

Indexing in the Heartland

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Letter from the President

By Sue Klefstad



Hello, team Heartland! Let's give a big round of applause and a standing Thank You to Carol Reed for assuming the Heartland Co-President position, to Devon Thomas for stepping into the Secretary position, and to Mary Peterson for maintaining her Treasurer position. Thank you!

And while we're standing and applauding, let's give a big Thank You to outgoing chapter President Meridith Murray! As a two-term Co-President, Meridith fed our indexer brains with delightful workshop morsels—both programs and tasty treats.

I hope they are all experiencing the happy indexing success that I have found in the past year of serving as a chapter officer.

Thank you to Laura Ewald for taking over the newsletter production. She's aiding our team learning by helping us keep in touch.

Also, a big Thank You to all you Heartlanders who voted in the election. You made it real.

Our Spring 2014 meeting approached one of the banes of our indexing profession: lack of feedback. As you'll read in this issue, we can learn from index usability tests, in which index users are observed using indexes. Wouldn't it be nice to have such direct feedback on our own indexes?

I do not want to diminish the value of peer review of indexes; they're extremely valuable! But the vast majority of peer reviews are conducted without the actual text in hand. The Institute for Certified Indexers, which offers experienced indexer review (<http://www.certifiedindexers.com/becoming.html>), requires submission of the text indexed. The ASI/EIS Award (formerly the ASI/H.W. Wilson Award) also requires submission of the text. An index doesn't stand alone.

What sort of feedback have you been fortunate enough to receive? I am always pleased when a client expresses happiness with my index. But my clients are authors and editors; I have never heard from an actual index user. User comments would be worth their weight in gold. I was interested to learn that the Pacific Northwest Chapter of ASI has been studying index usability since 2002, receiving comments from actual index users.

Are there any ways for indexers to increase our feedback? To learn if our indexes are actually usable? ■

Heartland Indexer Listing

The indexer listing is now live on our website (www.heartlandindexers.org). If you've given us your information for the listing, please check it for accuracy and let us know if you need us to make changes. For those of you who haven't sent us info but would like to be included, send your information to Carol Reed (caree15@bluestemclarity.com).

A big thank you to Shelley Quattrocchi for putting this on our website! Great job, Shelley!

Spring 2014 Meeting: Sample Index Peer Review

By Sue Klefstad

When Team Heartland gathered for our Spring 2014 meeting, there were just six of us. This small size made it possible for us to peer review sample indexes as a group. This way, we all got to hear all of the comments and suggestions.

One general comment in the process was that no one sends out a sample index unless it is requested. This contradicts the editor statement reported by Sylvia Coates in the ASI book *Marketing Your Indexing Services*, 3rd ed., edited by Anne Leach, that a résumé accompanied by a sample index carried more weight.

In the context of index peer review, we reviewed the Wilson Award Evaluation Worksheet handed out by Margie Towery at our 2013 Spring meeting. This information is also on the ASI website (<http://www.asindexing.org/>). In 2011 the H.W. Wilson Company merged with EBSCO Publishing. The award is now called the EIS Award for Excellence in Indexing. “EIS” stands for EBSCO Information Services—an acronym of an acronym. The “Award for Excellence in Indexing” was part of the name when it was the Wilson Award, too, because that’s the point of the award: excellence in production and presentation of an index. The indexer produces the index and the publisher presents it, so the award is to both.

This worksheet covers the main points of index evaluation:

- elegance
- usability
- coverage
- analysis
- access
- cross-referencing
- accuracy
- style

See the ASI website for details.

The Heartland group then read over the Institute for Certified Indexers list of indexing best practices, which follows. For an explanation of the items, see the ICI website (<http://www.certifiedindexers.com/index.html>).

- collocation
- differentiation
- exhaustivity
- completeness
- information scent
- multiple access paths
- appropriate structure
- literary and user warrant
- consistency
- audience relevance
- author relevance
- metatopic
- locator differentiation
- accuracy
- style
- cross-references
- acronyms and abbreviations
- names
- titles of works
- headnotes

As a former packager, one general index review comment I would make is to include a header in the .doc file of the index that you send to the client. Put the name of the book or project in the header, as well as page numbers. This is a simple courtesy to your client that polishes your brand.

Associated with index review is usability. A 2000 *Key Words* article by Christine Nelsen Ryan and Sandra Henselmeier (“Usability Testing at Macmillan USA,” *Key Words* Vol. 8 No. 6, p. 189, 199-202) relates an index usability study conducted by Macmillan USA after their head of indexing attended an ASI national conference session presented by Dick Evans.

The first step involved deciding which books to test. Evans suggested using books going into multiple editions so that the indexes can be improved by the testing. Macmillan USA then developed a usability test for each book to be

tested. They decided to give the participants a list of questions and have them write down the number of the page where the answer could be found. Questions were developed by both reading the book and looking for confusing index entries, such as cross-references. They avoided using the text's wording in the question, instead trying for real life wording. For example, a question about Excel's split screen function asked, "How do you view the beginning and end of a long document at the same time?"

The third step in the process was to determine who the participants would be. They used Macmillan USA indexers to administer the test to the participants, so that the indexers were directly involved in observing index users. For this first usability test, Macmillan USA used volunteer employees. Volunteers were asked to donate 60–90 minutes of their time; they were offered refreshments and a free movie pass as incentive.

Macmillan USA developed a set of questionnaires for the usability testing process. The pre-usability test questionnaire was delivered at some point prior to the actual test and told participants what to expect during the test. It also asked about familiarity with the topic of the book being tested and index use habits. There was also a post-usability test questionnaire that asked the participants to critique the process.

Each of the 22 participants was assigned an observer. The participants and their observers first gathered for a discussion of the process and to answer any questions. Then the participant–observer pairs spread out to cubicles for the usability test. Each in their own cubicle, the pair shared a desk.

Participants were told to think aloud as they worked to answer questions. This was to aid the observers, but in the post-test questionnaire, participants said that thinking aloud helped them. Observers were surprised at the choice of terms participants tried to look up in the index. Observers also learned that See cross-references did not confuse people but See also cross-references did: For example, if the participant was at the "Web

pages" entry and saw a "See also Websites" cross-reference, that participant expected to see a "Web pages" subheading under "Websites."

One comment often repeated by participants was how much easier it was to work with indexes that had bold main entry headings. Our Heartland group agreed that this is a publisher design issue, for the most part, not an indexer issue.

One lesson Macmillan USA learned from their usability test process was that they needed to involve the content people when building the usability test questions. Without that input on this first test, many of the questions were not understood by the participants. They hoped that with content area input, they would have questions that people might typically ask.

The indexing lessons learned were as follows:

- More double and triple posts needed.
- Use adjectives where appropriate.
- Use verbals to describe actions being done.
- Include more concepts.
- Make first-level entries bold in all indexes.
- Include synonyms for words index users may not know.

So the lessons learned began and ended with the same directive: more entry points!

The Pacific Northwest Chapter of ASI has been studying index usability since 2002. In a 2009 article ("Experience an Index Usability Test," *Key Words*, Vol. 17 No. 4, October–December 2009, p. 130, 132-133) author Cheryl Landes describes a Pacific Northwest Chapter booth at an ASI annual meeting in which they conducted an index usability test.

The chapter had two members index the same book of essays; one was a scholarly indexer and the other a technical indexer. The first lesson learned was that indexers' backgrounds significantly affected how they wrote entries and structured the index.

At the ASI conference booth, the chapter invited people to use each of the two indexes to answer five questions about the book. The conference participants tended to prefer using the scholarly index but answered more questions correctly using the technical index.

The chapter also conducted this usability test with a couple of student groups, one group associated with publishing and the other not. These tests showed that the backgrounds of the index users greatly affected their efficiency in using an index.

Another index usability study was published in *The Indexer* (“Let’s get usable! Usability studies for indexes.” Vol. 22 No. 2 October 2000, p. 91-95). When author Susan C. Olason became an indexer, many of her friends complained about how confusing indexes are. Finding little published information on usability, the author used her systems engineering and human factors background to conduct her own usability tests.

Her team worked to develop questions that went beyond keyword searches and that allowed use of the entire index without guiding the test participant. The questions were generalized into tasks. Example questions included:

- You want to compete in endurance riding events. How would you select a horse suitable for endurance riding? Develop a conditioning plan for you and your horse.
- You have finally decided to leave the city and move into the country. What business options are available? Choose one and develop a plan for implementing that option.

The test participants were asked to point with their index fingers at what they were doing so that their access paths could be followed. Combined with discussion after the test, the observer was able to trace the path followed by the index user.

Their study determined that indented indexes were 60% more efficient than run-in. Another determination was that prefix prepositions and

conjunctions added to index inefficiency.

Users who were familiar or somewhat familiar with the book subject matter searched for specific terms. Subject area novice users searched first for an index entry based on the title of the book. The “table of contents–type” index entries were helpful to novice users, as well as experienced subject matter users. Indexes with such TOC-type entries that contained cross-references to other index entries had higher efficiencies and higher usefulness ratings from users of all subject experience levels.

Indexing is a profession with little feedback; usability studies are welcome food for thought. ■



Patterns in Indexing Software Find and Replace By Sue Klefstad

All indexing software—whether Cindex, Sky, Macrex, or Word—offers an advanced find and replace feature commonly called “patterns”; in Word this feature is called “wildcards.” In the computer world, these advanced find and replace patterns are known as “regular expressions” or “regex.” There are a number of regular expression tutorials on the Web, but only Cindex 3 uses the same symbols as regex in its patterns; Cindex 2, Sky, Macrex, and Word use different symbols for the same concepts.

With patterns, we add the power of specificity to the Find command. For example, to find entries with acronyms, we could simply search for a left parenthesis, but then we’d also find all the entries with glosses in parentheses. Patterns allow us to specify finding a left parenthesis followed by at least two capital letters:

Cindex 3	Cindex 2
\([:lu:][:lu:]	([A-Z][A-Z]

Sky 7	Macrex
([A-Z][A-Z]	([A-Z][A-Z]

What have we said here? In Cindex 3, parentheses have a special meaning, so to find a parenthesis, we have to precede it with a backslash to specify a literal parenthesis character. Parentheses are not special characters in Cindex 2, Sky 7, and Macrex, so the left parenthesis has no special treatment here. However, for other characters that are special, Cindex 2 and Macrex also use the backslash to turn special characters into literal characters; Sky 7 puts literal characters inside square brackets.

Then after the parenthesis, we specify looking for two uppercase letters. Cindex 3 uses “character sets” to specify certain collections of characters, such as [:ll:] for lowercase letters and [:lu:] for uppercase letters. The Cindex 3 user guide states that these named sets are more reliable than enumerating the characters.

Cindex 2, Sky 7, and Macrex all use square brackets to specify the uppercase letter character sets, which is what Cindex 3 means by enumerating the characters. But Cindex 3 can also use square brackets to enclose character sets, just like the others do. Confused yet? The manuals do a nice job of explaining all the symbols and provide good indexing examples. For an explanation of Word’s wildcards, check out the Microsoft Word MVP [page on wildcards](http://word.mvps.org/faqs/general/usingwildcards.htm), “Finding and replacing characters using wildcards” (<http://word.mvps.org/faqs/general/usingwildcards.htm>).

I like to use patterns for quality control. For the science texts that I index, my clients want capitalized main headings. But some terms, such as pH or cAMP, need a lower case initial letter, so I can’t use the built-in main entry capitalization function. I check that my main entries are properly capitalized by Finding main entries that begin with a lower case letter:

Cindex 3	Cindex 2
^[:ll:]	^[a-z]

Sky 7	Macrex
<[a-z]	^[a-z]

I need to select the Main field from the field dropdown list.

The caret (^) used by Cindex and Macrex tells the Find to start searching at the beginning of the line. Sky uses a less than sign (<). To find a pattern at the end of a line, Cindex and Macrex use a dollar sign (\$) and Sky uses a greater than sign (>).

In Sky, if the field dropdown list is set to Any field, then the record is considered one block of text; the less than sign (<) matches the beginning of the Main field and the greater than sign (>) matches the end of the Page field. To match the beginning and end of a specific field, simply select the field from the dropdown list.

In Cindex and Macrex, if the field dropdown list is set to Any field then each field is checked for a match at its beginning and/or end. And yes, you can match both the beginning and end of a field:

Cindex 3	Cindex 2
^[BC].*y\$	^[BC]?*y\$

Sky 7	Macrex
<[BC]?*y>	^[BC]?*y>

This pattern will find words like Biology, Chemistry, Biography, Cry, and By. It’s looking for either a B or a C at the beginning, then anything or even nothing, with a y at the end.

Another quality control use of patterns is to check that all *t* and *f* table and figure indicators are in italic when they need to be. This is a two-step process of first doing a Find All in the page field for [0-9][ft]. I specify a number before the f or t to avoid including cross references containing f or t. Then in that find group I Find in the page field [ft] with the Attribute set to italic and the Not checkbox

checked, to find the f's and t's that are not italic.

Download a copy of the Spring 2014 workshop handout from the Heartland website for a table of the commonly used pattern symbols for Cindex 3, Cindex 2, Sky 7, and Macrex. ■



Bringing it home: Notes from the Charleston ASI Conference

By Carol Reed

This year's national ASI conference in Charleston, South Carolina, was the sixth conference Heartlander Devon Thomas has attended. As always, she enjoyed the time with other indexers and brought home tips, both practical and theoretical, that she can use in her indexing business.

This year, she says, the conference kept her hopping, from the Lee Brothers' inspiring keynote address—the next time you see Devon, ask her if she's started writing that cookbook—to meetings, sessions, and fun diversions.

The sessions Devon attended included "Before, During, and After Indexing: Forms, Emails, and Practices," by J. Naomi Linzer; "Our Changing Lexicon," by Nan Badgett; "Culinary Indexers' Reference Sources," by Catherine Sassen; "Jump-Start Your Marketing," by Kendra Millis; "Indexing Narratives," by Enid Zafran; and "The Future of MEDLINE Indexing," by Dorota Ponikiewska. Now that she's back home, Devon says she'll apply some of what she's learned—standardizing forms, using Cindex more efficiently,

tweaking her marketing strategy, and approaching her indexing projects with a wider perspective.

During free time, Devon did some sight-seeing around historic Charleston, which is loaded with beautiful old homes, flowers, and gardens. Other highlights: "I ate lots of seafood—shrimp every day, and it was the season for soft-shell crabs! I also went dancing, which is a nice way to meet locals and see a different part of town."

What keeps her coming back each year? "For me it is a combination of things. One is continuing education. I get so many practical tips from sessions and in talking with other indexers. Even when I disagree with how others index, I feel just having the discussion makes me a better indexer. Another reason is motivation. I find going to a conference makes me feel happy about my work—it's great to be with like-minded people who also get excited about indexing minutia. I always leave a little mentally depleted from learning so much in a short time, but I am emotionally recharged."

Devon plans to continue attending the national conferences, and she encourages other indexers to consider next year's conference a way to invest in your business and yourself.

Editor's note: Devon is also a newly-elected ASI Director-at-large. Congratulations, Devon! It is great to have a Heartland representative on the ASI Board. ■



Heartland Goes International!

The editors of *The Indexer: The International Journal of Indexing* published Laura Ewald's article, "Evaluating an index together: Heartland Chapter workshop, 11 May 2013" (Vol. 31, No. 4, Dec. 2013, p. 168), which covers Margie Towery's great workshop from our spring 2013 meeting. So good to see Margie's hard work and talent reaching even indexers far from the Heartland!

Accuracy

Creating Better Indexes, Part 6

By Margie Towery

Accuracy is one of what I call the “Ten Principles for Creating Better Indexes.” The other principles (or characteristics) are audience and access, comprehensiveness and conciseness (parts 4 and 5), clarity, common sense (part 2), consistency, metatopic and structure, reflexivity (part 3), and readability (part 1).

Accuracy, defined

Webster’s defines accuracy as “freedom from mistake or error” or “conformity to . . . a standard or model.” We’ve all heard the dictate to measure twice and cut once. Indexers talk about being accurate but that is often more in reference to page numbers or locators than other components. In reality, accuracy as a characteristic of a quality index requires much more than just accurate locators.

Comments on accuracy

In fact, getting the locators correct entails more than just popping a right locator into the page field. Locators must also reflect all of the pages on which that information appears as well as whether it is a continuous discussion (e.g., 3–7) or one that is scattered over several pages (e.g., 3, 4, 6–7). Locators must also accurately reflect the format of the text. For example, locators in the *Chicago Manual of Style* index are chapter and section numbers (e.g., 16.13 discusses locators in indexes [16th ed.]).

Need I even mention that spelling must be accurate? If there are variations in spellings in the text that affect the index, consult the author or editor concerning what should be used in the index (and/or corrected in the text!). Moreover, if the text uses British spelling, the index should as well.

Main headings must accurately reflect the meaning

of the text. Is the author discussing “health” or “health care”? (A caveat: in such cases where there may only be a few locators, then the “conciseness principle” would allow for combining those—“railroads and railroad development” is one that I often combine.)

In service of accuracy, names and events must sometimes be disambiguated. For example:

Iraq War (1990–1991) (or *See* Gulf War)

Iraq War (2003–2011)

Russell, Sarah (1752–1789)

Russell, Sarah (1856–1898)

The relationship of the subheading to the main heading must be captured accurately, such that the relationship is instantly clear and the user needn’t puzzle out what it indicates. This is one reason that we still need function words in some subheadings (of, by, on, etc.). In subheadings for a person, “birth” and “death” may be obvious but “influences,” for example, is not. Does it mean influences on the person? Or the person’s influence on other people or concepts (as influence, influence by, or influence on)?

Double-postings must be complete with all locators at both (or all) locations. Cross-references must accurately copy the main heading to which they point, including exact capitalization. I think it’s a toss-up as to whether parenthetical material in the main heading must be included in the cross-reference to it, and I generally leave it off, unless such disambiguation is needed to lead the user to the proper main heading.

Tools for improving accuracy

One main tool for creating an accurate index is subject knowledge. There is no substitute to understanding the discipline (or disciplines) in which a text is based. I don’t mean a depth of knowledge such as a specialist would have but rather a general knowledge that includes a bit of jargon and clues you in to when you might need to stop and look something up to be sure you represent it accurately in the text.

Indexers are fortunate to have sophisticated

indexing software. It allows us to truly focus on the content and let the software do the mechanical work. In addition, primary and supplemental software packages provide a variety of checks particularly relevant to accuracy.

We can use our software to create a page-order sort and check the index entries in that order, making sure that the locators and entries match the text. Newer indexers are often advised to utilize this check, despite the time it takes. More experienced indexers may spot check entries.

And there are occasionally things that we must code to provide a more accurate index. Does the publisher want “U.S.” sorted as “United States”? Are there special locator issues that need attention? Accuracy is not just about the index itself but also about providing an index that fits the client’s specifications.

The more indexing you do, the more you may pick up on your own typical errors. Keep track of these and run software checks to correct them. One colleague has noted that she always checks for “m” after a number in the page field, because that was one of the few errors she found in her work, mistakenly typing “m” instead of a comma. I sometimes run that check as well, but because I occasionally type “m” instead of “n” in a note

reference (e.g., 17m8 vs. 17n8). In addition, I always run the cross-references check at the end of my editing phase.

Try this!

There is another side to accuracy and, indeed, to the indexing process overall. Attention and concentration are key to accuracy, but I find that my concentration suffers in the early afternoon. There is, however, an aid to overcoming this, and it’s based on scientific evidence. What might increase alertness, boost creativity and the ability to see connections, strengthen memory, clarify decision-making, and improve productivity? It’s not snake oil. It’s a nap! My ideal nap length is about 10–15 minutes. Yours might vary. Check out the science and what sort of nap might work best for you in Sara C. Mednick’s *Take a Nap! Change Your Life* (and, I would add, be a more accurate indexer).



Upcoming Indexing Events

- June 25, 2014 - ASI Webinar: Autoclassification--Information Management Strategies [Details](#)
- July, 2014 (TBD) - Embedded Indexing & Ebook Indexing Online Course (UC Berkeley) [Details](#)
- Oct. 8–11, 2014 - AMWA Annual Conference (Memphis, TN) [Details](#)
- Nov. 4–5, 2014 - Taxonomy Boot Camp (Washington, DC) [Details](#)

See the Heartland Chapter’s home page for links to more details on these events. (<http://www.heartlandindexers.org/>)