

Fall 2011 Newsletter

Heartland Chapter of ASI

Chapter News

By Margaret B. Hentz, Co-President

Fall Meeting

We had a great turnout for the fall meeting of the Heartland Chapter held November 3rd in Richmond. More than twenty people came to hear Dave Ream represent ASI's Digital Trends Task Force (DTTF). He talked about e-book indexes with an emphasis on the ideal e-book index (which doesn't exist yet). He concluded his presentation with a hands-on review of indexes in some designated ebooks via iPads and Kindles.

In the afternoon, Seth Maislin of Potomac Indexing reviewed the "Unscability of Indexing." He encouraged (or perhaps more aptly challenged" the audience to think beyond producing back-of-the-book indexes and explore the world of taxonomies and information architecture.

Hats off to Meridith Murray who organized this very informative meeting and provided lovely mid-morning snacks! It wouldn't be a Heartland Chapter meeting without the delicious handmade candies that Sharon Hilgenberg shared with us.

Business Meeting

The fall meeting concluded with a productive business meeting. Mary Peterson, Treasurer, provided the treasurer's report and Sandy Topping, Secretary, had the minutes of the last two meetings approved by the membership.

Carol Reed, representing Paula McCoy, Laura Ewald, John Bealle, and herself, discussed some potential changes to the chapter's newsletter and website in an effort to streamline the production of the newsletter. After some discussion and considering previous discussion on our chapter's listserv, Carol is going to transition our current website to a free hosting provider. We would have our own domain rather than utilizing John Bealle's website (many thanks to John for generously providing support all these years). Within the website, the newsletter committee is considering putting articles in the website's navigation, indexed on an archive page, and downloadable for print reading.

Laura Ewald and I volunteered to be on the Publicity Committee. The first task is to review and update the chapter's current publicity brochure for sending to potential members. Once updated, the brochure will be sent to existing ASI members in surrounding states who are currently not affiliated with the Heartland chapter. The brochure will also be sent to the local library schools for distribution to their students. In addition, it will be sent to the members of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in the local geographic area for recruitment.

Since the annual election for officers (Co-President and Secretary) will take place late February/early March, a nominating committee is needed. Cherry Delaney volunteered to help contact existing members and see if they would like to run for an office. A short biography would be needed from each candidate. That information would then be sent to ASI's headquarters for preparing the ballot for e-voting. No more stuffing envelopes with paper ballots!

Please consider running for an office. It is a great way to network with other chapter members and contribute to our chapter. Since we do not have a large number of members, we need everyone's help to ensure its continuation as a chapter. In addition, Cherry needs at least one other chapter member to help her on the Nominating Committee. Contact myself and Cherry if you are interested in participating on the Nominating Committee or running for an office.

Spring 2012 Meeting

Meridith Murray, current Co-President, discussed the possibility of having the spring 2012 meeting in Cincinnati during mid-April to coincide with Alexandra Nickerson's visit to Cincinnati. The meeting topic would be cookbook indexing. Due to the possibility of limited meeting room and hotel accommodations because of another conference at that time, an Indianapolis location in May on another meeting topic is now being considered. Contact Meridith with meeting ideas and to volunteer with the meeting logistics.

I always enjoy meeting fellow Heartland chapter members at meetings and learning from each other. I do encourage everyone to become more involved with the chapter, either by running for an office, participating on a committee, or just helping with planning a meeting. It could be a New Year's resolution for you!

Dave Ream on E-book Indexes

By Carol Reed

The first portion of our fall meeting featured Dave Ream, principal consultant for Leverage Technologies. Dave addressed a number of issues surrounding e-book indexes: where the e-book market is headed, how e-book indexes currently function, how they might ideally function in the future, and how indexers are getting involved in EPUB standards development.

It's no news that the e-book market is expanding rapidly. 2010 saw e-books holding 6.4% of the total Trade market and 13.6% of the Adult Fiction market, numbers that continue to grow steadily. Amazon's Kindle e-book sales have surpassed both their hardcover and paperback sales. E-books won't become a medium of choice for nonfiction until technology overcomes some current obstacles, such as difficulty displaying graphs and tables, and the inability to highlight text.

In some ways, the print market is actually benefitting from e-book sales. App books for

mobile devices are gaining momentum while often boosting sales of their corresponding print editions. The majority of undergraduate textbook users (58%) still prefer print books for usability, and 41% want a print-on-demand version available when they purchase the e-book version. While it's clear that e-books will continue to grow, many basic usability issues still need to be ironed out.

Current e-book indexes are usually inadequate, if they're included at all. Those with static page number references are essentially useless, since the e-book format doesn't follow the print version's pagination (or if it does, the user has to scroll manually to find the desired page). In linked indexes, entries often link to general sections, rather than a specific paragraph, so you might or might not see the target text on your screen. Formatting problems can happen during conversion, making a marginally useful index utterly incomprehensible. Navigation aids are also lacking, so moving to and from the index is cumbersome and frustrating.

Looking at current e-book indexes, you might be tempted to conclude that e-book publishers and consumers are satisfied with basic search and that indexes are not a priority. While this is a concern, an increasing number of publishers recognize the contribution indexes can make to a good e-book, and some exciting developments are taking place.

Members of ASI's Digital Trends Task Force (DTTF) are actively engaging publishers and developers in conversations about e-book indexes, with a positive response from the industry. Dave has worked with Jan Wright in developing a prototype e-book index that is integrated with search. The prototype, which Jan will present at industry conferences in 2012, features three different modes:

1. Readers can browse the linked index as a chapter in the e-book.
2. Readers can type a term in a search box from any page; search results show index entries in addition to full-text search results; both types of results display snippets of the text, so readers can decide if a link is relevant before following it. A scrollable section of surrounding index entries lets readers browse for better terms and see cross references.
3. Readers can highlight a section of text and see the index entries corresponding to that section—a semantic “map” of topics.

In short, e-book indexes can potentially offer more functionality than traditional back-of-the-book indexes.

In order for any of this to happen, the standards governing the programming end of e-book production need to be built to allow such features. Dave and Jan are working with the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF) to develop EPUB 3.0—one of the standards that govern digital production—so publishers and programmers will have the tools they need to provide enhanced index functionality.

What might all of this mean for indexers in the future? Some of the best practices for indexing e-books will certainly differ from best practices for indexing print books. For instance, while five locators might be acceptable for one entry in a print index, it's far too many when you're following links. E-book indexes will work better with greater specificity, so singlelocator entries and more subheadings are appropriate. Small screen sizes will also dictate formatting, heading length, and number of subheadings to some extent.

If you're interested in indexing e-books, Dave recommends becoming familiar with XML tagging. EPUB 3.0 uses a system different from XML, but XML provides a good foundation. Also be sure to check out the resources below.