

INFORMAL GUIDE TO TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS

white paper-- a review or compilation of information on a single topic, usually issue-oriented (that is, there's a question out there that needs answering and the white paper compiles the background so that everyone is working off the same set of information). Often by a single author, but could be a committee effort. Could be any length that covers the topic, but usually 100 pages or fewer. These may be fairly informal--goal is usually not a "final" publication.

monograph-- usually defined either as (1) a manuscript on a single topic --or (less frequently)-- (2) a work by a single author. A famous monograph (fictional): Sherlock Holmes' analysis of types of cigar ash. Can be anywhere from pamphlet to book length.

guideline-- somebody's idea of best practices in an area. Almost a recipe or checklist or outline--all the things you should think about when dealing with Topic X. Not as formal as a standard and generally short and to-the-point.

committee report-- any written document that comes out of a committee (group-authored or group-approved) setting. Usually more formal than a white paper and usually has the goal of actually answering a question (instead of just compiling background information).

manual-- like a guideline, but much more detailed discussion of topics outlined in a guideline. Should be a sense that manual contains "expert" advice, not just someone's opinions.

standard-- should be a pretty rigorous presentation of things anyone dealing with Topic X should know, a consensus on best or required practices; might even carry the force of a legal requirement for working in a particular area.

NOTE: At ASCE (at least in Pubs), we do not use "white paper", "monograph", or "guideline" in any sort of formal way...though those words might be used in the title or subtitle of a document. (Note: usually I'd argue *against* using these words in a title...maybe in a subtitle.)

We do use "committee report", "manual" (or "state of the practice"), and "standard"--but as classes or types of documents. In other words, the *internal* ASCE definitions have to do with the level of peer review and approval processes and the level of production support for these documents. At ASCE:

"committee report" is a document generated by a committee--pretty much any length--that represents the research and opinions of that committee. Must be approved by ExCom (or equivalent). Must be presented to Pubs in "camera-ready" form.

"manual" is a document generated by a committee--usually at least 100 pages--that is compiled by a committee but goes through a peer review process that includes (at a minimum) review by 3 non-committee-member experts. Committee must either defend or revise manuscript based on reviewer recommendations. Must be approved by ExCom (or equivalent). Within Pubs, project must also be approved by Board Publications Committee. Manuscript is presented to Pubs as text files and original illustrations; Pubs provides copyediting and composition (as well as printing).

"standard" is a document generated by a committee that is peer-reviewed and revised and subjected to public ballot process and finally approved by CSAC. Manuscript is presented to Pubs as text files and original illustrations; Pubs provides copyediting and composition (as well as printing).