

ANDREW ETTER

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# MODERN TECHNICAL WRITING

# ABOUT ME



# WHY WRITE A BOOK?

- ▶ Wiki page
- ▶ “Market research”
- ▶ Self-publishing
- ▶ Profit?

## TL;DR

- ▶ Learn
- ▶ Write in lightweight markup
- ▶ Treat like code
- ▶ Make static websites
- ▶ Repeat

# Modern Technical Writing

< An Introduction to  
Software Documentation >

Andrew Etter

# TL;DR

- ▶ Learn

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# THE AFTERMATH

## Best Sellers in Technical Writing Reference

1.



The Elements of Style,  
Fourth Edition

by William Strunk Jr.

★★★★☆ (2,431)

Paperback

\$4.68

1241 used & new from \$0.01

2.

kindleunlimited



Modern Technical Writing:  
An Introduc...

by Andrew Etter

★★★★☆ (14)

Kindle Edition

\$3.99

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY YOU DO HERE?**

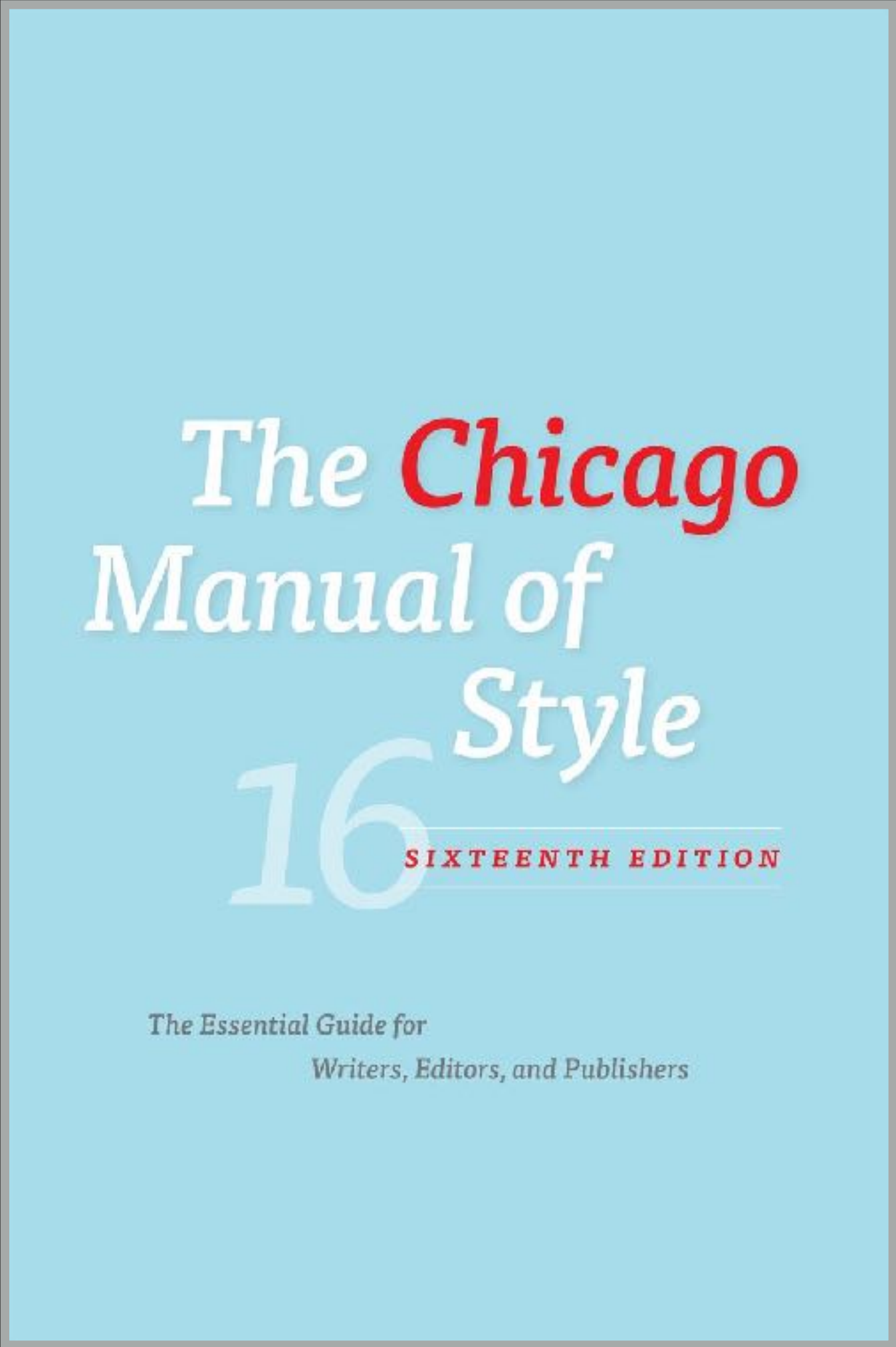
**BOB SLYDELL**

# “DIFFERENTIATED VALUE-ADD”

- ▶ Consistency
- ▶ Accountability
- ▶ Writing and curation
- ▶ Culture

# THE ACTUAL WRITING

- ▶ Second-person
- ▶ Present tense
- ▶ Plural helps avoid awkward gendered phrasings
- ▶ Arbitrary style decisions:  
I don't care

The image shows the front cover of the 16th edition of 'The Chicago Manual of Style'. The cover is a solid light blue color. The title 'The Chicago Manual of Style' is centered in the upper half, with 'The Chicago' in red and 'Manual of Style' in white. Below the title, the number '16' is written in a large, light blue font, and 'SIXTEENTH EDITION' is written in a smaller, red, all-caps font to its right. At the bottom of the cover, the subtitle 'The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers' is written in a small, white, sans-serif font.

*The Chicago*  
*Manual of*  
*Style*  
16 SIXTEENTH EDITION

*The Essential Guide for*  
*Writers, Editors, and Publishers*



# BENEFITS





**IF IT WON'T BE VALUABLE IN SIX MONTHS,  
WE SHOULDN'T BE WRITING IT.**

**ANDREW ETTER**

# PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

- ▶ Back-end > front-end
- ▶ 1.0 > 0.1
- ▶ Team size
- ▶ User base
- ▶ Analytics
- ▶ Don't forget "meta" projects

# THE TEAM



# THE OLD WAY

- ▶ Large team
- ▶ FrameMaker or Flare on Windows
- ▶ Binary or XML
- ▶ Bugs are like cold cases



# THE NEW WAY

- ▶ Smaller team
- ▶ Any editor, any OS
- ▶ Plain text
- ▶ More PRs than bugs
- ▶ Free

# LIGHTWEIGHT MARKUP

- ▶ A great way to make websites and simple e-books
- ▶ A half-decent way to make PDFs and complex e-books
- ▶ A terrible way to make magazines, pamphlets, or posters



# TOOLS

- ▶ Atom
- ▶ Terminal
- ▶ Chrome
- ▶ GitHub Desktop
- ▶ OneNote



## TOOLS (ALTERNATE)

- ▶ Notepad++
- ▶ Windows PowerShell
- ▶ Firefox
- ▶ SourceTree
- ▶ Evernote





# SCALE



# MIGRATING

- ▶ Pandoc
- ▶ Regex
- ▶ `git checkout -b migration`
- ▶ TOC, cross-references, variables, tables
- ▶ Prioritize aggressively
- ▶ Consultants exist



# THE PROBLEM WITH MARKDOWN

- ▶ Feature-limited
- ▶ Needs variables, includes, cross-references, conditional processing
- ▶ RST and AsciiDoc do these things already

# A SOLUTION WITHIN MARKDOWN?

- ▶ Use AsciiDoc or RST
- ▶ Improve AsciiDoc or RST
- ▶ Extend Markdown



**QUESTIONS?**

# IMAGE ATTRIBUTIONS

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