



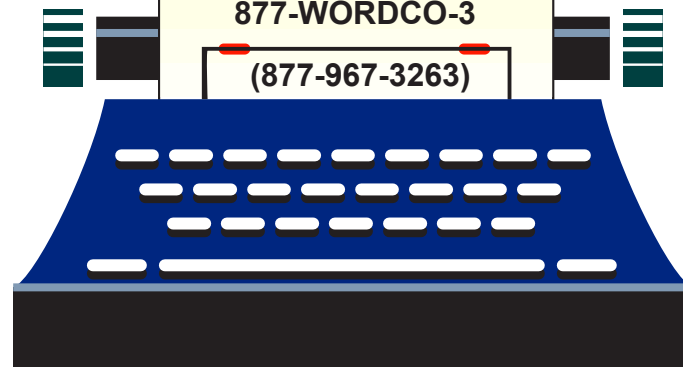
Sign welcoming visitors to WordCo

What Do You Need Indexed?®

Copyright 2009 WordCo Indexing Services, Inc. No part of this newsletter may be reproduced in any form without the explicit, written permission of WordCo Indexing Services, Inc.

We like hearing from you!

If you have any special concerns or questions, or have an idea for a future newsletter article, please contact Kathy at office@wordco.com or call her at **877-WORDCO-3** (877-967-3263)



Volume I, Issue 1

Summer / Fall 2009

Word from WordCo

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ✍ *Indexing News*
- ✍ *Employee Spotlight*
- ✍ *Know Your Index*
- ✍ *Workshops*

WordCo Indexing Services
49 Church Street
Norwich, CT 06360 USA

877-WORDCO.3 (toll free)
860.886.2532 (voice)
860.886.1155 (fax)

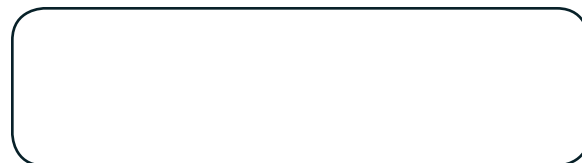
www.wordco.com
sringle@wordco.com



Indexing News

WordCo president and CEO **Stephen Ingle** delivered a presentation on "Indexing as a Balancing Act" at the annual spring conference of the New England Chapter of the American Society for Indexing (NEASI), held at Worcester State College on March 21. Steve's presentation was followed by a panel discussion involving Steve and WordCo employees **Rosemary Jordal**, **Bill Morrison**, and **Kathy Barry-Shannon**. The panel addressed the often conflicting demands put on the indexer, such as time constraints, space limitations, special client requests, as well as quality control.

WordCo was represented by senior indexer **Rosemary Jordal** and project coordinator **Kathy Barry-Shannon** at the annual conference of the American Society for Indexing (ASI) held in Portland, Oregon, in late April. They attended workshops and seminars on Web indexing, subheading construction, and using PDF documents in the indexing process. They also met and talked with indexers from around the country and beyond.



WordCo
Indexing Services Since 1988
WordCo Indexing Services, Inc.
49 Church Street
Norwich, CT 06360 USA



President Stephen Ingle and Project Coordinator Kathy Barry-Shannon review projects and deadlines at the WordCo white board.

A glimpse into the WordCo offices



Know Your Index: "Main Headings and the Value of Indexes"

by Stephen Ingle, WordCo founder and president

Most readers of books don't think twice about the index: it's just "there" and helps them find what they're looking for in the text. The index only becomes an issue when the information they are seeking is nowhere to be found: perhaps it is listed under an ambiguous or inaccurate heading, or is even missing entirely from the index. A professional, well-constructed index is complete, accurate, and "user-friendly," and helps the user locate pertinent information. The index also can serve as a marketing tool, since the presence of a superior index can influence the buying decision.

Let's look at one major aspect of the index: main headings. An index's main headings (also referred to as "main entries") consist of an alphabetical list of topics covered in the book. The book's user thinks of a topic and searches for it in the alphabetical list of main headings. In a psychology text, such a topic might be "personality": the user will naturally look under the P's for this heading. Or it may be something very specific, such as "behavior-outcome expectancy," or a person's name, such as "Adler, Alfred." Generally, a good main heading is one that is listed under the key term for the topic, is fairly concise and stands alone as a concept: thus, "results of Rorschach tests in adolescents" probably would be better placed under "adolescents" and "Rorschach tests," rather than under "results."

How does the indexer choose a topic for a main heading? Anticipating what the user will look up is the major factor. The

audience of a secondary-level text on health is going to be very different from the audience of a professional-level medical text, and the indexer's choice of headings should reflect this fact. The indexer must also take into account the physical limitations of the index. In many cases, there are only a finite number of pages available for the index, and the indexer must decide which concepts to include and which to exclude. The indexer has to prioritize headings, and be ready to remove less important ones if space becomes an issue. This "balancing act" is one of the most difficult parts of the indexer's job.

In addition, the indexer must be aware of implicit topics and concepts. For example, a book on the Middle East may discuss the phenomenon of "suicide bombers," but make no explicit mention of terrorism. A good index will include important topics, both explicit and implicit. (This is just one reason computers can't create quality indexes.)

Finally, the index should make judicious use of cross-references that help the user find what they are looking for. Cross-references (also known as "See" and "See also" references) direct the user to similar or related topics. This becomes especially important in multi-authored volumes, where authors may use varying terminology for the same concept. For example, in an edited book on the environment, one author may refer to "global warming," while another to "climate change." One author may use the terms interchangeably, while another makes a distinction between the



two. In such cases, the indexer would probably use "See also" references, as in: "Climate change, 45-47,52. *See also* Global warming."

When evaluating the main headings of an index, the editor should be on the lookout for the following:

- The major topics of the book are reflected in the main headings
- The main headings are sorted in a logical and consistent way. Numeric headings are handled in a consistent way (either spelled-out or at the head of the index before the "A's")
- The main headings are clear, concise, to the point, and not ambiguous, inaccurate, or wordy (for example, in a book on real-estate investing, the simple heading "values" could be interpreted as either monetary values or ethical values)

continued ...

Employee Spotlight: Dawn Tessmer

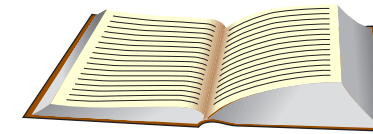
Some indexers have always been drawn to indexing as a career, and then there are those that stumble upon indexing almost by accident. WordCo indexer **Dawn Tessmer** may be one of the latter, but that doesn't mean she enjoys her job any less. "Before I saw the job posting, I never gave a thought to who wrote indexes. A year later, I can't imagine not being one of those people."

Prior to joining the WordCo team, Dawn earned bachelor's degrees in medical microbiology and immunology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She spent

four years as a microbiologist working in water safety, and has published numerous research papers on related topics. While there isn't exactly much demand for microscopy at the WordCo office, Dawn has found that her background in the sciences comes in handy when indexing: "It's definitely easier for me to work on some of the science and math books because I have that knowledge base to work from." And when she is working on a non-science book, "there is always someone from the team who can answer my questions or point me in the right direction."



In her free time, Dawn enjoys kayaking and folk guitar.



Know Your Index:

(continued)

- Main headings with long page spans are broken down into subheadings as needed
- The headings are appropriate to the book's audience
- Compound entries (for example, "ground-level ozone") are listed under both elements of the term, or at least cross-referenced

A good index is an invaluable asset to the book's user. Good indexes don't just "happen"; they result from the skill and hard work of a trained and experienced indexer. As a key component of the index, clear and accurate main headings are essential to your index's (and your book's) success.

Did You Know...?

- WordCo completes close to 500 projects annually
- WordCo has a team of ten trained indexers with a variety of backgrounds, working on-site at its facility in Norwich, Connecticut
- WordCo was started by Stephen Ingle out of his Queens, New York apartment in 1988

Workshops

WordCo now offers **indexing workshops** for its current and prospective clients. These one-hour workshops are available free of charge at your corporate location. Topics covered include an overview of the indexing process, as well as tips on evaluating indexes. Call the office (877-967-3263) or email Steve for more information.

