



Kobo™ Writing Life  
Content Conversion Guidelines

# Formatting In Action: eBook Evolution

*Let's prepare a document using an evolutionary approach. The book, in this case, is actually a short story called "Love Me Nostalgic", one I wrote many years ago. I'm going to begin by creating a plain document from this short story. I will publish it to my Kobo Touch eReader using the Kobo Writing Life portal and conversion tools.*

*The evolution of this eBook will follow with incremental changes. I'll add title and chapter formatting, sections, images, and book cover artwork. At every step, I will save the document, convert it, upload it, provide a screenshot, then move on.*

*By the end of this document, you'll have all the tools necessary to do the same. Formatting your book or short story for the eBook reader marketplace will no longer be a mystery.*

---

## THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU NEED TO KNOW

---

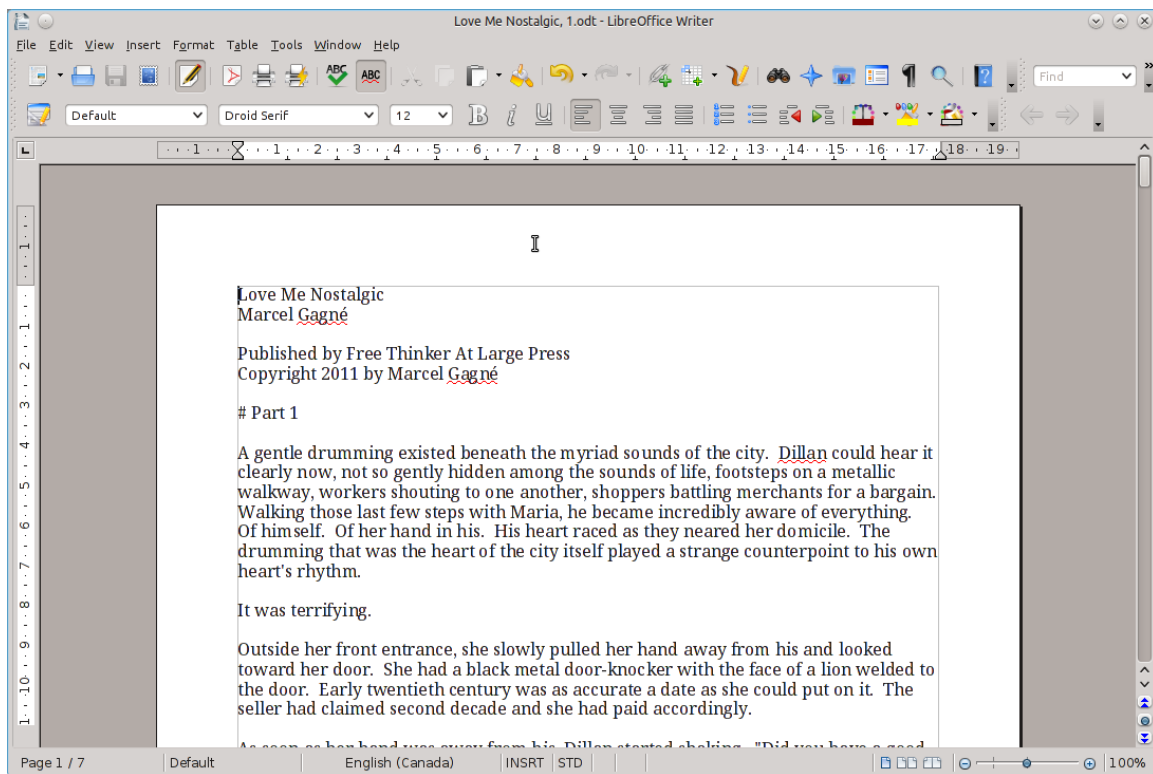
*Okay, now that I have your attention, here is the single most important thing to know when creating an eBook. Keep it as simple as you know how.*

*If you are using OpenOffice, start with a document formatted entirely using the Default paragraph style. Of you are using Microsoft word, it's called Normal. We'll get fancy later, but only so fancy. Feel free to use italics and bolding in your text.*

*Remember, eBook readers are about text, not trying to do weird and wonderful things. Clean text with simple formatting will win you more accolades than any attempt to produce an electronic version of a coffee table book.*

*Think simple as you work your way through this. You'll thank me later.*

*My initial document, seen in LibreOffice Writer, looks like this (se Figure 1).*



*Figure 1: The plain document in LibreOffice Writer.*

*When you see an image, as above, it has likely been resized to fit the article dimensions.*

*It's pretty basic in terms of layout with blank lines separating paragraphs. Before we start looking at doing any kind of formatting, let's turn this document into an eBook file suitable for a Kobo eReader, an industry standard epub file.*


---

## CONVERSION AHoy!


---

*Okay, let's get back to the conversion. When you're creating a new eBook you add your eBook content in the "Add eBook content" step. Upload your file and wait a few minutes. The conversion itself only takes a few seconds (it may take a couple of minutes for a large document).*

Upload your eBook content




Supported file types: .epub, .doc, .docx, .mobi, .odt

 **Converting content...**  
You can move on to another step and come back later to check on the status.


*If your file is already in the epub format when you upload it, you're done!*

Upload your eBook content

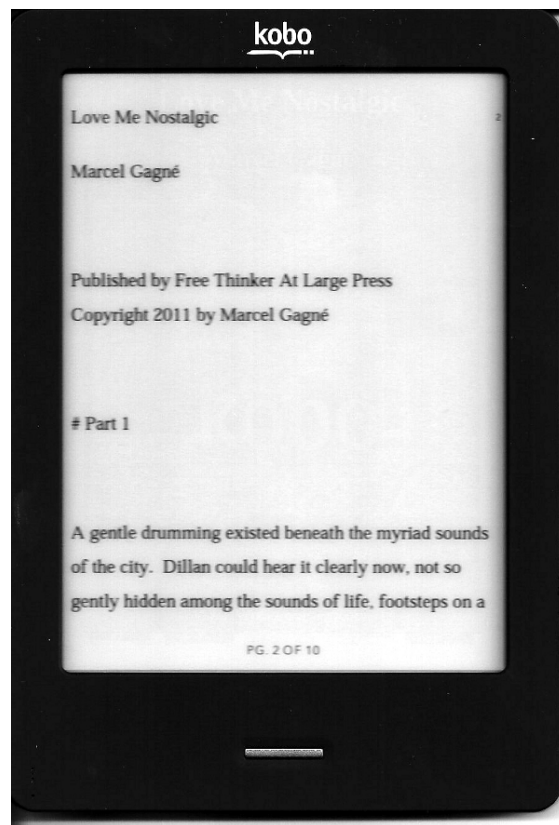


Supported file types: .epub, .doc, .docx, .mobi, .odt

Last updated: Mon Jun 4 12:24:37 2012

 **Done!**  
*Download and preview the eBook.*

*Once converted, the plain eBook looks like this (see Figure 2).*

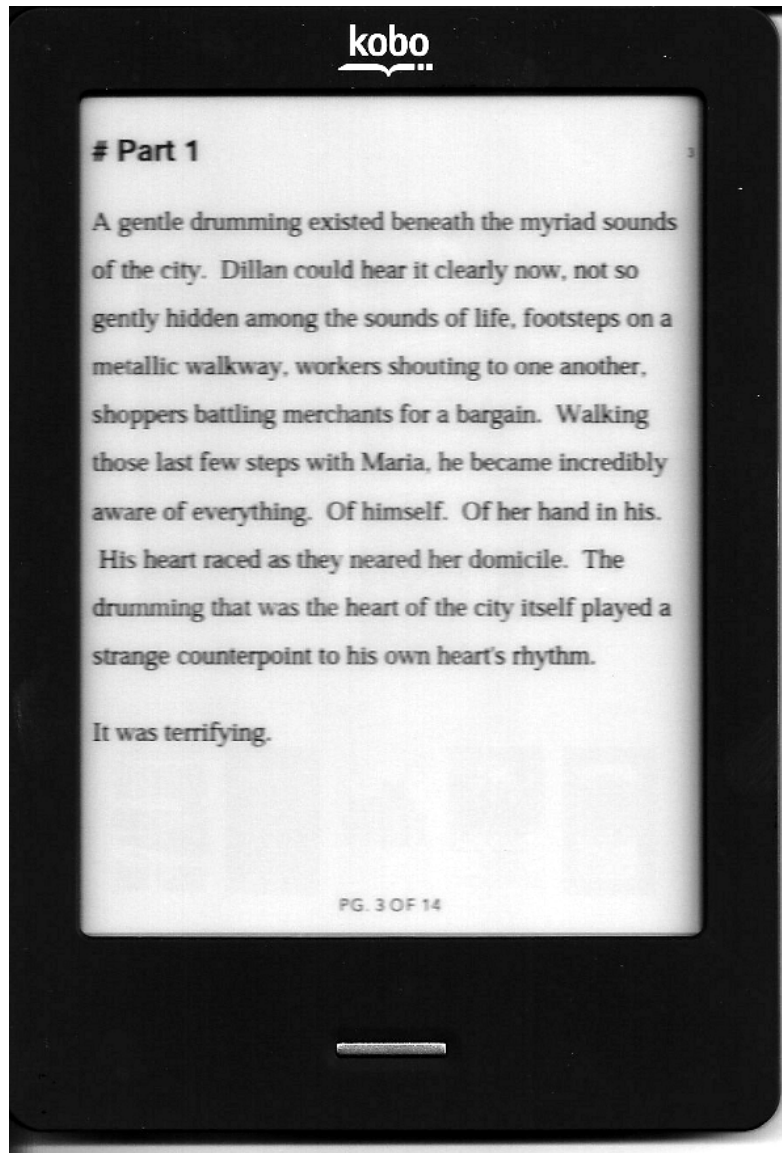


*Figure 2 : Plain eBook with no formatting to speak of.*

*There are some interesting things to note here. For starters, my hard returns are translated as a space between paragraph. Where I had a blank line between paragraphs (e.g. between the Copyright and the # Part 1) there are now two blank lines. This is the first lesson of formatting an eBook. Carriage returns are treated as paragraph breaks so don't put the in unless you want the extra space. If you've got blank lines between your paragraphs, get rid of them.*

*But what if you want to a line break or without a paragraph space? That's easy. Instead of pressing Enter at the end of a line, hold down the Shift key and press Enter (Shift+Enter). That gives you a line feed without a paragraph break.*

*The single most important format after default or plain is Heading 1, and maybe Heading 2. My short story is broken up into four parts which I call, coincidentally, Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, and Part 4. In each case I'm going to apply the Heading 1 tag. I save the document and re-upload my file in the “Add eBook content” step once more. The result appears in Figure 3.*



*Figure 3 : The Heading 1 tag as applied to my Part 1 section.*

*All those parts could just as easily have been chapter headings. An added bonus of applying the Heading 1 formatting is that the conversion automatically*

creates a table of contents. So, when navigating to Contents, we see our four parts (or chapters) as in Figure 3.

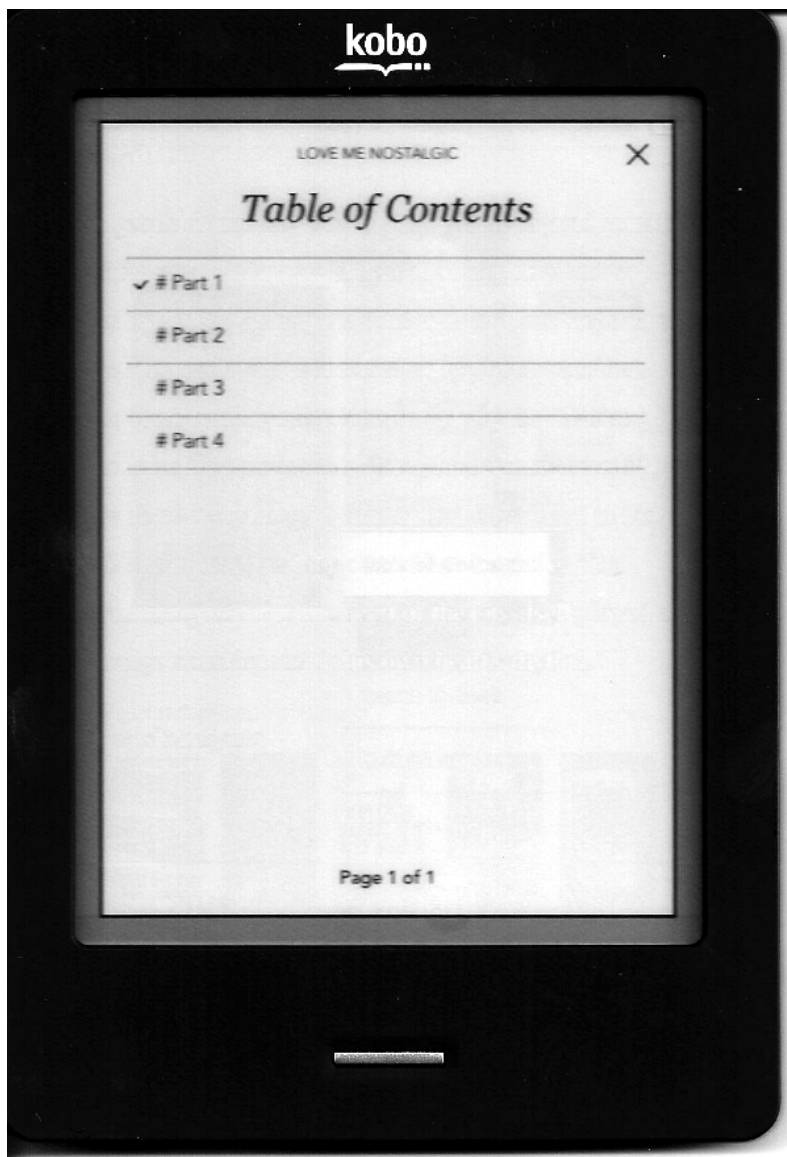
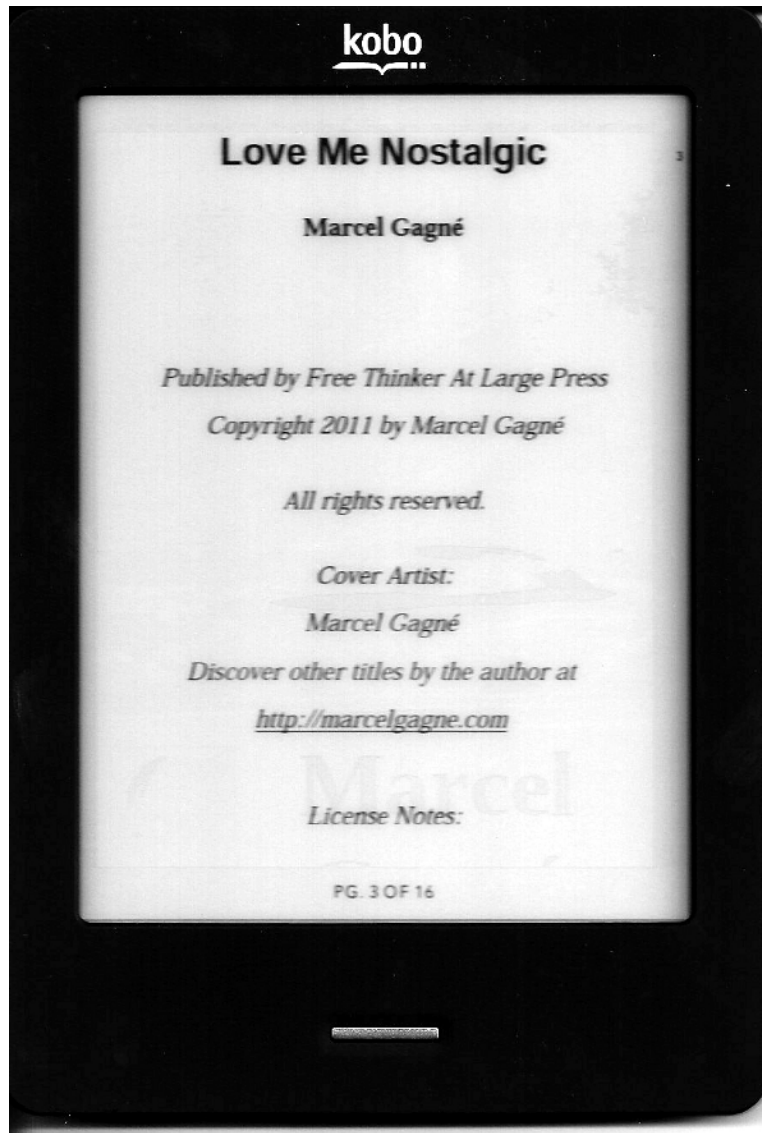


Figure 3 : The table of contents is automatically generated.

Now let's go back and take a look at the title and make it stand out a little more. The easiest way is probably to apply the Heading 1 formatting to the title; yes, Heading 1 will become your best friend. Then, select the front matter (title, author, copyright, etc) and center it. At the end of the last line, right before the story begins, add a page break (Ctrl+Enter). See Figure 4 for this one.



*Figure 4 : The title page with some basic formatting.*

*My title page is still a bit sparse so it might be a good time to consider what changes might be applied here.*

*If your eBook has an ISBN, include it here. Identify the edition of this particular work, especially if it is part of a series or an older work that has been redone. The title page is also a good place to identify the rights you are selling along with your eBook. This includes the license you are using to distribute the work.*



*Do you reserve all rights? Are people allowed to share the eBook? Are people allowed to make copies?*

*You might also include a Website address or some information about the publishing company that produced the book. Open up a paper book and see what's included there. Use your judgement.*

---

## COVER IMAGE

---

*The next step in our eBook beautification project is the addition of cover art. For this example, I created a cover using the GIMP, a free and open source software image editor, and some free artwork (in this case, distributed under a Creative Commons license).*

*I won't go into a discussion on the pluses and minuses of making your own covers. Hiring a good artist can be expensive though, a fact you need to consider as you evaluate the investment you put into your eBooks.*

*If you are creating your own images, keep in mind that the standard Kobo eReader has a 600 by 800 pixel screen. This is a good resolution to shoot for when designing your art.*

*To add a cover image, start by placing your cursor at the very top of the document, in the very first position. Press Ctrl+Enter to force a page break. The title and all text that follows will move down to the second and subsequent pages (see Figure 5).*

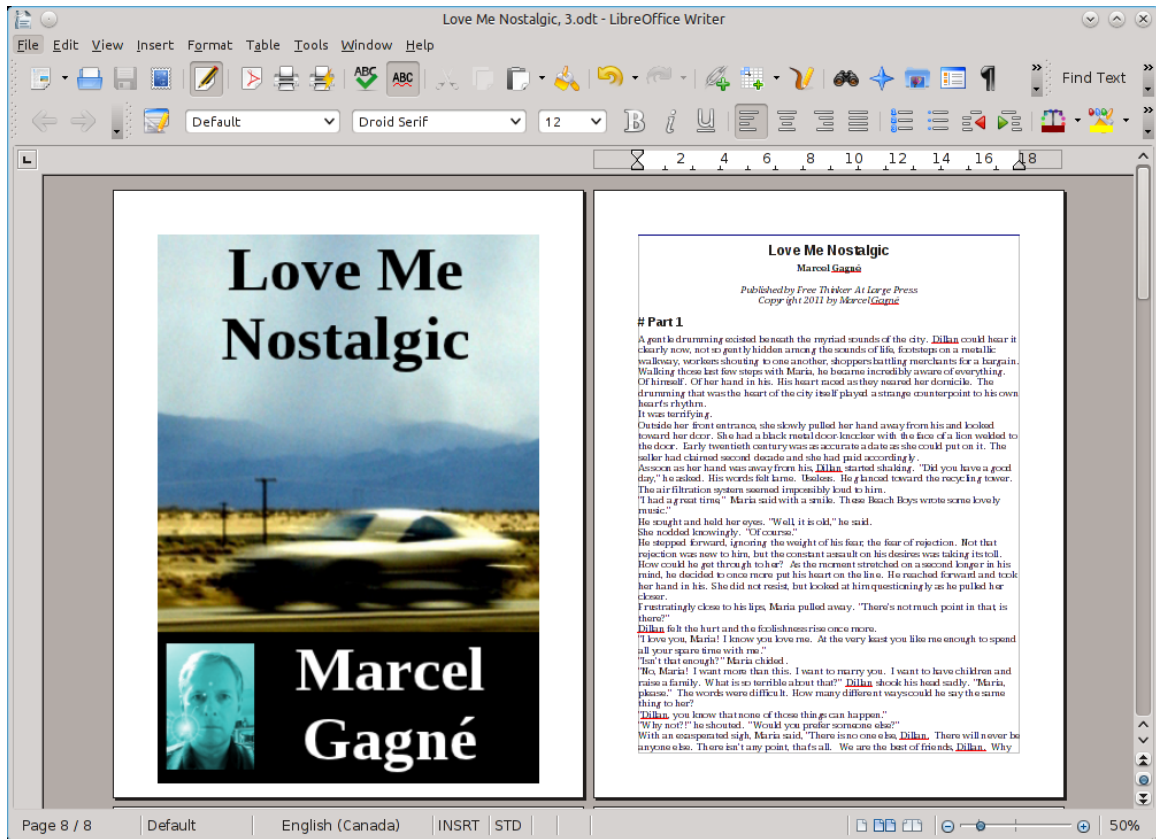
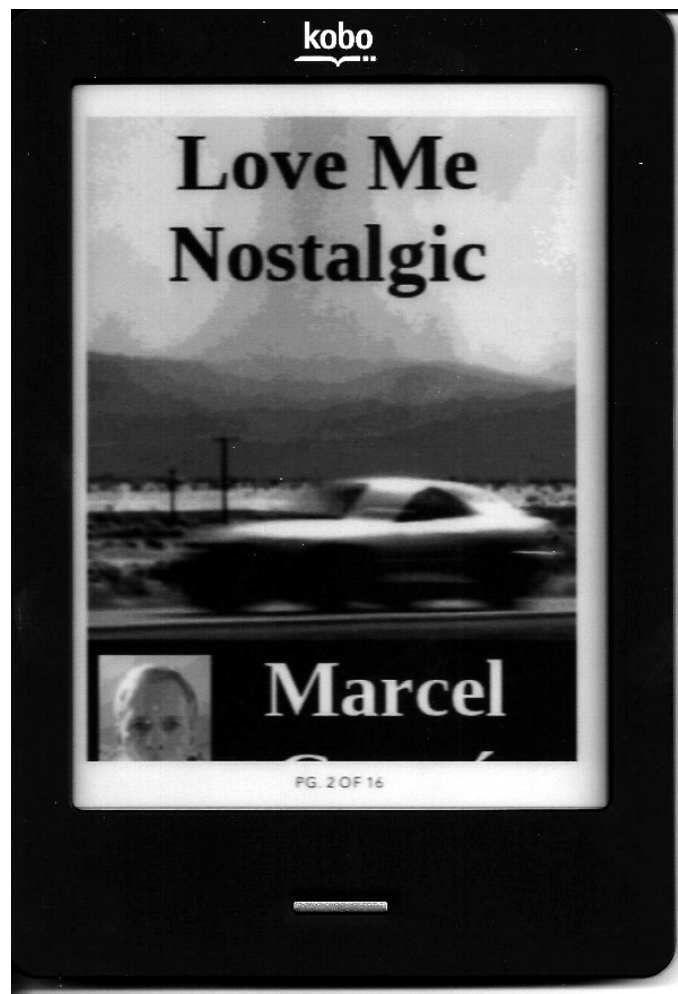


Figure 5 : Cover page inserted in my word processor.

As you can see, my artwork covers the entire page. The story itself begins on the following page.

*Let's upload and convert this latest version of the short story and look at it on the Kobo Touch (see Figure 6).*



*Figure 6 : My short story on the Kobo Touch eReader, with cover art in place.*

---

## ONWARD

---

*This is where I leave you, for now. This is by no means a complete guide to creating and formatting eBooks. What I hope I've achieved in these few short pages, is provide you with an understanding of the basics and how simple, subtle changes affect the final eBook product.*