

Word from WordCo

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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
[@wordcoindexing](https://twitter.com/wordcoindexing)



WordCo is the major sponsor of ASI's "Providential Transformation" in Providence, RI

Indexing News

eBook Roundtable with Stephen Ingle and Joshua Tallent

Mark your calendars for Friday, April 29. Steve Ingle, WordCo President and CEO, will be hosting a roundtable discussion with Joshua Tallent of eBook Architects on ebook indexes at the American Society for Indexing's (ASI) Annual Conference in Providence, Rhode Island. The discussion will focus on issues with ebook indexing including proposed guidelines and standards.

For registration info, visit the ASI website or call Kathy at 877-967-3263x113.

Hope to see you there!



Joshua Tallent

The Future of Books: A Report from Tools of Change 2011 by Stephen Ingle, WordCo founder and president

I recently had the privilege of attending O'Reilly's Tools of Change 2011 conference in New York, a three-day event dedicated to the latest trends in publishing. As an indexer, I was interested in learning about more about how people might look for information in books, especially ebooks. Is an "index" enough, or do we need something more sophisticated? Do ebooks even need indexes? What about "smart search"?

I have to admit that indexing per se was not a major focus of this conference. But the trends that were being discussed certainly do have a bearing on how users locate information in texts.

Technology is changing so fast that it is hard to keep up year to year. Let's look at a few of the major trends:

1) The iPad and tablet (touch) computing are here to stay and are poised to become predominant. When the iPad appeared in early 2010 there was much debate about whether it would be successful and whether

it would really make a difference in publishing. The answer is a resounding YES! to both questions (look out, Kindle!). There is even talk about "the app" eventually replacing the novel, textbook, etc. as the major container for content. The truth is that the iPad has sold beyond all expectations, has already spawned multiple imitations here and in the Third World, and is on its way to becoming the information interface that the younger generation will be familiar with and come to expect.

2) Digital First! Up until last year, the main focus of most publishers when it came to ebooks was figuring out how they could digitize their print content. In other words, "we created a print book, and now we need to have it converted into electronic format" for Kindle, eBooks, Kobo, etc. This perspective is limited because it looks at electronic texts as simple extensions of the print book. Publishers who are taking the lead are thinking digital content first, print and other forms second. The digital "ebook" has the potential to go way beyond an electronic version of the print book.

3) The Market is Adaptable. Sometimes it seems that technology is moving faster than we can keep up. And there is certainly a generational "delay" effect (my parents' generation still writes



letters, my generation uses email, and my children use Facebook, just to cite one example). The technology is around for awhile before people figure out what to do with it and subsequently embrace it. When electric lighting was developed, some readers complained that they could not read without the comforting smell of a burning candle. When paperback books were developed, some complained that they did not pay proper respect to the venerated "book." But people adjust to new technologies eventually (though there are always a few Luddites out there!).

One thing that is certain: publishing is in more flux and upheaval than any time since a certain Mr. Gutenberg invented movable type a few years back. How do we make sense of all this? What's the big picture, and where does indexing fit in? For answers, see "The Future of Indexing" and "Brian O'Leary's Grand Unified Theory of Publishing" (next page).



Providential Transformation
ASI Annual Conference
Providence, RI
April 28-30, 2011
www.asindexing.org



Brian O'Leary's Grand Unified Theory of Publishing

One of the presenters at TOC 2011, **Brian O'Leary** of Magellan Media Partners, attempted to provide an overview with his "**Grand Unified Theory of Publishing**" (his presentation is available on vimeo.com, last time I checked, and is well worth watching). In a nutshell, Mr. O'Leary described the shift taking place in publishing. For the last 500 years, the three "C's" of publishing (Content, Container, Context) have been related in a certain way. Authors produced Content (manuscripts, stories, treatises, etc.), Publishers published Containers (fiction books, cookbooks, textbooks, etc.), and Context (the content's relationship to other information) was presented through footnotes, bibliographic information, etc. In this traditional model, "Container" (book, magazine, newspaper) became synonymous with "Content." Because of the digital revolution, all of this is changing, and the publisher's role in this interplay is also changing.

In the new, digital model, the most important component is Context (symbolized by the "hyperlink" and the Internet). In this model, the user looks for Content in a certain Context. The Container is

rather arbitrary, and can be shaped by the end-user. The end-user achieves control over the Container via the API (application programming interface). According to O'Leary, digital users can customize their API (e.g.: Huffington Post users can specify which type of news items interest them and they want displayed, as opposed to a traditional print newspaper which is static and presents everything together).

The new, digital model represents a shift that has already occurred technologically, but to which users will adjust gradually. There is definitely a generational divide, with the older generation using more traditional publishing forms, and younger people tending to be more digitally focused. For publishers, the focus will be less on Container and more on Context. Publishers will also continue to have a role in quality control and as gatekeeper (i.e., "curator"). This change will not occur all at once, nor will it occur in all areas all at once. For example, cookbooks represent

an area where this trend is occurring very rapidly. People are migrating from traditional cookbooks to Youtube cooking videos, to Cookstr (an online, user-regulated, collection of recipes). On the other hand, structural engineering 101 will probably follow a more traditional model (logically organized textbook with examples and test questions) built into a structure of course credits, degrees and accredited institutions. The consequences of poor bridge or aircraft design are more serious than a failed strawberry shortcake. But there is no question that the shift

has begun even in these areas, and as publishing professionals we must adapt or risk becoming irrelevant.

Along with Mr. O'Leary, I truly believe that the opportunities outweigh the threats. There has never been a time like this where publishing is changing so fast, but for those who are willing to embrace the change, the opportunities are great.



The Future of Indexing in an eWorld

"What is the role of indexing in ePublishing? Do eBooks even need indexes? Can't users quickly find the information they are seeking via Search?"

Yes, Search is a wonderful feature in eBooks, provided you know how to spell the concept or name you are looking for, and provided you even know WHAT you are looking for. What if you have a vague idea of what you are seeking, but can't come up with the exact term?

Here's where a good index can be essential to locating information in an eBook. Unlike Search, an index provides an organized overview of the pertinent information contained within the text. It's time to

stop looking at the index as a "search" device for locating information, and start understanding the index as a tool that facilitates the learning process.

From this new perspective of the index as learning tool, the limitations of relying solely on Search or a Table of Contents become apparent. Consider the following example: a student in Psychology 101 want to find out more about "depression." A search of the eTextbook will probably return hundreds of undifferentiated results that the student will have to wade through to find the relevant passage(s). Moreover, the search may fail to pick up things like "Major Depressive Disorder" because the student

entered "depression" in the search window.

An index, on the other hand, contains a heading for "depression" that is broken down into an organized list of subtopics, and some of the subtopics may be further subdivided into sub-subtopics. The student can not only quickly locate and access the relevant content (via hyperlink), s/he is also provided with a contextual means of locating other, perhaps previously unimagined, concepts and information. Thus the index goes beyond simply "finding" information. It can be a learning tool as well.

For a discussion on types of eIndexes and how they work, please visit [WordCo's website](http://www.wordco.com).

Be sure to check out WordCo's new website, which includes great information on ebook indexes:
<http://www.wordco.com>

What Do You Need Indexed?

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 x113 (877-967-3263)