



## The Mobile Office

One great advantage of freelancing as a technical writer involves the freedom to essentially go anywhere at any time, and still maintain productivity through different settings. While mobility comes in handy when attending planned events abroad—such as conferences and industry shows—it also allows for the flexibility that's needed to respond to the unanticipated life events outside of work...*without interrupting work.*

For example...at the beginning of this year—literally on Jan. 2, the day after New Year's Day—I found myself on an unexpected road trip with a friend who needed help on very short notice to make the drive from Seattle to San Diego. Since I carry a mobile phone and work from a laptop computer, I had the ability to maintain business while traveling abroad for ten days—an event that was unanticipated less than a week prior to my departure. Fortunately this unfolded on the tail end of the holidays, so I had no meetings and in-person commitments lined up...but I was able to take work with me and maintain productivity, and it wasn't necessary to inform clients that I was leaving town. It simply didn't make any difference in the operation of my business.

This ability to operate is also handy in cases involving more urgent matters, including health-related emergencies that involve long stays in hospital waiting rooms, or for working out of a remote location for a day while checking up on a family member. I've been able to navigate through such a situation with my father in recent years; schlepping my work equipment with me on days that I commute 40 minutes north to where he lives. It's a simple issue of mobility and flexibility; if I reported to an office location through a typical five days per week situation, I would be unable to spend that time with Dad *and* work at the same time.

I understand not everyone can stomach working this way, as it presents perceptions of upheaval and a lack of grounding. While this is typical for freelancing technical writers, I still do a high percentage of my work out of my home office. That's where all my resources and desktop equipment wait for my use.

In the grander scheme of things, I have it easy. Some of my mentors in the industry are forced to accommodate more aggressive travel itineraries than the aforementioned scenarios I've described—in some cases commuting coast to coast repeatedly within a calendar year. It all goes with the territory. 📄

## ASI Minneapolis & Inspiration from Ernie Banks

Minneapolis really isn't as far away from the outer reaches of the Pacific Northwest as one might imagine; something I tried to articulate in a recent article titled "Planes, Trains or Automobiles?" for [Indexers Ink](#), the newsletter for our local chapter of ASI.



The theme of the conference this year is "Indexing Central," I believe not only calling out the geographic situation of Minneapolis in the country, but also pointing to the training and networking opportunities for indexers at the conference. The arc of what the conference represents goes further than local chapter meetings or even an indexing course.

The national conference for ASI is the primary annual opportunity for indexers to connect and get up to speed on the latest conventions in the industry. For someone still learning the ropes, it serves as a sort of barometer to get a firmer understanding of the lay of the land—and what one needs to accomplish in order to be successful. While some might argue that the costs involved with traveling to and entering the conference are too high, for me it's invaluable for my tech writing business...nearly it's worth its weight in gold.

In Portland last year, I was finally able to understand that as attending the conference revealed information on how to further my facility as an indexer, and helped me to establish connections amongst peers and others in the industry. I believe there needs to be some continuity in these established connections, along with dialing into more of the training opportunities offered in Minneapolis. With so many tools and aspects to indexing, including evolving technologies and a changing focus on client needs, the national conference represents THE primary opportunity to accomplish several of these critical connecting and training elements in a jam-packed 3-4 days.

The Twin Cities also pique my interest since I've never been there before, along with the fact that a new ballpark for the Twins is opening up a mere four blocks away from the hotel the conference is taking place in. As a baseball fan (see the [blog post about entertaining clients at the ballpark](#) at *The Penny Farthing Commuter*), I have no choice but to mix business with pleasure and attend a game or two. Hmm...two games, huh? Perhaps the influence of something I've heard somewhere before is taking hold. 📄

"It's a great day for a ballgame; let's play two!" — *Ernie Banks*

To see additional issues of the newsletter, visit [Dexter's Corner](#) to find tidbits on each edition—and then simply click to read!

Visit the [Top Hat Word & Index website](#) or contact us at [info@TopHatWordandIndex.com](mailto:info@TopHatWordandIndex.com) with any questions or inquiries.

## The Seattle Indexers Celebrate One Year



The Seattle Indexers peer review group has now been active for over a year. It's a feat worth celebrating since there were several folks who thought it wouldn't work.

It didn't start without a few hiccups. The first few times, the group met at Crossroads Center in Bellevue...however that room was suddenly unavailable, and we switched to the Bellevue Regional Library.

Over the course of a year, the group met six times, if I'm recalling correctly, with more meetings to come. That's not too bad start to a group that was thought to be unable to meet! 📄

You can find out more [about](#) Top Hat Word & Index by visiting the website, where you can also see samples for [indexing](#), [technical writing](#), and [editing](#). In addition, check out client comments at the [testimonials](#) page!



## Dexter's New Look



Throughout 2009, Dexter's appearance was more about imagination than anything else. The only imagery involved clip art on the newsletter page for the website.

You might say 2010 is Dexter's year of arrival. A close-up of his face can now be seen on the newsletter page, along with other facial announcements (like, um, the one above) in a post at the blog.

For more on Dexter, visit [The Penny Farthing Commuter](#), our WordPress blog, and catch him in action! 📄