

# The Slice

A Potomac Indexing Newsletter

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## Partner's Corner

### Mobility Tools

by Estalita Slivoskey



I have always worked from hard copies of pages, simply because I don't follow a regular work schedule/day/location, and it made more sense for me to print. As I've previously mentioned in this space, my kids are

so active in sports, that I probably spend more time sitting in bleachers or folding chairs at football, softball, basketball, and gymnastics venues than I do at my desk. It was always easier for me to just haul a stack of pages to mark wherever I went, sometimes taking my laptop with me if I was on a looming deadline and needed to actually key in entries. That all changed when my business partner, Richard Shrout, told me about a tablet he had purchased and he was using to mark pages. After some additional research, I bit the bullet, and two days later was unpacking a shiny new Samsung Galaxy NotePRO 12.2 tablet....I haven't printed a PDF page since then, and absolutely love my new-found freedom to just push the tablet into my purse (one with a padded inner pocket specifically made for tablets) instead of hauling a stack of pages in a big bulky briefcase.

Thankfully, Richard had already done the legwork on which apps worked best for our needs, so I downloaded one for \$4.50 called LectureNotes, and another one that was free called PDFView. Both of these, used in conjunction, allow me to import PDFs directly from our Dropbox folders

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## PI Gets Social!

by Joanne Sprott

Since becoming a partner in Potomac Indexing in January of this year, I've been working on PI's social and blogging presence on the Web. I have found that indexers tend to be less visible in social media and use their sites primarily as curriculum vitae for their subject specialties and experience. Taxonomists tend to be more visible on the interwebs, maybe because their work is often tied to websites, databases, images and other non-book information sources.

PI used to have a CV-style static website as well, but I've migrated the content to WordPress (check out the site's layout and content at <http://potomacindexing.com>), one of the many content management systems available on the Web. It does a good job of integrating the layout of a static website about one's services with a dynamic space for keeping blog posts.

My philosophy is to maintain a regular (and this is the challenge) stream of long-form content on the blog, and then broadcast that content onto appropriate social media (I favor LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google+ for business use). With this blog content as the base, we can then build a following organically by engaging in the back-and-forth of Twitter and G+ by following clients and fellow indexers and taxonomists.

My most important lessons learned in using blogging and social media for our publishing-related career fields is that focus and ongoing conversation/engagement are the keys to success (and minimizing the impact on productivity). I know I don't have to be chattering away on every network all the time, but that it's more important to

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## PI News and Events

On November 19, PI Partner Kay Schlembach gave a webinar presentation on *Taming the Metatopic* through the American Society for Indexing Webinar series. More details and a recording are available at: <http://www.asindexing.org/webinars/schlembach-metatopic/>

On November 5, PI Partner Seth Maislin presented on *Content Tagging* at the Taxonomy Bootcamp.

On October 15, 22, and 29, PI Associate Lucie Haskins gave a series of ASI webinars on *Embedded Indexing in InDesign*. More details and a recording are available at: <http://www.asindexing.org/online-learning/indexing-indesign-haskins/>

On September 17, Special PI Associate Fred Leise gave an ASI webinar on *Successful Subheadings*. More details and a recording are available at: <http://www.asindexing.org/webinars/subheadings-leise/>

On June 25, PI Partner Seth Maislin gave an ASI webinar on *Autoclassification*. More details and a recording are available at: <http://www.asindexing.org/webinars/autoclassification-maislin/>

## Conference Report: Writers UA West, 3–6 March 2014, Palm Springs, CA



Pilar Wyman, left, and fellow Peer Showcase presenter and STCWDC member Mary Saunders.

The WritersUA conferences on user assistance have been the “premiere gathering for software user assistance professionals” since 1993, with over 9,000 in attendance from two dozen nations. ASI’s DTTF (Digital Trends Task Force) co-chair Jan Wright presented at their Seattle, WA gathering in 2013. For this year, Jan suggested I talk to them about indexes for apps.

(I have presented on this topic at both SI and ASI conferences, most recently with Corey Pressman in San Antonio, TX last year, as reported by Lisa DeBoer in “Conference Report: Indexing for Apps,” *Key Words* Vol. 21, No. 8:125–126. At the SI conference in Brighton, England, 2012, the talk was titled, “Indexing for Hand-held devices/Indexing for Apps.” Print versions of the SI presentation have also been published here and in *The Indexer*.)

My proposal, “Indexes for Apps,” was accepted, and conference organizer Joe Welinske asked me to participate in the Peer Showcase.

Forty-three other speakers also gave presentations and workshops. The speakers included folks from Adobe RoboHelp, MicroSoft, oXygen, Rosetta Stone, STC (Society for Technical Communication) leadership, conference organizer Joe Welinske, and more. Topics ranged from FrameMaker workflow to agile development to MadCap Flare, from DITA to Author-It, and more. There was no way I could get to all the sessions, nor even attend in all the days.

Before the Peer Showcase, however, I did get to a few sessions. In particular, as ASI’s International Representative, with clients and index publications whose audiences are around the world, I was drawn to Barbara Jungwirth’s session on “Writing for Global Audiences.” Barbara provides German-English translation services for global audiences, and she shared what she has learned about global English.

Global English, not to be confused with simplified English, is more flexible, and includes more syntactic cues and gerunds. For example, instead of “The example shows a statement specifying the frequency,” we should say, “The example shows

a statement *that* specifies the frequency.” (Emphasis added by me.) She also reminded us that simple tenses are more universally understood.

All of these ideas I will keep in mind as I write my index entries. It was good to hear that “that” is helpful.

“It depends” is a universal phrase, she also noted. Again, good to hear.

Andrew Becraft’s session, “Techniques for Maximizing Content Reuse,” also caught my eye. On Twitter, he (@AndrewBecraft) did some advance promotion for the talk by tweeting, “I’ll be presenting on ‘How to maximize reuse without making your head explode.’” Even without that, I was intrigued. Would he discuss indexing in any form? I wondered. Assuming a text is indexed, having the index embedded can be very helpful for successful qualitative content reuse of that text. But review of the final product—including the resulting index—is absolutely critical for usability. Would he discuss the importance of editorial review? I wondered.

Indexes and indexing did not specifically come up, but chunking and discoverability did.

As Chuck Martin (@chuck\_martin) tweeted, “Ensure your reusable content gets used by making it discoverable and within a predictable organization.”

Then, during the Q&A session afterwards, Christopher (Chris) Seraidaris asked about best practices for metadata. In response, I offered that the ASI Best Practices Committee was going to be presenting their draft best practices for indexes and indexing at the upcoming ASI Annual Conference in Charleston, SC. This created a mini buzz, and the speaker declared, “Indexing is awesome!”

I was so thrilled, I said, yes, “Indexing is awesome. Tweet it! Shout it!” The audience loved that, too. I felt part of the community now, for sure. I soon tweeted, “#Indexing is awesome!”

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and use the included S pen to mark pages very easily. Due to the large 12.2" screen, I can view an entire page on the tablet at once, and can easily navigate back and forth between pages.

My tablet has a large 64GB memory, so I can have multiple large books on there at once, with no storage issues, plus a MicroSD slot if that ever does become a problem. The battery life allows me to work on it for hours at a time before having to re-charge, with just the basic power saving features enabled.

The main drawback of the tablet is that I can't actually index on it, but I couldn't actually index on the hard copies either! If I find myself needing to key entries, I'll take the laptop along, but view the pages on the tablet as my "second" monitor.

I mentioned importing PDFs directly from Dropbox earlier. We store all of our files on Dropbox, so as long as I have access to a secure network (I've collected passwords for networks at all of our frequent sporting venues) I can move files around, import them to LectureNotes, attach them to emails etc. This all occurs seamlessly on the tablet with the Dropbox app.

Another tool I use, but less frequently on the tablet, is the Skype app. We carry out our weekly meetings on Skype, so if necessary, I can use my tablet instead of my computer and participate just as easily. If I wanted to activate video I could do that also, using either the front- or rear-facing camera.

All-in-all, I'm extremely pleased with my new-found freedom to just grab the tablet and go. If I have to leave my desk on short notice and don't have pages printed, no problem, I just get to my destination, sign onto the network, access Dropbox and get started. It mimics the power and productivity of my bulky and heavy 17" Dell laptop, but is so much easier to carry around. Happy traveling!

*Spratt (continued from page 1)*

follow just those interests that fit with my business, and participate regularly but in sync with my own communication style.

My goal is to expand PI's blog to include guest posts from our associates on book indexing and taxonomy, as well as editing, proofreading, and publishing in general.

So, please contact me at joanne.spratt@potomacindexing.com if you'd like to provide content for the blog. I know there's tons of wisdom out there, and I'd love to help distribute it. :)



*Joanne Spratt has been book indexing (and editing/proofreading) since 1995 for trade, scholarly, and technical publishers in a wide variety of subject areas. She is noted for her detailed scholarly indexes and savvy user's perspective on technical subjects.*

*Joanne also serves the American Society for Indexing as Administrator of Exams for ASI's Training in Indexing Course.*

## **Fresh from the Oven**



**From Kate**

**Mertes:** I attended and spoke at the Chicago autumn workshop at the end of October, and I was (once again)

struck by just how valuable serendipitous contact between indexers can be. In the course of a discussion on a totally different subject, someone remarked that they sometimes had trouble copying over material from a text (such as a difficult-to-spell surname or a long institutional title) and getting it to convert to the right font. Several of us knew the solution (use shift-control-v when pasting), but many people weren't aware of it, and said just that bit of data made the whole conference worthwhile (not that the rest of it wasn't valuable!).

It can happen online as well—I've seen the same sort of serendipitous exchanges on listservs.

*Fresh from the Oven (continued)*

However you make it, a professional community is intensely valuable. As solo workers it's very easy to forget that; but especially at this time of the year, the importance of friends and family can't be stressed enough.

**From Janet Perlman:** I'm under contract and in the process of writing a new ASI/Information Today book. The working title is "Indexing Tactics and Tidbits." It is due out in the fall of 2015. It will be a pot-pourri of subjects big and small, ones that are not usually discussed or easily found in standard training curricula. The book, in A to Z format, will also gather other information of interest to the working indexer.

This is the fulfillment of a long-nurtured dream—of writing my own indexing book. I have edited two books for ASI/ITI, but this one is all mine to do!

**From Mary Coe:** I'm finishing a Master of Information Studies course at Charles Sturt University in early 2015. I have been conducting research into index use and will be presenting the results at the ANZSI/IPEd conference in Canberra in May 2015. I also recently started a part-time position as a "website indexer and metadata analyst" for NPSMedicineWise, and I will also be talking about website indexing at the Canberra conference. Any PI associates who would like to take a trip Down Under are very welcome to attend!

**From Liz Walker:** This has been a year of blessings for me. Last March my husband, Mike, had a serious fall which left him unconscious and bleeding. "What?" you say, "this is a blessing?" Yes, it is because my neighbor saw the fall and came quickly to let me know so I could call 911.

But the blessing doesn't stop there. While in the hospital emergency room they discovered that he had an Abdominal Aortic Aneurism (AAA) that needed surgical repair.

The morning before the surgery my husband had a mild heart attack. Another blessing! The heart attack was mild but had he undergone surgery it might have been life-threatening. After the heart attack a

Wyman (continued from page 2)

Of course, I also thanked @AndrewBecraft for his talk, and later tweeted, “Yes, meaningful or conceptual chunking is the way to go—for quality reuse and for quality #indexing. Thanks, @AndrewBecraft #WritersUA.”

Mike Baron (@PSCertify) also then tweeted, “Great quotes from the conference: ‘Indexing is awesome! Tweet it! Shout it!’”

During the Peer Showcase I demonstrated just how awesome indexing can be with the index to the GAYF (Geriatrics At Your Fingertips) medical reference App. As in other reference Apps, the Index and the Search feature are one and the same. That is, the index is the search. This saves readers having to search through passing mentions and undifferentiated hits.



Pilar Wyman, right, showing Chris Seraidaris, Senior Technical Writer at Sony Network Entertainment, the Index search feature in the GAYF App.

“Let the index be the search,” I encouraged visitors.

I shared screenshots from the GAYF App, and other reference Apps. I also demonstrated hands-on searching with the GAYF App and let users see how the index search works (pinpoint precision, drilling down through the index only when necessary for analysis, “double” postings, etc.). The idea is simple, and the result is powerful and effective for users.

The response was highly positive, with repeat visits from Silicon Valley representatives, Salesforce.com, and others.

After the Peer Showcase, I attended “Practical HTML5/CSS3 for Real Writers,” with hypertext expert Dave Gash. It was useful, so useful that my tweet, “Learning new stuff is always good. Amen! #WritersUA – HTML5/CSS3 with Dave Gash” was retweeted and favorited several times.

The last presentation of the day and of the conference was from Joe Welinske on “Trends in Mobile UA.” He shared various types of handheld and mobile systems and apps, and presented an overview of current issues regarding writing for the small screen. Nothing regarding their indexes or indexing...yet.

Pilar Wyman is a member of the ASI DTF Committee and a long-time medical indexer. She can be reached at pilarw@wymanindexing.com, and on Twitter @pilarw. Search on #WritersUA for more about the WritersUA conferences, on #indexes and #indexing for the latest on indexes and indexing.

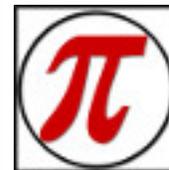
Fresh from the Oven (continued)

cardiac catheterization test indicated blockage, and he required triple-bypass surgery.

After recovery from the triple-bypass and cardiac rehabilitation, Mike then had the AAA repair surgery. We thought we were done with all of that when he went for a follow-up CT scan. The CT scan of the AAA repair showed a problem that required another surgery to repair the repair.

After this series of procedures in just the right order for success, we are back to enjoying our time together and with family and friends. There were several opportunities for a different outcome than what we now have, so we are BLESSED!

**From Linda Dunn:** This has been a year of publications for me—first a chapter on periodical indexing in the ASI book *Indexing It Right! Advice From the Experts*, Vol. 3 and an upcoming article in *The Indexer* on using authority files for names in large indexing projects which will appear next summer. Excited to share what I have learned from many years of indexing periodicals!!



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