



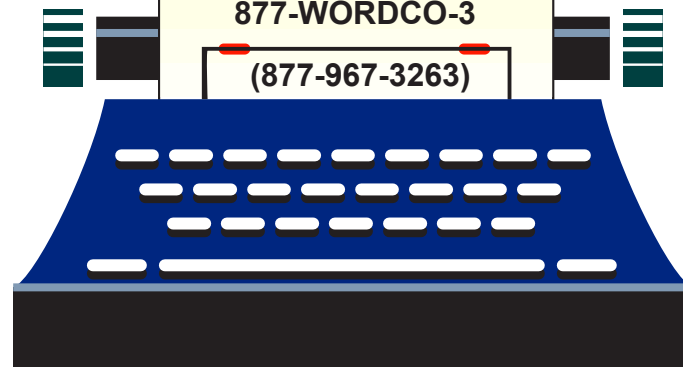
Sign welcoming visitors to WordCo

What Do You Need Indexed?®

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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)



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Word from WordCo

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ✍ *Indexing News*
- ✍ *Employee Spotlight*
- ✍ *Future of Books*

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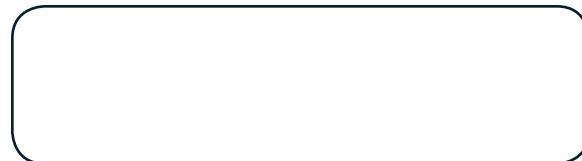
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Indexing News

WordCo president and CEO **Stephen Ingle** was elected vice president of the New England chapter of the American Society for Indexing (NEASI) late last year. As vice president, he will assist in putting together the spring and fall conferences. This spring's meeting will be held in Chelmsford, Massachusetts on April 17 and will feature presentations on index usability and marketing. Steve and indexing supervisor **Bill Morrison** will visit Minneapolis in May to attend the annual national conference of the American Society for Indexing (ASI). Bill will present a paper on creating name indexes efficiently, and Steve will participate in a panel discussion on running an indexing business.



Autumn and Kathleen review an indexing project (above)



At left, President Stephen Ingle exits WordCo headquarters



The Future of Books, Or Is There a Future at All?

by Stephen Ingle, WordCo founder and president

Back in the 1990s with the advent of Rocket eBook, industry critics confidently predicted that print books would be gone within ten years. Well, here we are at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, and books are still with us: fiction and non-fiction, the latter including cookbooks, travel books, textbooks, and professional books. My local megabookstore is still in business, and my daughter still has to spend hundreds of dollars each semester for her college texts. So do we in the publishing world have cause for concern, or can we somehow hold out until we retire?

Unfortunately, there is cause for concern. While millions of books are still being published, the numbers are decreasing (2007 was the peak year for printed books¹), and Kindle sales have driven Amazon.com profits to record highs. Manufacturing costs have skyrocketed and economic indicators have been shaky at best. It looks like we may have finally reached the watershed where electronic overtakes print. This is a threat to some, but as with any threat, there may be hidden opportunities.

Let's look at the trends. Aside from the decreasing number of books being published and the advent of Kindle and other e-readers, there are other unmistakable signs of major change. With certain types of books (textbooks, cookbooks, professional books) it is becoming the norm to include a digital (CD or Web-based) component. End users have come to expect this. Computer industry pundits predict that tablet PCs will take off this year², eclipsing netbooks and

possibly laptop computers. Such a trend would undoubtedly fuel the growth of Kindle and Kindle-like products. One can imagine that within five years college students will no longer carry around print textbooks, but rather work directly from their portable tablets.

We are undoubtedly in a period of great transition. So what does this portend for us in the publishing world? Here are some of my predictions:

- The number of print books will continue to decline, but not disappear. The decline may be especially drastic in certain sectors, such as cookbooks and travel books, as alternatives appear and gain popularity. Why spend your limited dollars on a cookbook when you can find a 5-star chef detailing the preparation of your favorite dish on YouTube? Why buy a travel guide when you can get current and reliable information on the best European hotels and restaurants right on your laptop or at the local Internet café?
- Until e-books look, feel, and smell like print books, and are totally solar-powered, there will still be a substantial market for the latter. There is a lot to be said for this versatile 15th-century technology. Printed books have a relatively long "shelf life," and don't depend on electricity, Internet connectivity, and
- The way people access information within books (and in general) has changed and will continue to change. The traditional back-of-the-book index has been challenged by text search, keyword search, and hypertext indexes. Successful publishers will understand,

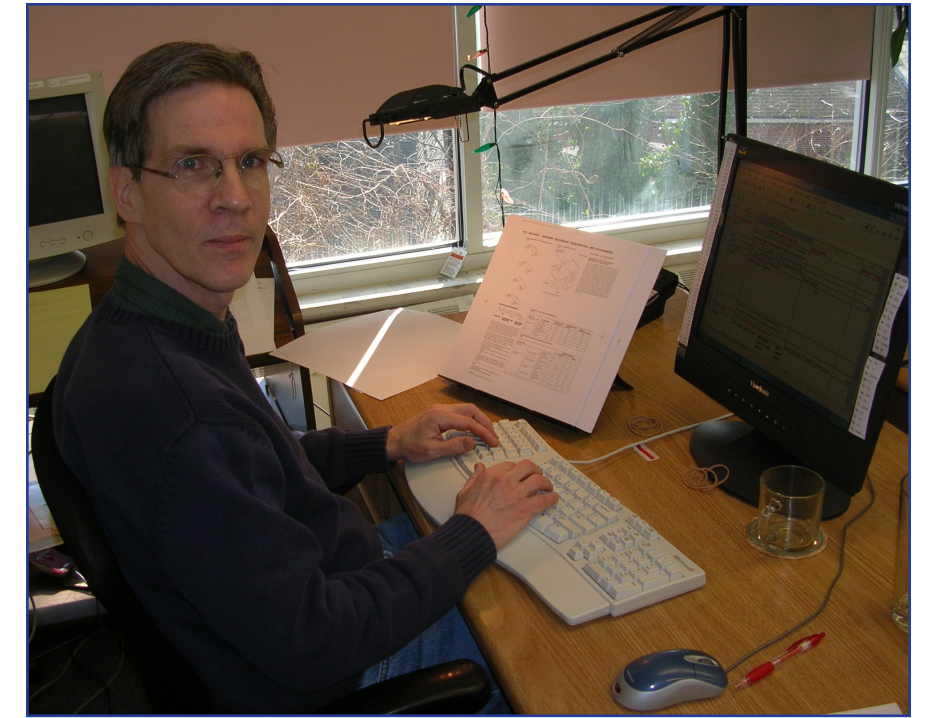
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are relatively immune to tampering. (Plus, they make great gifts!)

Employee Spotlight: Bill Morrison

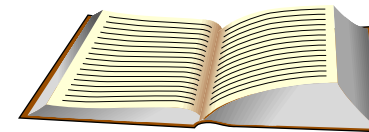
Indexing does not just depend on having specific skills: there is also the matter of attitude. When Bill Morrison started working for WordCo in 1999 he brought with him 25 years of improvisation experience as a freelance jazz bass player and 11 years of record cataloging experience. He has a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Connecticut College. "When they say you should have a backup plan in case a music career doesn't take off, I don't think having a philosophy degree was what they had in mind. This became apparent soon after I graduated."



When neither music nor philosophy was sufficient to pay the bills, he spent 14 years working for Rounder Records, 11 of those as a catalog editor. "In addition to having their own record label, at the time Rounder was one of the largest independent record distributors, and the catalog typically included around 25,000 active titles. We'd get as many as 100 new releases a week, and we had to come up with very concise and concrete descriptions for each one in no more than a single sentence, and in a hurry – and mere superlatives ('record of the year!' 'a great new talent!') wouldn't cut it with our customers, since they had heard them all before. This experience proved handy when I had to create index subheadings. In addition to dealing with the new releases, I had to generate large catalogs by artist, by genre, by record label – all this 'sorting' was good preparation for

indexing as well. Producing these catalogs on a relatively primitive and sometimes unreliable computer system also tweaked my improvisational skills."

Then there are Bill's music experiences. "As a freelance jazz bass player, a bandleader might call a tune I've never even heard, much less played, and I'll have to play it by ear, with no sheet music, and make it sound like I've known it all along. And talk about deadline pressure – the deadline is NOW. You have to use what you know to get through what you don't know. Maintaining composure under those conditions is good training for handling one of the prime challenges that an indexer faces – quickly grasping new material under deadline pressure. Indexing, however, is more like being in a recording studio than it is like playing live. You get to go back and correct your mistakes in the editing process."



Future of Books:

(continued)

and incorporate, electronic means of locating information in their texts.

This last point deserves treatment in some depth. In the next newsletter, I will move from a macro perspective to the micro, and address trends in indexes and accessing information in published texts.

1

<http://www.bowker.com/index.php/press-releases/563-bowker-reports-us-book-production-declines-3-in-2008-but-qon-demand-publishing-more-than-doubles>

2

<http://article.abc-directory.com/article/6709>