The Basics: Newsletter Design

STEP ONE
Your Theme: Come up with a theme for the month.
Decide what you’d like to have for a quote or phrase, colors and graphics. Is there a holiday during the month? Is it the dog days of summer or the dreary, dark month of January? You can pick your colors based on the season — or not. Come up with a funny catch-phrase about having too much snow. How about that bountiful crop of zucchini? Be funny or serious. Use your creativity.

STEP TWO
Set-Up: The basics using Publisher and Photoshop Elements
We have the basic version of Publisher and also Photoshop Elements. They are not the full version, like that used by professionals, but it works great for setting up our monthly newsletter.

MARGINS: The first thing to think about are margins. It’s best to keep your text at 1/2” margins on all sides. This way, all of your information is on the page, no matter what printer you use.

TEXT BOX AND COLUMNS: Select “draw text box” and create a large text box that goes from the left to right hand margins. (Remember to keep a 1/2” margin on all sides.) Next, you can select the number of columns. It’s important to have columns, rather than type going all the way across the page. For best results, choose 3 or 4 columns.

SELECT FONT AND FONT SIZE: You’ll want to maximize the amount of copy that fits on one page but don’t get too carried away. Try and stick with type ranging from 10pt to 8pt. If you’re writing something for large print patrons, you’ll need to go with bigger type, like 12pt. Always be sure to select easy-to-read fonts. It also helps to break up copy with book titles and authors in bold print and descriptions in regular print.

BOOKSUMMARIES: Now that you’ve chosen the titles you want to feature in your newsletter, it’s time to copy and paste the summaries. Copy and pasting book summaries from Amazon is very convenient but summaries are also available online from your favorite book vendor or author sites. It’s easy to transfer the book summary from the internet to your newsletter layout. Simply highlight the text you want and “copy” it (control + c or right click and select “copy”). Return to your newsletter layout and place the cursor where you’d like the text. Next, “paste” it (control + v or right click and select “paste”) in your text box. Before you move on to the next book summary, you’ll need to edit the copy.

EDIT THE SUMMARY: Sadly, there is only so much room on a sheet of paper. The next step is to edit the book summary. Read through the summary and delete the fluff. The summary needs to be short and sweet but don’t remove too much. Leave enough to tell a bit of the story and build interest for your patrons. Done editing the summary? Now you can copy and paste another book summary in the text box. Paste text, edit text. Paste text, edit text. Paste text, edit text. You get the idea.

CREATING PLACE HOLDERS FOR BOOK COVERS: Want to add book covers along with the text? To start, create a rectangular shaped box. It will need to be small, like .7” tall by .5” wide. Once you have created a rectangle, drag it over to the first book on your list. You will notice the copy moves over to make room for the small box. That’s good. It means the box has “text wrap” and your copy will automatically make room for it. Now that you have one box in place, go ahead and “copy” it. When we “paste” it, another box will appear. Drag that box to the next book summary. Continue “pasting” and moving the boxes to desired locations.

PREPARING BOOK COVERS: Remember when we copied and pasted the book summaries? Well, we will do something similar for the book covers using the program Photoshop Elements. (Before we start copying book covers, we’ll need to add the image dimensions. Select the crop tool in Photoshop and input the measurements you want, such as: W = .5” and H = .7”). We can go back to your preferred website for book summaries and “copy” (control+c or right click and select “copy”) the book cover. Next, move on to Photoshop Elements and choose “new” (control + n) and then “paste” (control + v or right click and select “paste”) the book cover. The image should appear in a new window. Select the cropping tool (don’t forget to add your dimensions before cropping) and select the area you would like to crop. When it’s good, you can click on the green checkmark and the image will be cropped to the correct proportions. The last thing you’ll need to do is save this image as a JPEG.

PLACING BOOK COVERS IN NEWSLETTER: It’s time to add a book cover to the newsletter you’ve created in Publisher. Select the “place holder” you would like to fill. Click on “Shape Fill” and scroll down to the “picture” option. Next, select the book cover you’d like to add from the list of saved options. When you select the book cover, it will automatically appear in the “place holder” we added earlier. Repeat this process for adding each book cover.