

The Slice

A Potomac Indexing Newsletter

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1, SUMMER 2015

Taxonomy Tidbit

Don't Leap Into Auto-classification: Throw a Tagging Party Instead!

by Seth Maislin



No matter your plans, in the end you will not achieve your findability and efficiency goals if you can't put the right values into the right data fields.

Here at Earley Information Services (formerly Earley & Associates) we had just that problem. We are rebranding (and other exciting things to come!) and consequently migrating to a new website. This migration project was running smoothly, with all processes generally on schedule: strategy, artwork, authoring, and technology. But we also had nearly 1000 pages of intellectual capital, webinars and papers and blog articles going back several years. Every one of these pages needed to be reviewed, rebuilt, and retagged.

I know most of you think 1000 pages isn't that many, but auto-classification is rarely cost-effective with under ten thousand assets. And our business terminology is specialized and interrelated, which would confound most auto-classification tools. So it's a manual job. A manual job requiring pizza.

(continued on page 3)

Editor's Focus

The Search for the Smooth Read

by Joanne Sprott

Taking a philosophical turn on the editing and proofreading thing. There are all kinds of tools that editors use to find inconsistencies in word usage or capitalization, punctuation, etc. that make a proofreading pass, for example, go faster. Since most of these tools are not available for the Mac operating system (the one I use), I've found that I rely on keeping an old-fashioned style sheet (recording how a term was spelled or capitalized or hyphenated, etc., and then doing search). But these are all mechanical helpers, and in the end, the editor has something a bit more subjective to do as a service to the author: searching for interruptions in a smooth read.

That's how I approach the editing task (proofreading itself is a bit more mechanical since you're not rephrasing unless it's egregiously bad grammar-wise). I see my job as being a stand-in for the "end reader," which is not the same as the friends and relations that authors normally give their books to for preliminary review. Friends and relations are cool, but they tend to be a) biased emotionally to praise rather than critique, and b) normally without a professional grounding in effective writing techniques for the type (fiction or nonfiction) or genre (academic, memoir, fantasy, romance, etc.) of writing.

Because I do this type of critical reading for a living, I have a broad exposure to different writers and can put the current writer's effort into a context. I know pretty much what to expect from effective

(continued on page 3)

Welcome to the Summer Edition of Slice!

We have been ramping up our book indexing activities as our regular clients with larger series of books have gotten into their production flow. Even with thunderstorm glitches, the fact that we can call upon each other and our associates gives us the reliability to keep production going no matter what. :)

In this Issue...

Don't Leap into Autoclassification 1
by Seth Maislin

The Search for the Smooth Read 1
by Joanne Sprott

Best Practices in Indexing 2
by Pat Rimmer

Plus our regular tidbits:

In the News 1

Resource Finds 1

Fresh from the Oven 3

Resource Finds

The folks at Info Trends Group are working on making search more usable at the enterprise level, where a great need exists to adopt practices used in consumer apps. Very interesting white paper located [here](#).

Cool new book on indexing by veteran indexer Nan Badgett, *The Accidental Indexer*, is out. Looks like a great read. More [here](#).



The Indexing Best Practices Document

A very fruitful indexer collaboration

by Pat Rimmer

Working with the Best Practices Committee was a joy. The group, made of five experienced and new indexers of various backgrounds and disciplines, worked very well together. Donna Shear and I were co-chairpersons. Linnea Dwyer, Anne Fifer, and Margie Towery were also valuable members. We asked several other ASI (American Society for Indexing) members to join us but did not find others able to contribute the time at that time. The five that worked on the committee functioned as a unit with hours of discussion and follow-up work. When one member was busy or ill, another took up the slack.

The focus and purpose of the committee was to further the practice of indexing by creating a document that could be used by experienced and new indexers as well as editors and authors. With this in mind, we wanted to use natural language that the newest indexer or a non-indexer could understand, and define related terminology that may not be as readily understood. Thus the revised document discusses the structure of an index beginning with the metatopic and main headings and ending with cross-references and locators. We also wanted to enumerate qualities of an excellent index that did not fit into the structural elements so a section for qualities was added. Many publications and other documents were consulted to include the ASI criteria for the ASI/EIS Publishing Award, Hans Wellisch's Indexing A to Z, and ISO 999 among others. These references and any others that were used will be available in the published document.

We used both Skype and Yahoo groups for discussions until the rough product was generated. Donna Shear shared our progress at a chapter meeting in early 2013 and received feedback which was incorporated into the document. This document was submitted to the ASI board for review in March of 2013. Comments and suggestions from the board required additions and restructuring.

In July of 2013, the committee met for three days at my house outside of Atlanta, Georgia, to revise the Best Practices document. We literally cut and pasted parts of the document to restructure and revise it. We added the qualities section and planned to add examples later. The committee realized that various disciplines had their own Best Practices and wanted to address those issues as well. To that end, at least one expert in each field was contacted and asked to prepare a short appendix keyed to the main document that would delineate the variations for that discipline. We were unable to produce an appendix for every discipline but many disciplines are represented. Examples were also added.

This document was once again submitted to the board for review and approval. The board accepted it for review by the membership. The committee presented the Best Practices and appendices at the 2014 National Conference in Charleston for discussion and suggestions. It was well received at the conference and was subsequently revised and uploaded to the website for membership review and comments. We received a few comments but very few changes were necessary at this point. Copyediting and further tweaking was done and the final document was submitted for approval and accepted by the board. It will soon be available to all who desire to use it for education or justification.

Truly, work on the Best Practices Committee was enlightening and pleasurable. It was work but not burdensome. Good friendships and business relationships were forged and a workable document was produced to benefit the indexing profession.

Pat Rimmer, one of PI's expert indexer associates, served on the committee that compiled the material for the Best Practices Guide, which will be published by the American Society for Indexing later in 2015.

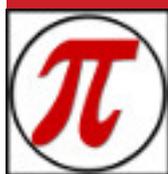
Maislin (continued from page 1)

Five of us from across the company attended two four-hour working sessions. We had our vocabularies ready and typed into Excel, did some QA, and then input our data into the CMS. It was tedious work that was especially uncomfortable for our marketing SMEs, who don't do taxonomy. Thankfully we had each other. We asked questions, laughed, and compared progress, and in the end we achieved great results that couldn't have happened any other way.

We establish organizing principles specifically so that people can work better as individuals, and as teams. Tagging is not fun (see also "[How to Get People to Tag Documents](#)"), but it's a great excuse for strengthening social bonds across the boundaries in your business. So is governance. When specialists gather from across the organization and experience in real-time what it means to have a common language, it's not only your content that gets better. Your people get better, too.

Does your content need some tidying up, or are you longing for a complete redo? Let us know how you're planning to get it done—or what's holding you back—and if we should bring the pizza.

(Originally published on the [Earley Information Science](#) blog on 4/16/15.)



Potomac Indexing, LLC
2007–2015
Maryland
potomacindexing.com
Produced in the United States of America. All Rights Reserved.

The Slice is published four times a year as a service to our associates and clients, providing articles of interest to the publishing community.

The information in this newsletter is presented as is and is based on the best knowledge of the authors. No warranty is provided (neither expressed nor implied).

Information in this document may be subject to change without notice. Consult your Potomac Indexing, LLC, representative for information on the products or services available to meet your needs.

Other company, product, or service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.

Comments and Questions: Contact Joanne Sprott, Editor and Designer at slice.editor@potomacindexing.com

The Slice

Spratt (continued from page 1)

writing on accounting, science fiction, sociology, and inspirational non-fiction, for example. All of these writing contexts have a different look and feel, a different flow to the text. Knowing this gives me the ultimate tool to do an effective editing job; the ability to find the places where I have to stop and scratch my head, go back a few sentences and come up with a smoother way of expressing something that works for that "story's" context.

I get to smooth out the bumps and fill in the literary potholes in the narrative, thus serving not just the author's writing purpose, but more importantly, the reader's desire for a positive experience.

So, even though my immediate client is the writer/author, and they are the source of my income, I see myself as ultimately the servant of the reader, to add value to their experience of a book. And in this way, I also become a partner to the writer in providing that reader experience.

It's one of the great satisfactions of my work. :)



Fresh from the Oven

From Kay Schlembach: My husband retired almost a year ago, and we moved from the Washington, D.C. area to near Albany, NY.

Our daughter, Grace, is a freshman in high school and thriving. I also survived two total knee replacements as well. It has been quite a year.

Fresh from the Oven (continued)

From Joanne Sprott: Under the "best laid plans of mice and men" category— Since December, I've relocated my freelance operation to a townhouse in Corpus Christi, Texas. We had some plans about moving to the great Northwest of the USA after selling our house in Houston, but have settled on being elder care providers for my husband's mother for a bit, so she can continue to stay in her own home. It's working just fine, actually, and we get weekly sojourns at the shore on the Gulf of Mexico. It's the freelance online business life that makes this sort of flexibility possible. :)

"Fresh from the Oven" provides a space for our partners and associates to let us in on their personal and work lives as freelance professionals.



In the News

Interesting white paper is available on using usability lessons learned from consumer-oriented search and applying to searching data within corporations. It seems that corporate search is somewhat behind the times...More [here](#) (a PDF download link).

It seems that ebooks are good for improving literacy. Read more [here](#) from this article on the research.

Joe Wikert writes on the risks of an all-you-can-read ebook subscription service. More details [here](#).

And actually, the most fascinating article was this one by Brian O'Leary on the natural confluence of book publishing and content marketing. More details [here](#).

In this column, we'll tune you in to interesting blog posts and news articles around the Web. Your finds or links to company news are welcome. Just send them to the Slice editor at editor.slice@potomacindexing.com