

# The Slice

A Potomac Indexing Newsletter

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 3, JULY 2011

## **PARTNER'S CORNER**

By Mary Coe

I recently travelled back to the U.S. to meet with my Potomac Indexing partners, visit family, and attend the American Society for Indexing (ASI) conference in Providence, Rhode Island.



It was great to see many of our associates in Providence, and I especially enjoyed meeting several of you in person for the

first time. While the Internet is a fantastic communication tool, it can't replace face-to-face interaction. I always come away from a conference feeling inspired about indexing and lucky to be working with such wonderful people.

I wore two hats at the conference this year — Potomac Indexing partner and also representative for the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI). I am a dual Australian-American citizen, working in both countries (as a Potomac Indexing partner in the U.S. and operating my own indexing business in Australia). In addition to ASI conferences, I regularly attend the biannual ANZSI conferences. The next one will be in Melbourne in September 2011 (<http://www.anzsi.org/site/2011Conference.asp>). I am always happy to see indexers from across the Pacific, so if you are at all interested in visiting Australia, this would be a great opportunity!

The ASI and ANZSI conferences this year have similar themes, highlighting current changes in the publishing industry — as well as seaside locations. The ASI conference was labelled "Providential Transformation" and the upcoming ANZSI conference is named "Indexing *see* Change" (the conference will be in held in the seaside Melbourne

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## **Ebook indexing**

By Glenda Browne

Change sometimes comes more slowly than we predict, but snowballs once it starts. This is the case with ebook publishing, where the proportion of ebooks to print books sold has grown rapidly over the last few years (<http://www.teleread.com/ebooks/survey-consumer-attitudes-to-ebook-reading>).

While many ebooks were published without indexes as publishers were unprepared to add them, there is now a window of opportunity for the promotion of manual indexing of ebooks through the use of embedded indexing techniques.

Many ebooks claim to have an index when all they do is reproduce the print index without links to the text. This, unfortunately, can lead people to say that ebook indexes are of limited value.

### **Locators**

Locators in ebook indexes should link to the relevant discussions in the text. Because ebook readers can show different amounts of text on the screen, print page numbers have lost some relevance. They may be replaced by ebook locator references (although these tend to be long and unwieldy) or by arbitrary numbers, e.g., cats Ch 5 [1], [2], Ch 7 [1] to refer to two discussions in Chapter 5 and one in Chapter 7.

Pierke Bosschier examined 19 "random" ebooks, and found that only two had fully functional indexes with links. One was *The Indexing Companion*, published by Cambridge University Press (Melbourne office) in 2007. CUP was a pioneer in the use of XML in book production. When they brought in their awkward CUP XML indexing approach many of us were critical, but in retrospect they showed foresight, meaning they are one of the few publishers optimally including indexes in ebooks. (They now have a system which is more efficient to implement.)

Although embedding the index is an extra cost, once the index has been em-

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## **EBooks**

By Jan Wright

The current situation of indexing in ebooks is not very usable. Most ebooks don't have indexes. The ones that exist are often without page numbers or any kind of active links, and do not help the readers. On some ereaders, it can take many steps to go to an index, find an entry, go to the text, find the entry in the text, decide that you need more information, return to the index, and start again. This is a combination of both hardware and software issues, and we can tackle the software issues by developing a standard that turns an index into a linked, active feature of an epub.

The index is a crucial piece of accessibility into non-fiction content, and should be incorporated into the standards as something separate and special, not as a chapter appended to the end of an epub. We have heard informal feedback that reading ebooks is fine for fiction, but for non-fiction, better navigation and better memory and recognition aids are needed to help readers place themselves in a linear stream of information, and be able to get back to that information and reread it. "A few pages back" or somewhere "in an earlier chapter" are very hard navigation puzzles onscreen.

Indexes provide pre-analysis of a text and should be linked and featured with search and navigation indicators as one of the main ways into a text. The index is a conversation with the reader and a helping hand to find concepts that can be lost without the right words to find them again. It can help provide access back into the text when skimming is difficult.

Examples of the critical assistance of the index are easily seen when you consider books such as the Grammar Girl's

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## **PARTNER'S CORNER**

By Mary Coe

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suburb of Brighton). I wrote a report on the ASI conference for the ANZSI newsletter, and I would like share some of it here for our associates and clients who were not able to travel to Providence. I will follow this up with a report on the ANZSI conference later on this year.

The ASI conference spanned four days, beginning Wednesday afternoon with a table talk session with the ASI Digital Trends Taskforce, followed by an international representatives meeting in the evening (unfortunately, I was not scheduled to arrive in Providence until Thursday evening and missed the international meeting). Optional workshops on Cindex, SKY, basic indexing principles, and taxonomy/thesaurus creation were offered on Thursday, and the conference proper kicked off that evening with chapter leaders/SIG leaders meetings, a new members/first-time attendees orientation and the welcome reception.

Friday's and Saturday's programs both started bright and early at 8 am with keynote speeches presented during breakfast. Thirty seminars were then packed into the two-day program, which often meant a choice of up to five sessions during any one time period. Seminars included topics as diverse as indexing history, Spanish language indexing, legal indexing, online help indexing, embedded indexing tools, work-family balance, ergonomics, and marketing. Lunch breaks included speeches from the Wilson Award winner and international updates. Friday finished with SIG meetings and the Wilson Award presentation. Saturday afternoon provided an optional trolley and walking tour of Providence. All in all, it was an exhausting but very informative conference!

Joshua Tallent of eBook Architects ([www.ebookarchitects.com](http://www.ebookarchitects.com)) was the first keynote speaker. Joshua noted that sales of ebooks are steadily increasing and that enhanced ebook readers are coming on to the market, such as Nook Color and Kobo eReader. Ebook applications, such as Bluefire Reader and Adobe Digital Editions, are also available for personal computers or mobile phones. Dynamic indexes are not included yet in many ebooks, but they will be needed as the range of material increases. In addition to his own conversion service, Joshua mentioned Sonar Bookends Activate, an automatic hypertext-link generator that can create links from an index in a PDF document. Joshua thinks that advocacy by indexers is important and that we should be actively campaigning for useful ebook indexes. I was interested to learn that Harlequin romances are the best sellers in the ebook market — unfortunately, no indexes needed though!

Erin McKean, founder of Wordnik.com, was the second keynote speaker. She was previously editor in chief for American Dictionaries at Oxford University Press. She noted the limitations of the print medium and the unlimited space in the digital dictionary. Instead of having to write very specific, limited entries for a word, which often don't capture all of the meanings or context, she can now create very complete, detailed entries that more accurately capture the "aboutness" of a word and its actual use in the language. If you have not yet visited [www.wordnik.com](http://www.wordnik.com), you may want to take a look. The "Word of the Day" feature is especially entertaining. I've learned a few new words there lately, including 'catawampus,' 'loppet,' and 'tulipomania' but haven't yet found a way to work them into conversation....

Many of the seminars reinforced the "brave-new-world" concept for indexers. In his Cloud Indexing seminar, Seth Maislin urged us all to "think outside the book box" and consider the many areas of the online world in which we could be indexing. He suggests that in the future, the content of books will be fragmented as digital pieces that can be reassembled in various combinations and that indexers will be more important than ever, as readers struggle to find what they want in a growing world of information. The ebook roundtable (Joshua Tallent, Stephen Ingle, Jan Wright) also suggested that indexers could be in demand as ebooks offer a vast dynamic "body of knowledge" that will present navigational challenges for readers. Indexers should perhaps think beyond the "static" world of print and consider how their skills can apply to ebooks and the digital world in general. Again, we were urged to be advocates for indexing and move beyond the "tyranny of the page." Taxonomy was also a buzzword for the conference. The legal indexing panel (Chuck Knapp, Lori Murphy, Joanne Rhoton, Mary Wendt) told us how they have had to "be nimble and able to

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## **Ebook Indexing**

By Glenda Browne

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bedded it can be re-used in different formats. For example, extracts of *The Indexing Companion* are online at Google Books. There are hyperlinks from the online index to the extracts that have been made available. The embedded indexing makes this possible with no extra indexing or linking work required.



In some cases publishers employ different people to create indexes and to embed them. This can be practical only for works with clear section divisions, e.g., legal loose leaf services that are indexed to paragraph numbers.

Interestingly, just as we have come to live with the loss of page numbers, Amazon has announced that they will be putting page numbers back into ebooks (<http://mashable.com/2011/02/07/kindle-page-numbers>) because of demand from people who need to cite the ebook, or for people who may wish to discuss the book with others who are reading in a different format (e.g., book clubs).

The ideal locators for ebooks (and in many ways for print books) are paragraph or section numbers, as with updateable loose leaf services. The use of paragraph numbers would make updating the embedded indexes for new editions much easier, as each section would have a clear starting and finishing point.

### **Non-standard ebook indexing**

Just as we learn to deal with standard ebook indexing, other challenges come along. These include:

- indexing for non-standard formats, e.g., spoken books (<http://www.readhowyouwant.com/Format/audioformats.aspx>).
- indexing for mobile devices ([http://www.web-indexing.org/Case Study in HTML Indexing-Wyman.pdf](http://www.web-indexing.org/Case%20Study%20in%20HTML%20Indexing-Wyman.pdf)).
- indexing for textbooks that are part-online, part-print (where the indexing for the online part may be indicated in colored font).

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## Ebook Indexing

By Glenda Browne

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- indexing CD-ROMs or DVDs that come with a textbook (additional material, such as pronunciation guides, is often accessed only through a table of contents).
- indexing for books presented as a set, e.g., the three books sold together on a USB stick as the *General Practice Series USB* ([http://www.mcgraw-hill.com.au/medical/digital/murtagh\\_suite.html](http://www.mcgraw-hill.com.au/medical/digital/murtagh_suite.html)). This would be a wonderful opportunity to create a coordinated index to lead to content in all of the e-textbooks, but their comment is "Finding information across all three books is simple with the easy-to-use search engine."
- indexing for open source, editable, build-your-own-textbooks (e.g., at [www.ck12.org](http://www.ck12.org)). Here there might be technical approaches that could draw indexing content from each 'chunk' that is included in the final book. Alternatively, metadata tagging of each paragraph (using an open system indexing approach) would give a less-structured but more re-usable set of access points.

Indexers need to be able to create embedded indexes for ebooks, and also to confidently discuss indexing options with publishers who may be unsure of the approach to take. ■

*Glenda Browne has indexed books, journals, online help, databases, and websites for nearly 20 years, and teaches and writes about indexing. Browne and Jonathan Jermey have written Website Indexing (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Auslib Press, 2004 and [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)) and The Indexing Companion (Cambridge University Press, 2007). Her index to The Indexing Companion was highly commended in the 2008 ANZSI Indexing Medal awards. More recently she has published The Indexing Companion Workbook: Book Indexing — details at <http://www.webindexing.biz/books-written-mainmenu-119/tic-workbook>. Glenda won the 2007 IgNobel Award for Literature for an article on indexing, and is Vice-President of the NSW Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers.*

## Ebooks

By Jan Wright

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bestsellers. Searching for examples of when you should use the word "which" and when you should use the word "that" return a lot of results that do not help. An active linked index, which Grammar Girl insisted upon in her ebooks, is the only way to achieve good search results in cases like this. Where Google fails us is the same place where Search fails us, and even in a Search-based world, we need alternatives to help us find information while we perform a variety of types of information quests.

We need to keep in mind that readers turn to a non-fiction book in several mental states: having never read it and needing to see if their needed information exists in it; having read it and needing to retrieve information that they know exists; formulating a question to be answered and guessing the word to use; and reformulating their question as they learn more and change focus, to another term, to a narrower term, or to a broader term. Search can be helpful at several stages, but there are crucial stages where access to an index's pre-analysis of a text saves a reader time and frustration.

The ideal epub index would be accessible from any page of an epub in the same way as search or a glossary would be. Accessing the index quickly from a page would not mean having to show the entire index: it could be combined into a search window with a type-in field. The reader could start typing a word to search, and the results for the word could be shown in snippets of context for the search feature, while the index itself could display the searched word in a scrollable section of the surrounding index entries, allowing the reader to browse for better terms, narrower terms, or broader terms, and allowing the reader to see cross references or additional suggestions for terms to search. Enhanced epubs could build this capability in.

In a highly usable index, the reader would not have to worry that the index would forget where he or she had been researching: on the reader's return for more information, the index could display the last known section that was used, helping the reader to save time. Snippets of text for the searched term in context would reduce the need to return.

We can take a clue from the Amazon "Look Inside This Book" feature to the index's importance, even if it is not actively linked. Readers should be able to browse the index fully. This would mean two modes: quickly searching, as described above, and a second method for complete browsability.

Indexers would like to develop standards for epub indexing and best practices for usability on small screens. These best practices would include: suggestions for writing indexes that appear best on smaller screens, avoiding long strings of links; providing more information in subheads so that readers can easily choose the appropriate entry, discussing the best methods to code and implement indexing, and improving index usability so that it is a valued information pathway into the content. ■

*Jan Wright, owner of Wright Information Indexing Services, has been indexing and taxonomizing since 1991. She has experience in technical documentation including: print production, development of online help and translated indexes, and indexing, taxonomies, and controlled vocabularies. She has been a member of the American Society for Indexing since 1991, has won several awards including the ASI/H. W. Wilson Award for Excellent in Indexing in 2009. E-mail her at [www.wrightinformation.com](http://www.wrightinformation.com).*

### England, China, and Russia

Our own Richard Shroul has an exciting, international itinerary that includes conference attendance, conference speaking and research. He will be attending the SI Conference at Keele University in England, September 2-4. Then he will give a talk on standards development for ebooks at the China Society of Indexers (CSI) on September 19-21 in Jinan.

Richard has been told that this is home to some of the best table tennis players in China. He will try to work in some table tennis during this trip when he can.

After the conference in China, he plans to spend a few days in Beijing.

In between the two conferences he plans to stay in Russia to continue his ongoing quest of figuring out how they find things without indexes.

This trip can be described as an around-the-world trip going the wrong direction, east. He has a travel agent working on this now — she just got started on it. And he has to get visas to both Russia and China.

As an interesting point of trivia — which visa is the most difficult to obtain? See the next issue of *Slice* for the answer.

## THE TOOLBOX

### Ebooks — a User's Perspective

By Julie Matson

After moving cross country and unloading a lot of books, I decided that using ebooks because of their large capacity of storage space, might be something I should investigate. So, I bought a Nook. I've downloaded about a half dozen books, primarily fiction. My initial impression is that some aren't even spell-checked, let alone edited. Now, my impression is deteriorating even further under the realities of what kind of an "index" is considered acceptable in a book I bought to use for references purposes.

The book is *Eat This, Not That, Non-Diet Diet Book* and it calls out specific products for their nutritional contents and lack thereof, as well as recommendations for specific restaurants. However, the index does not include either a list of all featured products by category or brand name, nor the restaurant names. To make matters worse, there is a simple search feature that required that I make a trip to Barnes & Noble to figure out how to work. Trying to thumb through the ebook is slow and cumbersome. I like to flip through "real" pages, which would have come in handy because there are a lot of pictures in this book. I found it impossible to match the page numbers listed in the index to any sort of listing within the book. Intuitively, I would expect to be able to utilize a link to move to the page number listed in the index. I was unable to do so. Ughh.

I think that ebooks may have a future. Obviously expectations of readers have diminished in proportion to the quality of the products available for purchase. I hope our industry can be a part of innovation that will continue to make the written words useful to our users. If you haven't already done so, please read the excellent articles written by Glenda Browne and Jan Wright in this issue, which discuss not only the problems, but pose possible solutions.

#### Ooma Phone System

This phone system, a VOIP, was rated by *ConsumerReports* as the best product of its type on the market. I have used Ooma since January 2011, and have found it to be very reliable with superb voice quality. Once in awhile, a call is dropped but I think that's a problem with my less than ideal internet connection rather than Ooma. My system paid for itself in less than 6 months. It has the advantage that your computer doesn't have to be turned on in order for it to work. The only time you need your computer on is during initial setup and setup was simple. All domestic calls are free and international calls are inexpensive. Voice mail, caller ID, and call waiting are included. Your only charge is about \$3.50 a month to cover taxes.

#### Ooma's Mobile App

They've been promising and it's finally here – the Ooma Mobile app that allows you to make domestic and international calls from your iPhone or iPod touch over any Wi-Fi or 3G network is available. I believe that the app will work on any Android cell phone but I can't confirm. According to Ooma, you'll save up to 90 percent on international calls vs. mobile calling plan rates, enjoy the HD audio with superior voice transmission while saving minutes on your cell calling plan. There is a \$10.00 charge for the app as well as a 1.9 cents per minute rate for domestic calls (or \$4.99 for 1,000 minutes a month). For more details, check their website at [www.ooma.com](http://www.ooma.com). At this point, this only works for outgoing calls, however the ability to use this for incoming calls is coming. If I was still on a contract with a provider, I'd sign up for this pronto. If you do decide to try it, please let me know how it works. FYI – Ooma is tied to Google in some way but I'm not sure how. ■  
*Julie Matson is our Toolbox Editor. She may be reached at [matson.julie@gmail.com](mailto:matson.julie@gmail.com).*

## PARTNER'S CORNER

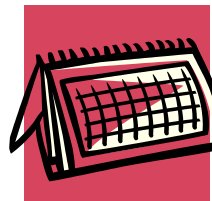
By Mary Coe

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change" as they transferred their indexing skill sets into taxonomy, using software such as MultiTes. Locator specificity was also discussed and indexing to the paragraph level or to section numbers was deemed acceptable—again, moving beyond the specific print medium.

This is a challenging time for indexers as we transfer our skill set into the digital world. Collaboration will be key, both with our colleagues (domestic and international) and with our clients. I encourage you to talk about and advocate for indexing with anyone who will listen — in any part of the world. ■

## CALENDAR — UPCOMING 2011 EVENTS



**Kay Schlembach**

will be presenting *Metatopic Menace* and *Hunting the Elusive Wilson* at

ASI's Southeast Chapter meeting in Saint Augustine, Florida, September 24 and 25. Janet Perlman will also be speaking. Contact Sandi Schroeder ([sanindex@schroederindexing.com](mailto:sanindex@schroederindexing.com)) or Diana Witt ([diana.witt@comcast.net](mailto:diana.witt@comcast.net)) for more information.

**Seth Maslin** speaks at the Taxonomy Boot Camp Monday, October 31, 2011, 2:30-3pm Washington DC

"*Embracing the Unexpected in Taxonomy Development.*" Surprise is the best validation. Taxonomy developers can't know what they don't know, and all taxonomies and taxonomy applications are unique in some way with their own nuances and custom contexts. It's important for taxonomists to uncover these details quickly, and this means the unanticipated is business as usual. Besides, surprise is far more useful than general agreement among stakeholders, which often suffers from siloed thinking and political motivations. Seth Maslin will share several real-life, on-the-job surprises (and a few delights), along with suggestions on how to find surprises of your own. ■



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