossovers

Map Reading and Navigation for Everyone

Novels:

Ride The Restless Wind

Dead Men's Gold

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Sample of my other books

Chapter 1

So there you are, sitting in your old rocking chair, wondering where the good times have gone. The days are marching by and maybe it is time for you to put your life story down for future generations or you have written several poems you would like to share. Maybe you have a great idea for a DIY project or a sought after skill which will die with you when you pass on. Or maybe like me, you wake up one morning with an incredible dream in your head and suddenly find the urge to put it down on paper.

Whatever it is, you need to start somewhere and what better way than pulling out your laptop and starting to pound on those keys. But wait, I hear you say, what, where and how?

These days it is virtually impossible to get 'published', so that leaves us no option but to self publish and put the book on the web. We can do this by either creating a PDF document or an ePub one. The fundamental

difference between the two is that PDF pages are fixed in size and if you want to resize the view, you either zoom in or out to make the page larger or smaller. Ebooks on the other hand allow the device to increase the size of the font, which then causes the pages to reflow and the pages expand or contract.

EBooks are great for novels, which consist mainly of text. Pictures tend to come out small in eBooks and are difficult to see, especially on cellphones. Pdf files on the other hand, are better suited to technical books that have lots of pictures or diagrams and are laid out on A4 or Letter size pages. The beauty of PDF type books, is that they can be easily printed out, especially if it is a DIY guide with drawings and diagrams. This book, for example, is laid out in PDF format because as you will see, there are many screen shots to guide you through the various formatting processes. My novels are eBook format, as that is what my online publisher, Smashwords, requires although they do contain a few pictures at the end.

Chapter 2

Let's start off with PDF files, as they are easily prepared and the only software required is Microsoft Word or a similar word processor (you must have the 'Save as PDF and XPS plug-in installed). While this book is about eBooks, I am including the PDF format here because that was how I wrote this book. I'm not going to explain any further on how to use Word per se, suffice to say that all you need to do once you have finished with your layout, is to select '**Save As**' and then select as '**PDF or XPS**' and Word will do the rest for you. Just make sure that '**Optimize for: Standard**' is selected when saving as a PDF - you don't lose any quality.

This is a process that you will go through many a time, i.e. proof reading, correcting, and then saving as a PDF. Remember one thing and that is: don't rely on Spell Check, although they do work sum of the time!

Now onto our eBook proper. The first thing you will need to do is download the software required to create and format our eBook. eBooks have differing file extension names and this depends entirely on the viewer that you will be using to view the book with. The following main file extensions are used: .epub and .mobi. For a comprehensive listing of all the formats, visit Wikipedia at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_e-book_formats to which the following refers:

The [EPUB](#) format is the most widely supported vendor-independent [XML](#)-based (as opposed to [PDF](#)) e-book format; that is, it is supported by the largest number of e-Readers, including [Amazon Kindle Fire](#) (but not standard Kindle).

Now the beauty of the software that we will be using is that they can save our book in all of the popular formats listed in the above article.

Okay, enough waffling on, let us get down to the nitty gritty. Download and install the following free software programs:

1. **Sigil** -
<https://github.com/Sigil-Ebook/Sigil/releases/download/0.9.6/Sigil-0.9.6-Windows-Setup.exe>
2. **Calibre** -
<http://calibre-ebook.com/dist/portable>
3. **Flightcrew** -
https://github.com/Sigil-Ebook/flightcrew/releases/download/0.9.1/FlightCrew_v0.9.1win.zip
4. **Pagina EPUB-Checker** -
http://download.pagina-online.de/epubchecker/files/pagina-EPUB-Checker_Win-1.6.1.zip

Pagina requires Java 1.6 or later to be installed on your computer. I had hassles installing Calibre on my laptop and found that the portable version worked best for

me. Sigil has a portable version as well.

5. **Icecream Ebook Reader** -

<http://icecreamapps.com/Download-Ebook-Reader/>

Icecream Ebook Reader is a library for storing and viewing epub files on your computer or laptop.

6. **FBReader** -

A nice epub reader for android phones is a free product called **FBReader** and can be downloaded from the **Google Playstore**.

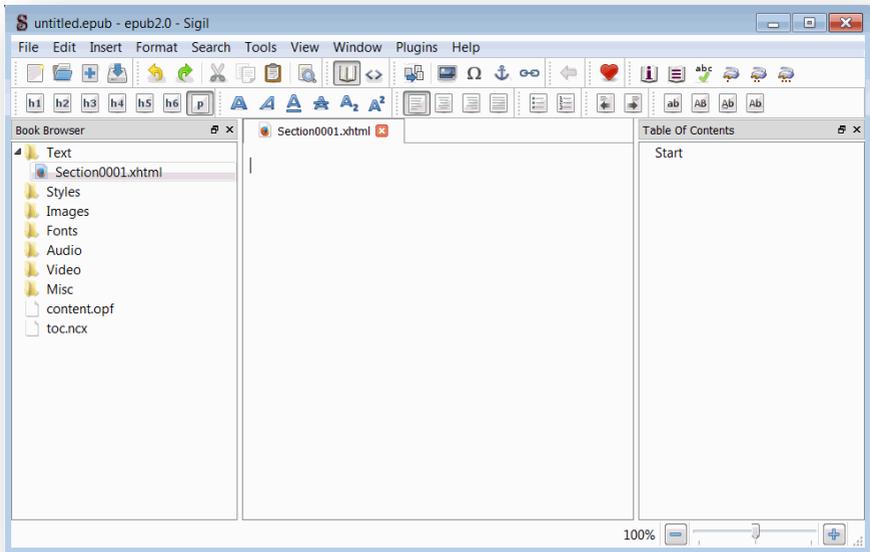
Chapter 3

Sigil is the main program that we will be using to lay out our basic structure of our book, as well as for writing of our text. It is an html-based program, using the same mark-up language that is used for designing web pages. It does not use or need any complex formatting, it is really just like making a simple web page, and it uses **CSS** style sheets, which contain our text formatting and layout instructions. **Sigil** doesn't create the **css** style sheets and so we will use **Calibre** to do that for us, but more on this later on.

After installing **Sigil**, run the program. You will see a page consisting of three screens or panes with two rows of icons along the top - see overleaf.

Before going any further, select **Edit/Preferences**. Make sure that the boxes marked '**Open**' and '**Save**' under the heading '**Mend XHTML Source code on:**' in the **General Settings** tab are ticked, then close the dialog box by selecting '**OK**'.

The left hand pane is marked '**Book Browser**' and this is where the actual html files are located, as well as the folders



holding various files. For example, the **Styles** folder holds the CSS sheets. Other folders are: Images, Fonts, Audio, Video and Misc. We will be only using the **Image** folder for now, which will hold our books' cover photo.

The centre pane is our text editor, where we will be typing or pasting in our text,

which by the way, must contain no formatting, as would be the case if you import text from Word. Also, don't use tabs or any other formatting, use only Sigils formatting commands - see the **Sigil Help** guide. I would also suggest that you download and read Mark Cokers '**Smashwords Style Guide**'.

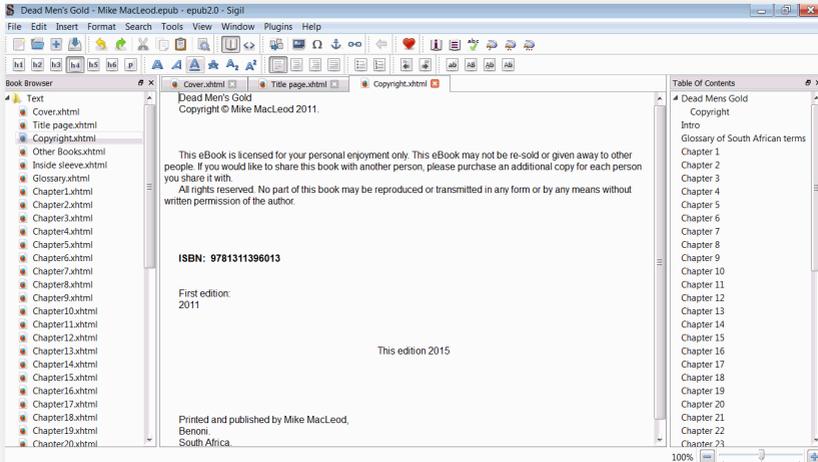
The right hand pane contains the table of contents tree, which we edit when we have finished adding in all the chapters and text.

The main thing about eBooks is that each chapter has its own .xhtml page. Notice the file in the **Text** folder in the left hand window, titled: **Section0001.xhtml**, this represents our first page, which is **reserved** for the cover photo.

When I write a novel, I usually have twenty-five chapters in total. Each chapter consists of about ten or so pages, which would make my novel round about two hundred and fifty pages long, and is about the average length of a novel.

Also, remember that our first page is in fact the cover of our book. If you

look at my screen shot from one of my novels, you will see that there are several pages before we even get to



Chapter One. These include the first inner page with the book title followed by the copyright page and in my case an 'Other Books' page and Glossary page. This is then followed by the Introduction page.

Just remember that you are laying out your book or novel exactly as a printed book would be, so have a look at a few men's books that you might have lying around and see how they are formatted - or you can use my layout,

which I'll include at the end of this book.

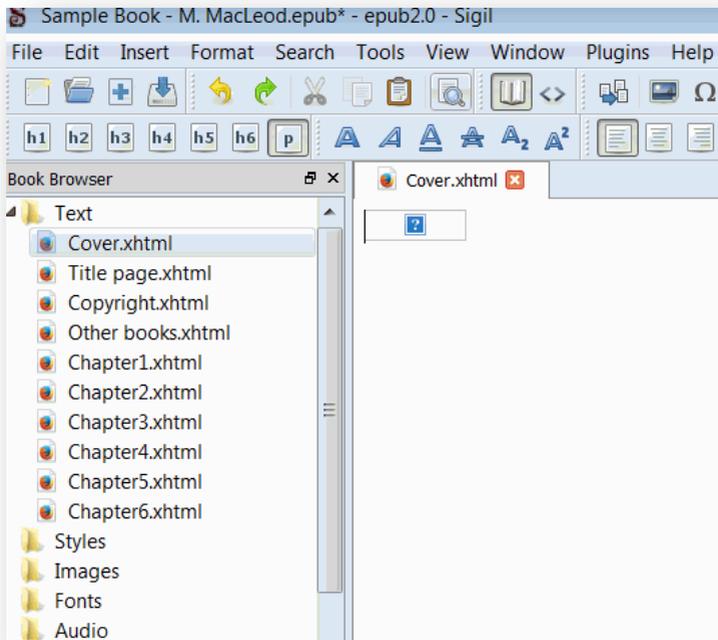
Okay, let's do some formatting. Right click the file: **Section0001.xhtml** and rename it to '**Cover**'. Right click on it again and select '**Add semantics**'. Choose '**Cover**' from the drop down box and then select '**Ok**', or you could simply double click the word '**Cover**'.

Right click on the file '**Cover**' again and select '**Add Blank HTML File**'.

Notice that **Sigil** has added '**Section0001.xhtml**' again. You can also add blank pages by clicking the '**Split at cursor**' icon on the top icon bar, the one with a blue arrow pointing to the right (it is under the word '**Plugins**'). This feature is also very handy if you have pasted a large chunk of text into a chapter and then decide to split it into smaller chapters. Just place the cursor at the text you want to split and hit the '**Split at cursor**' icon. The new **.xhtml** file appears in the left hand pane below the current chapter.

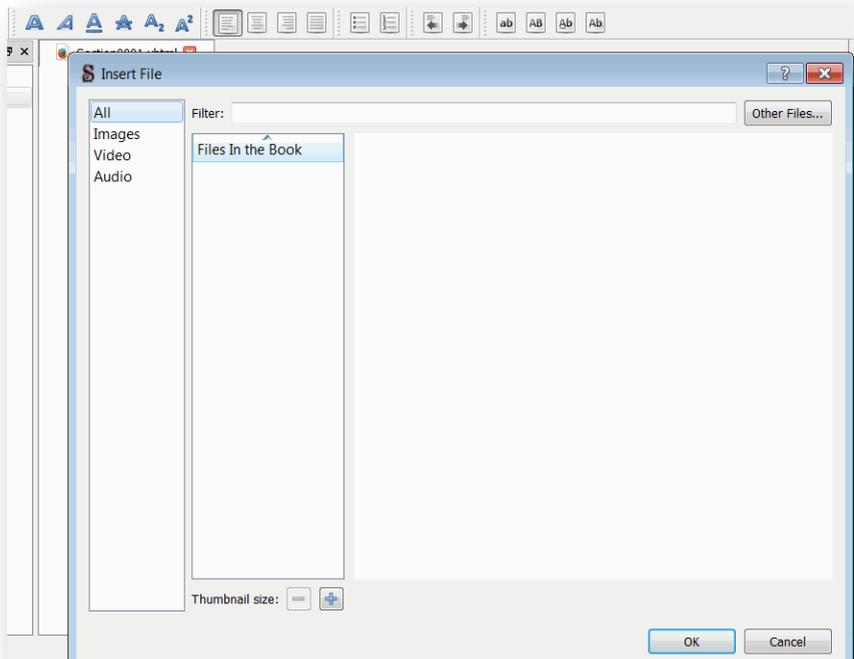
Repeat this procedure for as many times as there are chapters in your

book. Note that each file is numbered sequentially, with the next one being: **'Section002.xhtml'** and so on. Repeat the process of renaming them, by right clicking each file and naming it according to the layout of your book, as you might not necessarily be writing the same type of book as me. Again, right click each file and select **'Add semantics'** and choose the appropriate category for the type of file you are creating. For the **Chapters** pages, use **'Text'** as the option.



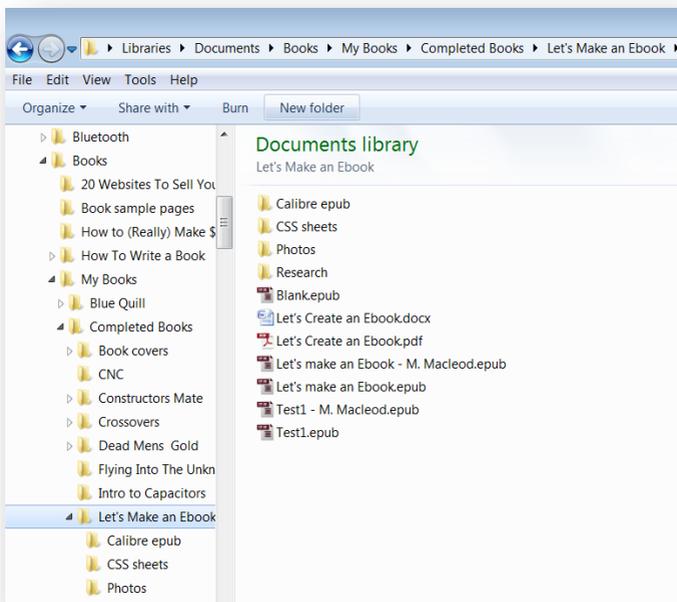
Double click the file '**Cover**' in the left hand pane to highlight it. Notice that the centre pane now has the heading '**Cover.xhtml**' at the top and there is a blinking cursor in the blank section below it - this is where your cover photo will go.

Select the **Picture** icon at the top of the screen or select **Insert/File**. The following screen opens: '**Insert File**' .



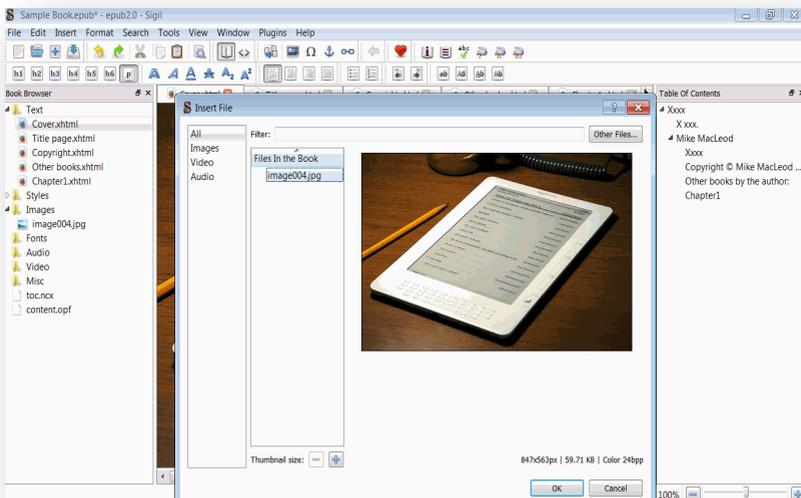
Select '**Other files**' on the right and then navigate to where your cover photo is stored. Mine was 406 x 576 pixels. It'll take some experimenting to get it the right size when viewed in Adobe Digital Editions or similar readers. I usually save the cover photo in several different sizes and try each till it looks right.

I usually have a separate folder on my laptop for each book that I write, which then has subfolders for things like photos, research and all the



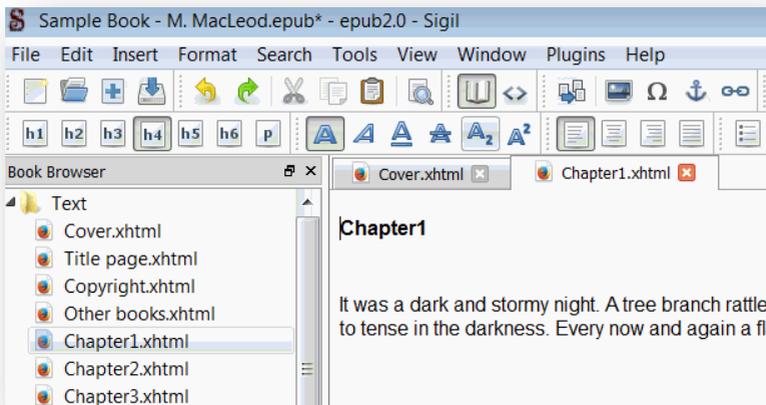
stuff that usually goes with writing a book, it just makes life easier. Select your photo and click 'Ok'. Your photo has now been added to the centre screen. Also note that the 'Images' folder in the left hand pane has a drop down arrow next to it. Click on this and you will see that your photo now resides in **Sigils** image folder.

Click on the **Photo** icon at the top of the screen again and you will also see that your photo is listed in the drop down screen and is where all your photos will be stored.



If you change or edit your photo, you will have to delete it from **Sigil**, then reload the new one, as we did above. Any unused photos in **Sigil** must be deleted, as they will give errors when doing a validation check. You can also imbed audio and video files in **Sigil**, but so far I have never tried this, as copyright might exist and becomes a minefield of legalities later on.

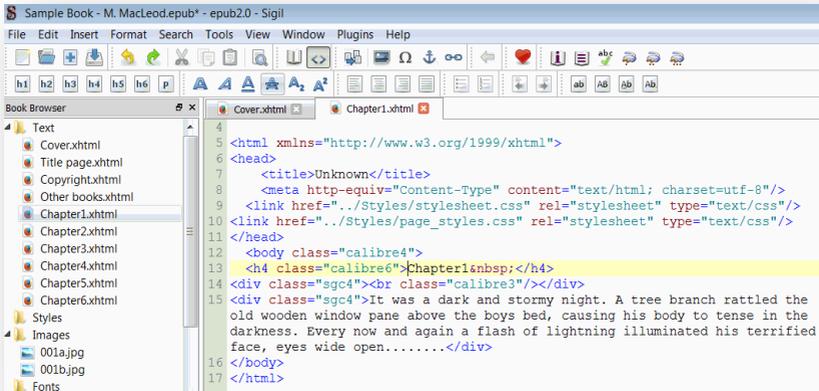
It would pay to save your project around about now - you don't want to lose all this hard work now, do you!? Select '**Save As**' and choose a name,



which is usually the same name as the book's title. Notice that **Sigil** has given it an **.epub** extension. For future saves, use the blue downwards pointing arrow, the fourth icon from the left at the top of the page.

Some hints. Anytime you double click a folder, file or image in the left hand pane, it will be opened in the centre screen, with a tab showing its name and an option to close it - the little X in the red square to the right of the file name - see screen shot above, showing several tabs.

Also on the screen shot above, you will see an open book icon that is currently selected - this is the Book normal view. Next to this icon is one with greater than/less than arrows <> in it, this is the '**Code View**' selector. Click on it now and the centre pane turns the page to coding view, showing the current formatting - see below.

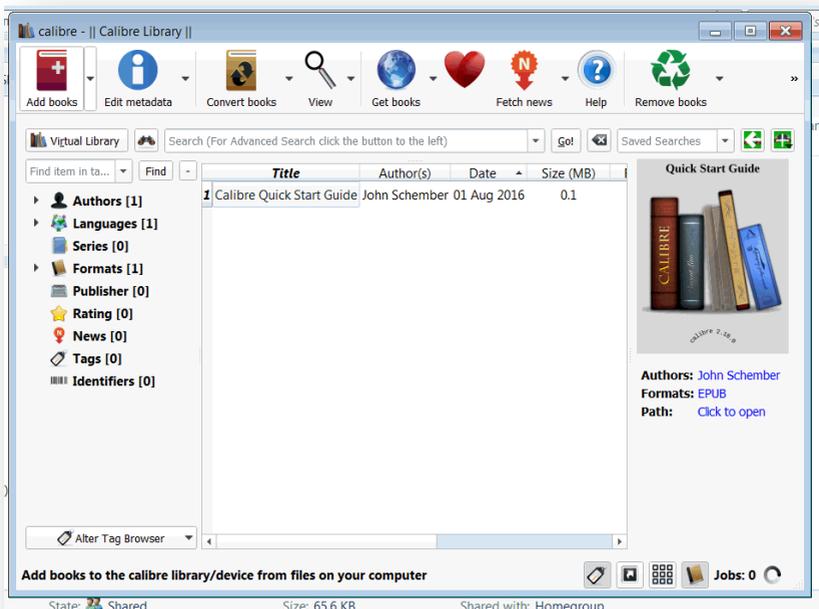


Just like any word processor, you can make text **Bold**, *Italic*, increase or decrease the detent spacing as well as a host of other features and is something that you will have to play around with to get the feel for laying out text. Don't forget to use the **Sigil** help manual, as well as **Google** to further your knowledge, as it is beyond the scope of this book to go into any detail on this subject. Besides, you might format your manuscript totally different to mine, so don't be afraid to play around.

Chapter 4

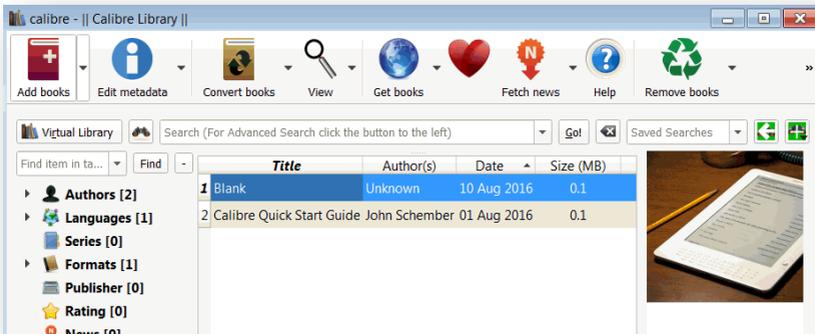
Time to create our CSS files and we'll use **Calibre** to do it.

Hopefully you have already installed **Calibre**, if not, do so now. Save and close your ePub book in **Sigil**. Run **Calibre** (it might take a few moments to open). You will see that **Calibre** already has a book in its editor page, the Quick Start Guide. Double



clicking on it will open the book in **Calibre's** epub viewer. You might want to go through it at some stage but close it for now.

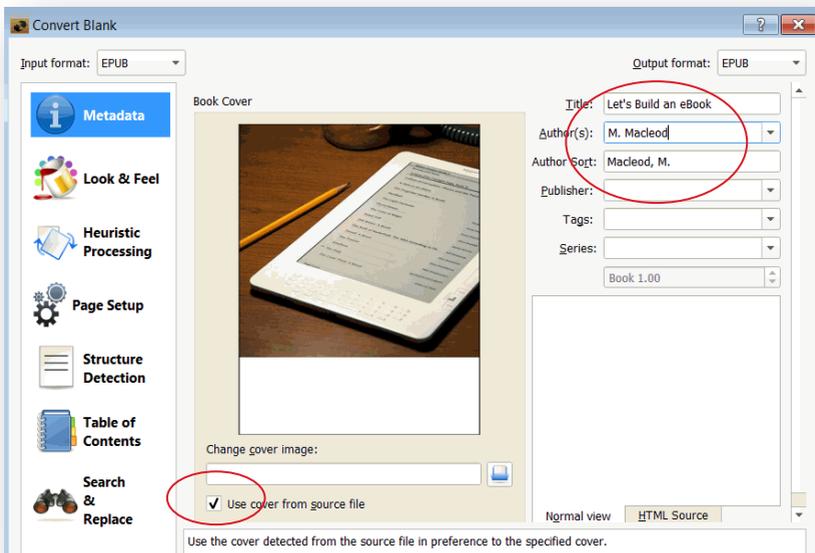
In Windows Explorer, open the folder containing your epub file and with **Calibre** visible, drag the file onto **Calibre's** text editor, or you can click **Add Books** and navigate to where it is saved to. The program will read the contents of the file and display it as the first title in the editor, in my example, called **Blank**.



The following procedure will install the CSS files into the ePub document. We will also set a few parameters that will help **Sigil** provide a cleaner output. By the way, if you

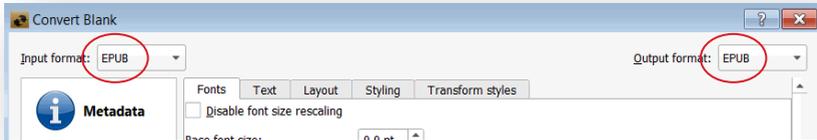
have your own CSS files, you can install them by right clicking on the **'Styles'** folder in **Sigil** and then selecting **'Add Existing'** files and follow the prompts.

Next, let us click the **'Convert Books'** icon at the top of the screen. The following screen opens:



Meta data contains the details of a book and is used by publishers to catalogue your book. It consists of the book title, authors name, language etc.

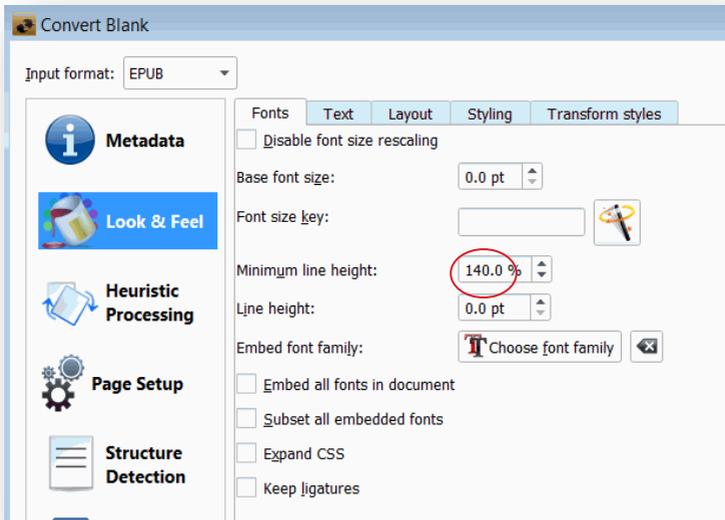
The **Metadata** tab in the left pane is highlighted blue. At the very top left and right corners of this screen are two boxes showing '**Input format**'



and '**Output format**' respectively. Make sure they both have **Epub** showing for now. Later on you may wish to change the output one to any of the formats listed in the drop down menu.

Change the title of the book if it is not showing the correct name and add or edit the '**Author(s):**' text box as necessary. The box below it will automatically reflect that info. Place a tick in the box next to '**Use cover from source file**'

Next, select '**Look & Feel**' in the left hand pane. The '**Fonts**' tab on the right will be open. Change '**Minimum line height**' to 140% and leave everything else as is.

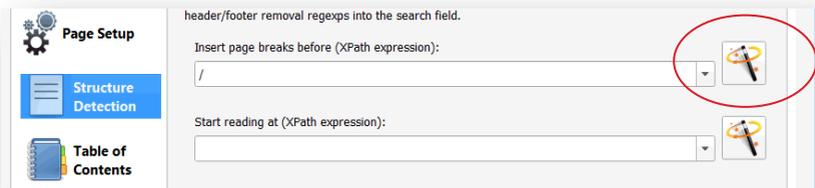


Select the '**Layout**' tab on the right. Tick the '**Remove spacing between paragraphs**' box and leave everything else as is.

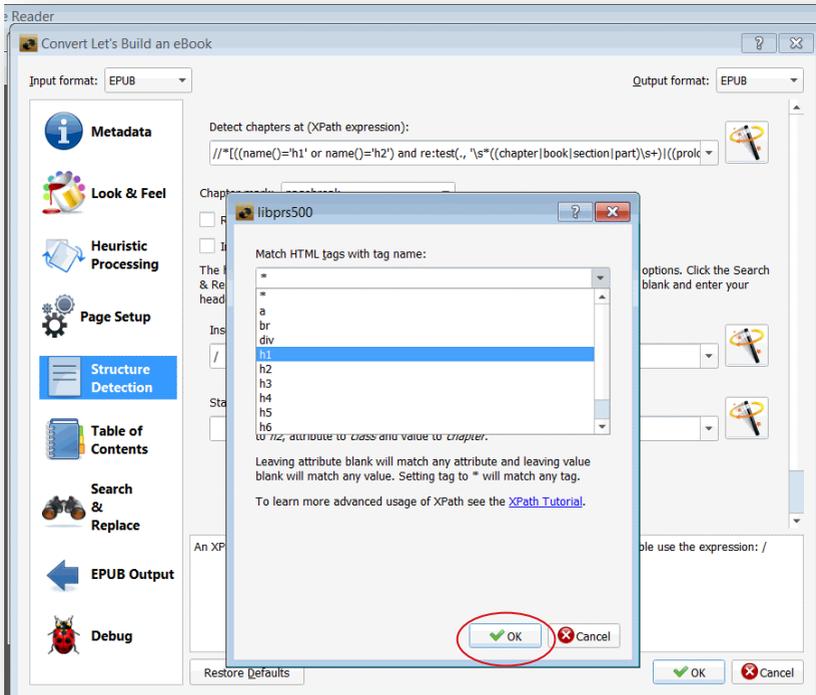


So far so good, let us continue.

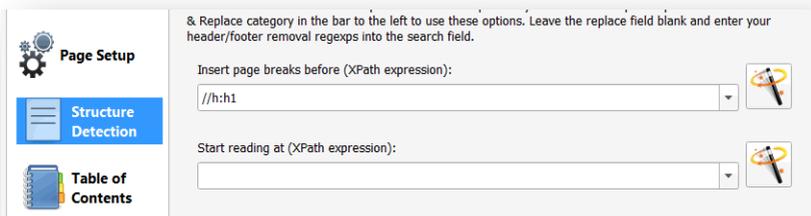
Select '**Structure Detection**' on the left. You will see several text boxes with a magic wand icon to the right of them. Click on the wand next to '**Insert page breaks before (XPath expression):**' - the one with the forward slash '/' in it.



In the drop down menu, select the down arrow next to the first row text box containing an '*****'. Select '**H1**' from that drop down menu and click on '**OK**' .



Your screen should now look like this:

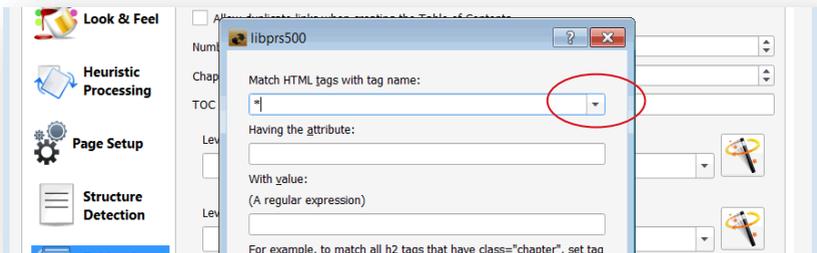


and contain `'//h:h1'` in the text box.

Now select **'Table of contents'** in the left hand pane. Again, you have a page with magic wands next to the text boxes, select the wand next to **'Level 1 TOC (XPath expression):'** - (the fourth row).



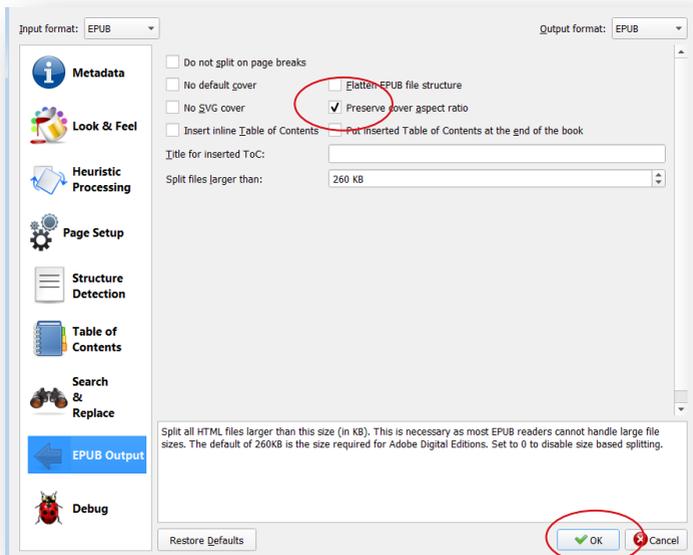
Select **'H1'** in the first row text box with the **'*'** in it and click **'OK'**.



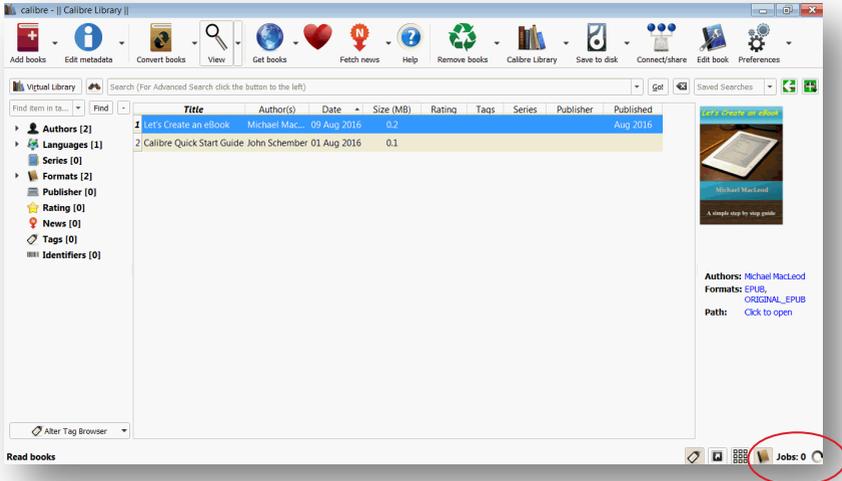
Your page should look like this and contain `'//h:h1'` in the fourth row text box:



Select **'Epub Output'** on the left. Put a tick in **'Preserve cover aspect ratio'**, then click **'OK'** at the bottom right of the screen.



If you look down to the bottom right of the screen, you will see '**Jobs1**' and a rotating arrow, indicating that the file is being created. When the

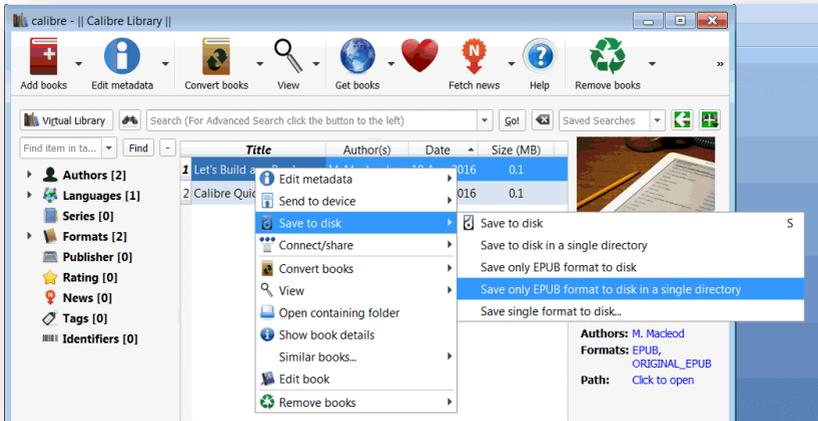


operation is complete, the arrow will have stopped and '**Jobs 0**' will show.

We're nearly there, so please be patient. **Calibre** has now returned to its main screen with our eBook listed as number 1.

Right click on the books title and select '**Save to disc**' and then choose '**Save only ePub format to disk in a**

single directory' from the sub menu that opens (fourth row down).

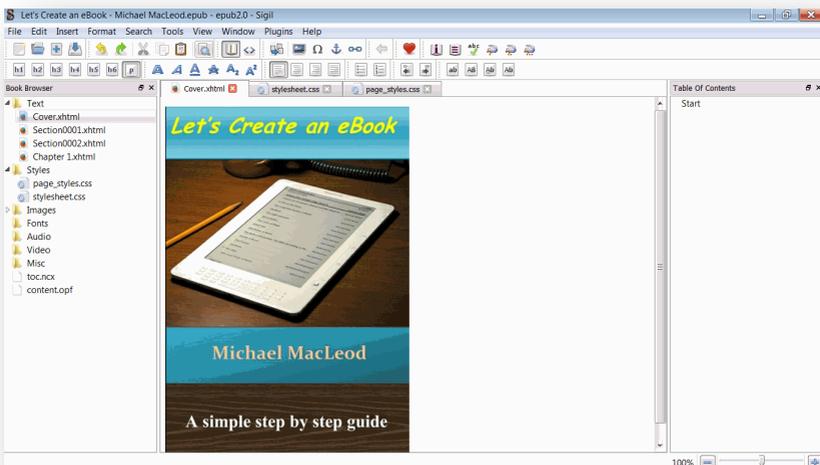


A menu opens, asking for a folder to save the download into. Create a new folder called **Calibre Epub** in your books folder. Highlight this new folder and then click on '**Select folder**' whereupon it will save the new files to this directory. This folder now automatically opens, showing the new epub file and a few others including your cover photo. This is now your new eBook with an **.epub** extension. Note its new name, then copy it and go back to your

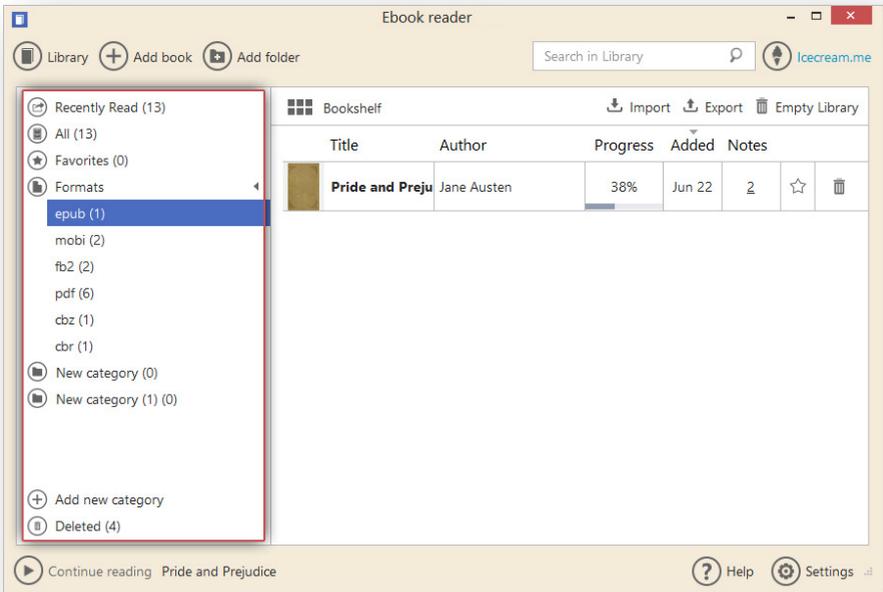
original folder in Windows Explorer where you created the first epub file. Paste your new file and either keep or delete the old one.

If you want, you may rename this new file. Right click on the new file and select '**Open with**' and choose **Sigil**. It now opens showing the **CSS** files under the **Styles folder**. Continue editing or adding text or photos to your book, remembering to save your work every now and again.

Calibre may have added a new cover page called '**titlepage.xhtml**'. If so, highlight it in the left hand pane, then right click and delete it. Save your work.



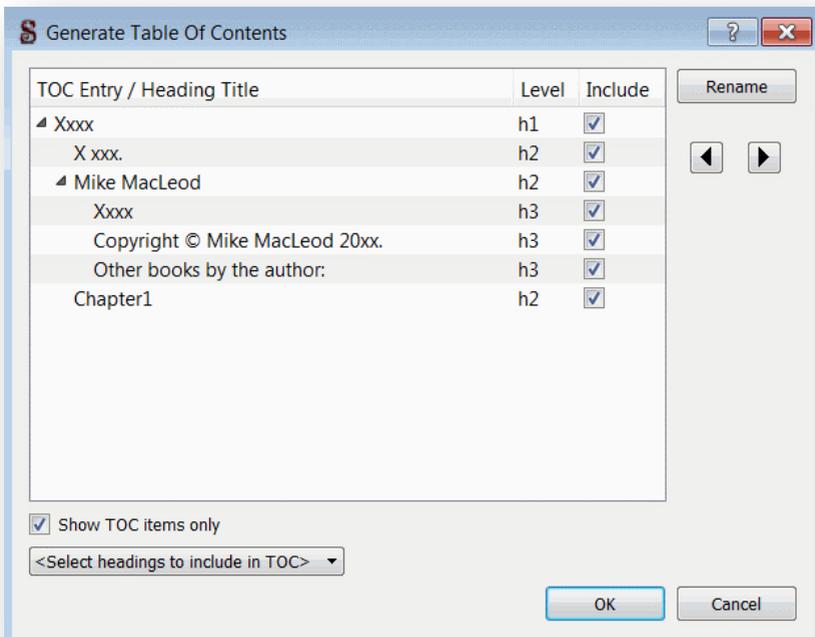
I use Icecream Ebook Reader as my eBook launcher and library to preview my books with.



Chapter 5

There is still some work to be done but we are now into the final stretch, and all that remains is to create the **'Table of Contents'**.

If you click on the **'Generate Table of Contents'** icon at the top of the page (second to the right of the red heart), a drop down menu appears, showing you what your **TOC** looks like.



On the right hand side of the screen are two black arrows that will change the indent level of the highlighted Chapter heading and its value is shown under the heading entitled '**Level**'. If you select **H1** for a Chapter heading, it becomes the main heading and aligned to the left. Any heading below that not having the **H1** indent becomes a subheading of the one above and indents further in than the one above it. The main heading also gets a drop down arrow, which will show or hide the subheading in your books TOC.

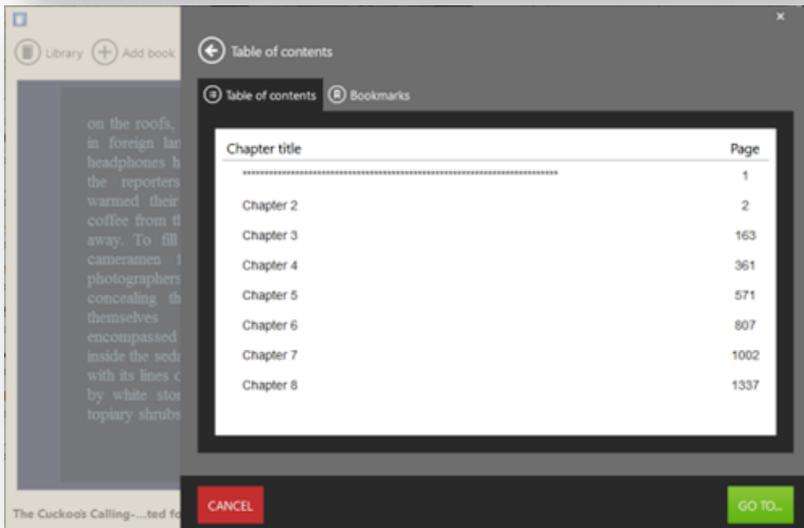
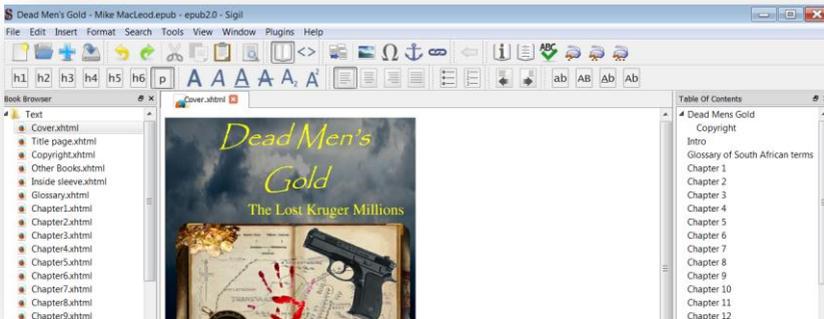
The heading marked '**Include**' allows you to select which page will appear in the TOC and un-checking a tick next to a heading will remove it from the TOC. If you un-check one by mistake, you can close the screen and re-click the TOC icon at the top of the page, which will then generate a new screen and a new TOC.

Closing this menu updates the TOC column on the right of the main screen. Save your work and test your epub file and see that it is behaving as you'd like.

Let's Create an eBook

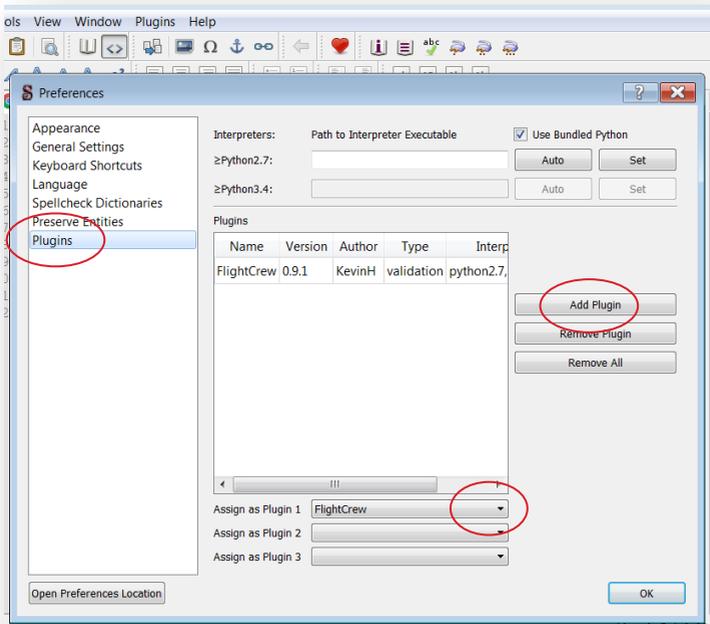
Mike MacLeod

Note: for the page to appear in the table of contents, it must have text on the page or at least the new chapter number. Here is a sample from one of my novels and how it looks in Icecream Ebook reader.



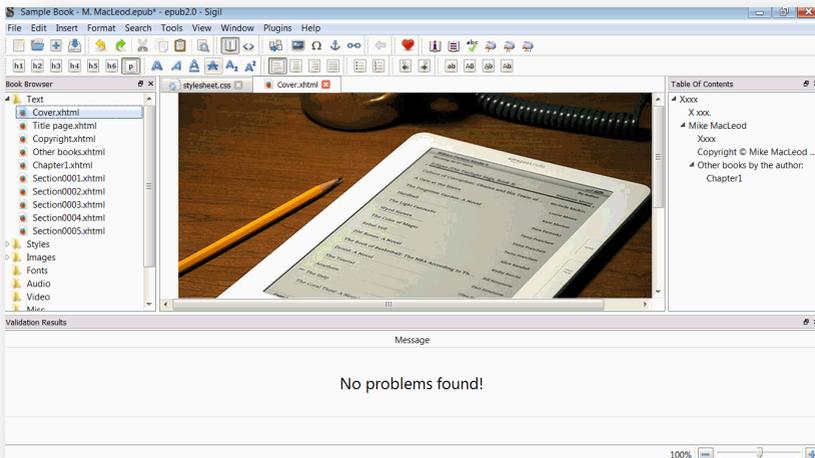
Chapter 6

There remains one more task ahead of us and that is to validate our book using the '**FlightCrew**' plug-in, but first we need to install it. Move the zip file that you downloaded via the web link, to the Sigil main folder residing in **C:Program Files/Sigil** - there is no need to unzip it. Go back into **Sigil** and select '**Plugins/Manage plugins**'



at the top of the screen. Select **'Plugins'** on the left side of the window that opens and then select **'Add Plugin'**, on the right. The next screen allows you to navigate to the **Sigil** folder where you copied the zip file to. Click on the zip file and it will be loaded into Sigil as shown above. You can also assign the **plugin** to one of the quick start icons on the toolbar menu at the top of **Sigil**, by selecting the drop down arrow next to **'Assign as Plugin 1'** - then click **'OK'**. You are returned to the editor.

Now click on the **'Plugin'** icon again



and select '**Validation/FlightCrew**' or select the first '**Run Plugin 1**' icon on the top right of the toolbar. This opens a task pane showing **FlightCrew** at work. When it has finished, the centre pane of the main page will split in half, with a report containing all the errors in the current document being shown in the lower half of the screen or, if we're lucky, '**No Problems Found**'.

Should it pass this test, you are ready to upload it to a hosting website, which in my case, is Smashwords. Should Smashwords decline the document due to errors, try running your ePub book through another program like **Pagina**, which might highlight other problems.

I hope that you find this book useful and may it start you off on a successful writing and eBook publishing career. Remember that Google is your best friend.

Mike MacLeod
2016.

Sample style sheet:

```
        margin: 1em 0
    }
.sgc {
    display: block;
    font-size: 2em;
    font-weight: bold;
    line-height: 1.4;
    text-align: center;
    margin: 0.67em 0
}
.sgc1 {
    border-bottom: 0;
    border-top: 0;
    display: block;
    line-height: 1.4;
    padding-bottom: 0;
    padding-top: 0;
    text-indent: 1.5em;
    margin: 0
}
.sgc2 {
    display: block;
    font-size: 1.41667em;
    font-weight: bold;
    line-height: 1.4;
    text-align: center;
    margin: 0.83em 0
}
.sgc3 {
    line-height: 1.4
}
.sgc4 {
    border-bottom: 0;
    border-top: 0;
    display: block;
```

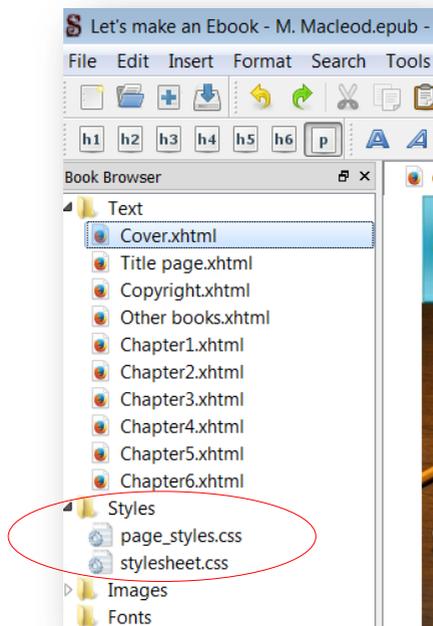
```
line-height: 1.4;
margin-bottom: 0;
margin-top: 0;
padding-bottom: 0;
padding-top: 0;
text-indent: 1.5em
}
```

Copy the text above and then open Notepad. Paste text into Notepad and then save file as: **stylesheet.css**. You can then import this file into Sigil by using the **Add Existing Files** by right clicking on the **Styles Folder** in the left pain.

Sample pages tyles sheet:

```
@page {
margin-bottom: 5pt;
margin-top: 5pt
}
```

Do the same for the above code and save as: **page_styles.css**. Add it to the Sigils **Style folder** as you did for the stylesheet above.



Sample pages:

Book Title

by

Authors Name

Title

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