The ATLANTIC INDEXER

Newsletter of the Mid- and South Atlantic Chapter of the American Society of Indexers

2007–2008 Officers

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Spring Program

WHICH PATH DID YOU FOLLOW? - UNDERSTANDING OUR INDEX DECISION MAKING

WHEN: Saturday, March 29th, 2008 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: BCC (Bethesda-Chevy Chase) Regional Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD

What happens when two experienced indexers write an index for the same book? A lot of useful information happens, that's what!

In a quest to better understand the process of creating an index, Kari Kells and Sherry Smith indexed Eben Fodor's *Bigger Not Better: How to Take Control of Urban Growth and Improve Your Community.* The result of this joint endeavor was the book *Inside Indexing* in which both indexers describes their indexing and decision-making processes. The March workshop, presented by Kells and Smith, is based on the principles outlined in their book and is designed for indexers who are familiar with indexing terms and have completed an indexing project. Practice indexes and course assignments do count!

This participatory workshop is based on the fascinating phenomenon that all indexes for the same text will differ. Without knowing who wrote what, workshop participants will explore the decisions apparent in each other's indexes.

Prior the workshop, Kari and Sherry will select anonymous examples from the submitted indexes that offer discussion opportunities. They will focus on the primary principles of indexing and how we handled them in the indexes: making decisions about readers; identifying the metatopic; analyzing the text; determining the appropriate level of detail; gathering scattered and similar information; remaining consistent with depth, structure, and wording; providing multiple access routes; and phrasing entries for brevity and usefulness.

About Our Speakers

Kari Kells began indexing in 1994. She has been teaching indexing since 1998 through many mediums, including the Graduate School of the USDA. Sherry Smith discovered the indexing profession as a third career in the mid 1990s. Since then, she has worked as a freelancer who specializes in scholarly books that cover a variety of subject areas. Both have served as Pacific-Northwest Chapter officers and committee coordinators and as ASI committee members.

Registration

Please register by February 22nd so you have plenty of time to complete your index and send it to our workshop leaders by March 10th. After registration, the assignment and guidelines will be sent to you.
To register, send the enclosed form with your check and lunch selection to: Becky Hornyak, 3618 Secret Grove Ct., Dumfries, VA 22025.

Registration includes lunch and refreshments for the day. Though we have not confirmed our caterer, we know lunch will be a sandwich or roll-up to include a choice of beef, turkey or vegetarian. Please indicate your selection on your registration.

Register	Before 2/22	After 2/22
ASI Members	$60.00	$70.00
Nonmembers	$90.00	$100.00

Directions – See enclosed form

Traveling?

Bethesda is easily accessible by public transportation. Traveling via Amtrak, you'll want to arrive at Union Station, Washington DC, and transfer to the Metro Red Line (keep right as you reach the main platform) for the Bethesda Station.

Three major airports serve the greater Washington DC metro area which includes Bethesda MD:

BWI – Baltimore-Washington Intl, Baltimore MD
IAD – Dulles Intl Airport, Herndon VA
DCA – National, Arlington VA

For ground transport information from these locations, consult the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority, www.wmata.com/riding/visitors/visitors.cfm. Shuttle bus and train transport is available from BWI. IAD has bus transport. DCA is Metro accessible.

Housing

Local members! If you have space in your home for a visiting ASI member, email Suzi Kaplan. Travelers, let us know if you're interested in staying in the home of a local MSA-ASI member or perhaps a local Bed & Breakfast.

No hotel arrangements have been made, but the hotels listed below are nearby. If you would like a roommate for your hotel stay, email Suzi Kaplan. Suzi will send each potential roommate a list of emails for others of the same sex/gender who are seeking a roommate for the workshop.

Residence Inn by Marriott (Suites) – 301-718-0200, 800-MARRIOTT, marriott.com/hotels/travel/wasbr-residence-inn-bethesda-downtown
Hyatt Hotel - 301-657-1234, 888-591-1234, bethesda.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels
Bethesda Inn - 301-656-9300, 800-323-7081, american-inn.com

Notes from the Chair

Some of you may recall that for the fall newsletter, I did a little playing around with a membership spreadsheet and had come up with some "facts" about our members. What I didn't know at that time was that those dates were only from when ASI started a member's database in 1988. Our chapter history dates back to 1978! So I shorted some people by 10 years.

Anyway, this got me to thinking that I really know VERY little about our chapter and its history and I would like to know more. I've already been in contact with some of the long-term members looking for information, but if anyone out there has a special memory of a meeting or get-together, especially from the early meetings, please contact me at vswope@keystoneindexing.com.

Please note: A short chapter business meeting will be held at the March workshop right after lunch at the BCC (Bethesda-Chevy Chase) Regional Services Center.

Membership Corner

IT'S TIME! JOIN ASI & THE MSA CHAPTER!!

Did you notice registration for the Kells and Smith indexing workshop is discounted for members of the American Society of Indexers? Discounts on fees for MSA-ASI workshops, seminars and other meetings are one benefit we offer fellow members of ASI. If you've been thinking about joining, take the time now to become a member! ASI annual dues follow a calendar year schedule, January through December and are currently $150 USD. Join online at www.asindexing.org and be sure to check 'New Member' on your workshop registration form. Membership in one chapter is included in your annual dues so don't forget to check the box for the Mid- and South-Atlantic Chapter (MSA-ASI)!

Welcome to our new members!

Rebecca Rudolph	Parsippany NJ
Julie Contakos	Cary NC
Janice Okita	Washington DC
Alexandra Fox	Arlington VA

Kevin Mulrooney	Newark DE
Rekesha Spellman	Chesapeake VA
Marian Styles	Charlottesville VA
Amy Whitfield	Cary NC
Christine Janecka	Cary NC
Carylyn Moser	Pittsburgh PA
Cassandra Harper	District Heights MD
Susan Coren	Annandale VA
Melissa Russell	Fleming Island FL
Gail S. Rayburn	Laurel MD
Dawn Clark-Atkins	Cocoa FL
Marc Deluca	Charlotte NC
Carol Bachman	Springfield VA

Did You Know . . . ?

The Atlantic Indexer is available either by mail or by online subscription. As a member benefit, everyone receives the print version in the mail unless you "opt-out." If you prefer to receive the newsletter electronically, please send a written notice by email to the newsletter editor.

Offshoring in the Publishing Industry   By Kate Mertes

In early September I was part of a panel on offshoring in publishing for the Washington Book Publishers, an association for people in the DC area who are involved in publishing. Members include printers, book packagers, publishers, and freelancers and employees engaged as editors, design and layout specialists, copyeditors, proofreaders, and indexers like you and me: check out www.washingtonbooks.org. Panel members included Nancy Lammers, Publishing Officer for World Bank; Carolyn Gleason, Director of Smithsonian Books, Byron Laws, VP of Sales for Aptara (formerly TechBooks), and yours truly. The panel was moderated by Joe Brinley of the Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

It's clear that offshoring of printing jobs is now mainstream practice. All of the panelists and most of the publishers represented at the meeting printed a large amount of their products overseas, mostly in China, Singapore, Italy, and India – particularly large print orders and four-color products. Enterprising professionals overseas are also working at providing design, layout, and copyediting and proofreading services. On the other hand, all the publishers present pointed out that many printing jobs, including those on a tight schedule and those with shorter runs, are more economical to print in the United States and will probably remain so. The quality of offshored printing had, for everyone, had its glitches up front, but time and patience had allowed for vast improvements in that quality. Offshore printing establishments may be learning on the publisher's dime, but they have proved to be fast learners, and their charges remain extremely competitive.

Overseas editorial services are another thing. While certain sorts of works do get proofed and copyedited offshore, especially technical manuals, issues of language and culture mean that the offshoring of large volumes of editorial work is just not likely. I pointed out that I had worked on several offshore indexing projects and none of them had resulted in successful large-scale transfers of indexing work. While I do know a few good offshore indexers in India and Singapore, their prices are not significantly lower than mine. In fact, I am now regularly contacted by book packagers in India and Singapore to take on indexing work for them – the offshoring has boomeranged back to me. Byron Laws talked amusingly about his experiences playing "Pictionary" in India and what it shows about bridging cultural divides over the river of a common language. Publishing has certainly become a global industry, but U.S. professionals still have a place on the map.

I really enjoyed meeting the WBP members, and have since joined the group and been to some other events. It's a really good way to meet local people in publishing, and in fact I've obtained several new clients as a result of my attendance. I encourage local ASI members to attend some WBP sessions and think about joining. Indexing too often is a last-minute thing for publishers; the more they know about us, the more likely they are to think about indexes as part of their work.

Upcoming Events

Round Table Indexer Brunch

WHEN: Monday, January 28, 2008
9:30AM – Noon

WHERE: Bethesda's Original Pancake House, 7700 Wisconsin Avenue

WHY? It's VERY Metro-accessible, so park your cars in those outer Metro lots or take a bus to those outer Metro stations and hop it to the Red Line's Bethesda Station. Take all the escalators you can find all the way up to the Wisconsin Avenue level, where you'll see the Hyatt Hotel. Walk north, away from the Hyatt, on Wisconsin to reach 7700. The restaurant is in an interior courtyard.

WHAT's on the agenda?
You!
- What do you need from MSA, ASI and your indexer peers?
- What do they need from you?

Reviews/Peers/Reviews
You've written an index, but you want a few more indexer-pro eyes to have a look before you submit it? Email an .rtf of your index file by Saturday, January 26 to Suzi Kaplan (suzik@keyindexing.com). Suzi will distribute your index to all who RSVP.

- You don't have an index to share just now, but you'd like the practice of an in-person peer review? Not to worry! We'll distribute – one or ours or one we've found – an index to all who will be attending. *So remember to RSVP!*
- You've written an index, but couldn't meet the January 26 deadline? Print 4-5 copies and bring them along. Time permitting, we'll wing a review together.

Those of us new to, or who could use a brush-up on, reviewing indexes may benefit from a look at "Peer Review: Discussion Options" of ASI's Pacific-Northwest Chapter at pnwasi.org/peerguidelines.html.

Book Discussion
OK, say no one's in the mood for a review this week or no one submitted, distributed or brought an index for review. No worries! It's the perfect time to get in a little professional practicum by reviewing some of the basic texts of our profession.

Pull this one off your bookshelf or zoom to your library for an interlibrary loan. Let's read and be ready to discuss Chapter 1 of Do Mi Stauber's, *Facing the Text* on January 28!

Wouldn't be your first choice? Be ready to tell us what your ideas are for readings we could discuss in future?

The restaurant doesn't accept reservations, so we'll be there early to grab our tables. Come early or late. Well, do let us know if you'll be really late. See you then!

Suzi Kaplan (1-28 only) 301.452.3419

More Upcoming Events

May 1–3, 2008   Denver, CO
2008 ASI 40th Annual Meeting
Warwick Hotel in Denver, Colorado.

Usability Report Update

The Mid- and South-Atlantic Chapter Usability Study may grind exceeding slow, but we hope it will eventually grind exceeding small, producing valuable data about how well users are able to interpret and take advantage of index features in order to find the information they seek. To that end, a small group of MSA-ASI members gathered at Kate Mertes's house in Alexandria, VA in early November. Vicki Swope brought some incredibly tasty goodies, including newly harvested local apples and a fantastic pumpkin cake roll.

Last year we worked on producing a "golden index" – an index as trouble-free as we can manage, using what we think are the best techniques for constructing a usable index. The "golden index," an edited version on an index for a Smithsonian publication on Native American costume called *Identity by Design,* is posted on the MSASI website. You can buy the book through the Smithsonian website or at Smithsonian bookstores, or on Amazon.com (accessible through ASIndexing.org). The exhibit on which the book is based is on an extended run at the National Museum of the American Museum (NMAI) and is really worth visiting. At several meetings and by email, quite a lot of indexers have commented on the index as it stands and made suggestions for tightening it up and making it as user-friendly as possible.

We've tested the index against indexers, but we haven't tested it with an actual user group of non-indexers yet. As we learned in earlier sessions, an index that looks great to us might exhibit unexpected problems in the field. Dick Evans told us, for instance, of a usability study he ran in which the physical layout of the index, in three narrow columns, caused all sorts of comprehension problems – very useful information, but it prevented the gathering of other information about index usability that he had hoped to study. Our aim for this meeting was to devise some questions we might use to do some initial index testing with a group of non-indexers.

Dick was unfortunately unable to attend the November meeting. However, Kate Mertes has been reading as much as she can about usability studies (a field mostly based on the testing of electronic products), especially Carol M. Barnum's book, *Usability Testing and Research,* recommended by Dick Evans. Kate filled the group in with what she had picked up.

Barnum suggests usability tests generally have the following characteristics:

- The goal is to improve the usability of a product. Each test should have specific goals and concerns that must be articulated when planning the test.

- The participants represent real users.

- The participants do real tasks.

- The testing team observes and records what users do and say.

- The team analyzes the data, diagnoses the problems, and recommends changes to fix these problems.

Barnum recommends having a test plan that defines the audience, the goals of the test, and possible concerns (such as whether users understand test terminology properly), as well as a step-by-step outline of the test process. She also suggests that, in order to correctly capture the audience, a screening questionnaire is a good idea. Test results can be seriously skewed if, for example, you are aiming to test people with a fairly sophisticated knowledge of books but wind up including people who generally don't read more than one book a year.

Barnum and many other usability specialists stress that one has to be aware of the Heisenberg problem: the actual process of testing can skew the results, because the test can clue users in to the answers you are looking for, can direct them in subtle ways, or can end up putting words in subjects' mouths, providing the very information you are trying to use the test to elicit.

Usability experts (including Iliana Kingsley, an ASI member who has given several talks about usability studies at national ASI meetings) recommend that researchers use a "talking method," asking participants to speak out loud their thought processes as they go about completing the tasks on the test. Ideally, one videotapes the testing process, as well as having the testing team take notes of what the subjects do.

With all these things in mind, here are some general questions the workshop participants came up with as possible test questions:

1. There is information in this book about specific things used to decorate the costumes. What can you find in the index that leads you to an explanation of an item used in this way?

2. Can you use the index to find a photo of an item used for decoration of costumes?

3. There's a picture of a red dress on the dust jacket of this book, with a caption on the back of the title page. Use the index to find out more information about this specific dress.

4. Read [the following text; useful chunks might be the bulk of material on p52 or p130]. What is it about? Where in the index would you expect to find it, and related information on the same topic, if you were trying to locate it again?

5. Find information about handbags in the index.

6. Find information about [a specific person] in the index.

Any suggestions for refining questions would be most gratefully received.

If you have contacts at a local library or other venue that you think would be a good place to find test subjects, please contact Kate Mertes at kmertes@hotmail.com.

Newsletter Name Change Contest Results

According to the informal vote taken in December, *The Atlantic Indexer* wins as our new newsletter name. *The Capital Indexer* was such a clever name, emphasizing the area where this chapter started and the goal of indexers to be excellent at what they do. However, the new name reflects the expansion of the chapter and the scope that our large member base now represents. Thanks to everyone who voted and congratulations to the member, who wishes to remain anonymous, for submitting the winning entry.

Sponsor the Newsletter

Sponsor an issue of this newsletter (donation of $100 requested) and we'll put your business card, poetry, birth certificate, handprint, whatever you'd like on the back cover. Your donation will help with the costs of printing and mailing The Atlantic Indexer. Can't budget funds to sponsor an issue? If you'd still like to help, please consider an online subscription to The Atlantic Indexer. You'll receive an e-mail notification when the latest issue is placed on the chapter web site instead of a printed version.

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