



PCI Journal has Style


You've read a lot here about the peer-review process, but that's only a fraction of what we do at *PCI Journal*. There is a lot more that must happen after a paper is submitted, reviewed, accepted or rejected, and returned to authors for revision. Other aspects of our job include advertising, taking or procuring photos, writing, laying out papers, proofing, requesting copyright permissions, budgeting, technical editing, and more.

The first step after a paper has been accepted is editing. Editing is often a thankless job. The readers are our main customers, and they usually don't notice editing unless the editor misses something. Every word, number, punctuation mark, and design element is an opportunity for a mistake. That's about 500 words per page, and there are about 100 pages per issue of *PCI Journal*.

The best editing often isn't obvious. It's both an art and a science. There is an art to polishing a sentence, but there are grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style rules to follow. We get those rules from various sources, but the main source is a stylebook. At *PCI Journal*, we follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*. It is the guide of choice for technical publications, including those produced by the American Concrete Institute. The 1026-page *Chicago Manual of Style* has been published by the University of Chicago since 1906 and is on its 16th edition.

In addition, we have our own stylebook—based on the “ACI Style Manual,” *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*—that covers frequently used rules and items not discussed in the other guides. We also have a procedure to follow when an entry is not covered by any of the references we use. First, we search the internet for common usage. If that doesn't yield conclusive results, we talk to people in the specific field, if the topic is technical, to find out whether there is a common practice. Style guides are not based on personal preference. Every editorial change has a reason behind it.

Consistency is an important aspect of style, especially in a technical publication. Its role in making a paper more readable should not be discounted. Every deviation from a set style leads to a greater chance for error. The difference between a superscript zero or *o* and the degree symbol might not seem like much, but if improperly typeset, it could look like part of the number.

Authors are also our customers and can sometimes feel criticized by an editor's review. Editing is never a personal criticism of an author's writing skills so much as a tool to help the author convey his or her message in the most clear and concise manner. Editors want to work with writers to ensure that what makes it to print is organized and unambiguous. Because as the old Vidal Sassoon commercial says, “If you don't look good, we don't look good.” 

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