



The Slice

A Potomac Indexing Newsletter

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Partner Perspective



An Introduction from our Newest Partner

by Meghan Brawley

Hello! I'm Meghan Brawley, Potomac Indexing's newest partner—newest both in my addition to PI's management team and in my time in the industry. I've been indexing since 2012, after completing the American Society for Indexing (ASI) Training in Indexing course, but I worked in libraries for around ten years before that.

My life in information access started in college with my late-night work-study position at my university's reserve desk, which I loved. In between checking out file folders of photocopied articles and biology study binders, I was able to get paid to do my studies for my history degree. It's also where I learned to cruise databases for the fun of it, following subject heading trails to exciting new information. But I ended up considering librarianship only in the last week of my senior year, when a professor and mentor suggested it as a career (after she ran into me carrying a stack of thirty or so library books I had to return before graduation!).

And it was a perfect fit—I got to learn and teach something new every day, without

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Associate's Report

Logic and Language of Patterns

a 2015 Seattle ASI conference report by Maria Sosnowski

Scott Smiley presented a workshop on patterns. His goal was to get people to understand the logic behind patterns so that they can create their own for specific situations, rather than to just present a set of patterns for people to copy and use.

Pattern matching is a more advanced form of find and replace. Unlike macros, which do a series of actions and can move things between fields, patterns cannot move things between fields, but they can reorder chunks within one field. Patterns are a bit like a combination of Boolean search logic and algebra, best learned with problem solving and interaction. Scott introduced the steps as:

- Formulate the problem you are trying to address in ordinary English
- Translate this to the limited vocabulary and tasks of patterns
- Express this translation in symbols the software can understand

To help attendees, Scott provided a "cheat sheet" with pattern symbols in Sky, Cindex, and Macrex (although luckily the Macrex workshop was going on at the same time, so Scott was able to limit his presentation to just two of the three software options). He also had Sky people and Cindex people grouped so that when it was time to work in small groups people didn't have to add the complexity of different symbols to their thinking.

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Welcome to the Winter Edition of Slice!

Potomac Indexing has been working on many changes over this winter, including partner shifts, new connections in the religious publishing sector and a refocus for our content strategy offerings.

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A Fond Farewell to Kay and Seth

by Richard Shrout

Both Kay Schlembach and Seth Maislin have been integral to the culture of Potomac Indexing (PI) as we know it now. In order to thank them sufficiently, I need to go back to the beginnings of PI, when it had no name and the earth was almost void—or so it seemed in Maryland. Mary Coe and I had discovered that we could work together and in fact needed to work together even though we used different software and prepared different types of indexes—medical and database versus computer subject back of the book, and used different styles of indexing—many subheadings versus minimal. After a year or two of working together, we came to the conclusion one day sitting at Mary's kitchen table in Silver Spring, Maryland, that we needed to form a company, mainly because income taxes were getting too difficult to figure out.

The idea for the business structure of the company was primarily mine. Mary had two colleagues whom she thought would be great partners, so she contacted them, and that initial partnership worked for about two years. When the other two partners left (leaving Mary and me alone again), I was serving on the American Society for Indexing (ASI) Board with both Kay and Seth. Mary had not met either one of them but trusted my initial judgment to invite them both to join the partnership. They accepted our invitation to become partners and have thus been PI partners for the last ten years.

When Mary moved to Australia about five years ago, we were just not able to figure out how to maintain the business model with her included, given the vastly different tax systems of the US and Australia. So, Mary departed the partnership and Estalita Slivoskey replaced her as a partner. Mary is still an associate of PI and is doing extremely well down under.

Kay and Seth have been with PI, then, from almost the beginning of the company. The goals of the current partners will remain very similar, in keeping with our partnership in integrity philosophy. But there will be a look and feel difference given that it will be impossible to replicate Kay's and Seth's valuable contributions to Potomac Indexing.

As many of you as clients and associates are already well aware, both Kay and Seth are teachers par excellence. They both liked to put the partners through exercises that became great teaching moments. I remember one business exercise in particular where Kay urged us all to come up with our expected income in X number of years. Three of us came up separately with the same number. Seth's number, however, was four or five times greater. We haven't quite achieved his number yet but we are getting closer. So I would describe Seth as a true visionary in regard to where PI could eventually go. And if we needed someone to just talk—on anything—to anyone—both creatively and intelligently, he was our choice.

Kay, on the other hand, has been a behind-the-scenes worker bee and surrogate mother for PI. As long as she lived in Virginia and I lived in Maryland, the full name of the company continued to make some sense. Whenever I needed to take a flight in or out of Dulles, I could cross the Potomac River and her home was always open to me and any of the other partners, whether her family was home or not.



Kay's biggest contribution to the company has been her managerial skill. She ran many complex projects with teams of indexers. These projects were often technically complex, such as the index to Bartlett's Quotations for the iPad. Seth's big contribution has been his technical expertise, especially in regard to taxonomy, and embedded Word indexing and similar related techniques.

We had lots of fun working together whether remotely via Skype since we all live in different states, or at ASI or other conferences. Seth would keep us in stitches with his constant stream of puns and jokes. Kay's humor was very different. She would often come up with a pun but we would have to explain it to her. She was so good natured and would eventually figure it out and start to laugh. Kay's generosity of spirit is legendary at PI; she always knew what gift to give anyone who needed a gift for whatever appropriate reason. We hope that she will continue to serve as a consultant to us in that respect.

We held partner retreats at various locations over the years, including at Kay's house. We would spend at least one full day face to face. I think those meetings were very necessary during the formative years of the company. I remember many experiences fondly in regard to those meetings, with Seth telling us a constant stream of stories and jokes while Kay kept us organized and on task. At one location we had no white board so Kay wrote on the sliding glass door of our cabin somewhere out in the Northwest after an ASI conference.

Both Kay and Seth share a love of family and both treated the other partners as family. I enjoyed hearing many stories over the years about their spouses and children. They both possess the musical thread that runs through the indexing profession. Seth is a great singer in a local a cappella chorus, which actually sang the National Anthem at a Boston Red Sox game last year. Kay has recently been developing her singing voice. And Seth also plays classical piano.

So, an era has passed. PI will never be quite the same. We intend to continue to improve and to learn lessons gained from both Kay and Seth. And they are still around. The Bartlett's Quotations project was a referral from Seth's current company. PI has a strong relationship with his new company. They value our expertise in doing certain kinds and sizes of projects. And Kay, staying on as an associate, still loves to work on K-12 textbook projects.

The current PI partners will continue to emphasize our individual strengths so PI will continue on but will look and feel just a little different.

So, Kay and Seth, we will miss you both very much as partners. And we wish both of you and your wonderful families all of the very best.



Richard Shrout, MLS, MPA, founding partner of PI and past-president of the American Society for Indexing (ASI), focuses on domestic and international indexing issues, including the changing digital publishing environment. Richard has a passion for collaboration and service with 20+ years directing technical services in the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Federal Trade Commission library systems.

Resource Finds

Great idea and publication from ASI, Indexing for Editors and Authors, A Practical Guide to Understanding Indexes, by Fred Leise, Kate Mertes, and Nan Badgett. More details [here](#).

In the software arena, if you do any indexes in InDesign for ebooks, for example, KPS Indexing Plug-ins are a very valuable resource, indeed. More [here](#). (Disclaimer: PI has no affiliate relationship with KPS Utilities).



Fresh from the Oven

From Janet Perlman: I have a new ASI/ITI book coming out, called Indexing Tactics and Tidbits: An A to Z Guide. It's a collection of mini-chapters or essays about a lot of indexing-related things that are not usually taught or or that indexers don't usually get to discuss with other indexers. I've chosen an alphabetical format as an homage to Hans Wellisch, author of the 1991/1995 Indexing from A to Z published by the H.W. Wilson Co. The book will be out in April. Watch for it!

From Joanne Sprott: I'm getting ready to find out what seriously mobile work is like, since we are about to purchase a travel trailer and head out from Corpus Christi to points northwest beyond the Rocky Mountains. I'm counting on my mobile hotspot to keep me connected and internet-secure. And don't worry, I'll take pictures. :)

"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

—Joe Wikert has brought up an interesting interactive "more content" concept for ebooks. Instead of being simply "print under glass," tagged terms would be "live" and take you to more info (assuming you were online). The only thing missing was an allowance for looking up subjects not explicitly mentioned, but that figures. Comment discussion was interesting as well. More [here](#).

—Traditional brick-and-mortar bookstore chain Barnes & Noble is trying to figure out the integration with virtual and physical book experiences and their effort is compared to Amazon's model for same. Read more [here](#).

—Serial comma, anyone? Lastly, a little snippet for the editing geeks in the readership from our book indexing and editing style guide, the Chicago Manual of Style. 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

Brawley (continued from page 1)

having to deal with the publish-or-perish rigor of academia. At least, it was the perfect fit until my military husband and I had our first child. Suddenly, the nights-and-weekends schedule of the public library reference desk didn't fit with the boots-on-the-ground-in-24-hours operations tempo of his Army unit. Adding the problem of finding reliable off-hours childcare to the existing challenge of frequent moves and I knew I needed a change.

I'd been considering indexing as a back-up career already—I'd heard about it from a college newspaper friend who'd grown up with an indexer mother—and the timing couldn't have been better. So I dusted off the ASI Training in Indexing CD I'd purchased a year earlier and got to work. Along the way, I met Kay Schlembach at a regional conference in St. Augustine, Florida, where she kindly shared her advice on indexing with small children in the house. Not long after that meeting, Kay connected me with PI, and my first indexing job was as a Potomac Indexing associate. In fact, PI has kept me so busy over the last four years that I've barely had a chance to take on my own clients. Every time I would get ready to kick off my marketing efforts, she or Estalita Slivoskey or Joanne Sprott would come knocking with a new project.

And that's the beauty of PI to me. The funny thing is, now that I'm a partner, I'm getting to pull that marketing plan out and run with it. I hope to expand our client base into other subject areas, and am working with Richard Shroul on religious publishing efforts, as well as expanding our embedded indexing offerings. So we'd love to know about any updated interests or skills all our associates have as we move forward with PI, along with any needs for embedded indexing particular by our clients.

I'm looking forward to working with and learning from everyone here.

Sosnowski (continued from page 1)

The vocabulary of patterns is limited to “followed by” or “replace” and does not include things like “move” or “take” or “put” or other types of actions. He described this situation as a high school kid from Mars who only does exactly what she is told and whose vocabulary is very limited. And Scott reminded us that there is no undo button for patterns, so ALWAYS backup your index before you try one.

He provided several situations for us to translate the problem into the limited vocabulary and then express it in symbols. We started with simple problems, such as finding all terms that start with “poli” and grouping them. Then we worked our way up through wildcards, and ended with moving chunks of text around. The workshop was very interactive, with discussion and questions encouraged, multiple answers possible, and strengths and weaknesses of answers used to facilitate learning.

Think about how nice it would be to have an easy way to group and swap all acronyms as part of your editing process, rather than doing it along the way. Imagine using patterns to easily double-post names in a biography that is full of women with married and maiden names. Or, how about using patterns to edit an index done in run-in style after the client decides that no, we really do have room for an indented index after all. A pattern can easily take all the subentries starting with “and” to move them to the end of the entry.

If you missed the workshop, you can read about patterns in the recently released Index It Right! Volume 3, where Scott has a chapter on patterns.

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Maria has spent the last nine years indexing both books and weekly legal publications. Her background includes a law degree (JD) and a psychology degree (BS) as well as graduate level coursework in psychology, which has proven very valuable to PI.



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