



Typewriters? Gone. Most documents are now produced on computers using word processing software. A non-typist (me) would struggle to produce a short, error-free letter without several false starts and wasting a lot of paper to get rid of spelling errors or to use better words or phrases.

It all took time and was quite frustrating. Occasionally an improvement would be abandoned because of the great effort that would be involved; the document would just have to do.

Several consequences arose, one being a mass of unbroken text that was difficult to read and re-locating one small part almost impossible as there was no 'picture' of the page in the readers mind – just a block of text.

Computers have potentially changed all that. Not the time to produce documents, but the quality of the finished article. Because corrections and adjustments are so easy to make, document often go through many stages of tweaking and improving. Paper is not being wasted, but time is not necessarily being saved.

The biggest change is that the appearance of the end product can be much better. It then becomes easier and more interesting to read and parts can be made more memorable by the introduction of elements that make an image in the mind of the reader. The reader, after all, is the important person here.

Mike J showed members the way Microsoft's latest edition of Word is set up and where to find the controls and little menus to get the typing done. He suggested that it would be a good idea to select fonts appropriate to the content of the document, but to restrict the variety to two or maximum three to avoid distraction. WordArt should be used sparingly to provide some interest.

Some discussion followed about the usefulness of displaying non-printing characters indicating where spaces and tabs are used. They also indicate a forced new line. Inserting a page break forces a new page to be started. This helps to prevent the subsequent pages being disturbed by alterations before the page-break.

Howard showed how to include graphics to help the reader form a mental image of the page. The graphic can be rotated and the surrounding text adjusted using the white space to provide a more readily remembered image of the page.

The programme comes with many prepared templates from which to choose, indicating where they are thought to be most useful. However, if you simply want, say, a personal headed notepaper, it is possible to create your own. Many people set out a letter that they like and save a copy. That can be used as a template by loading it; saving it immediately under a new document name then replacing the irrelevant content with new.

On greetings cards and posters text is part of the graphics.