

### Is There an Abstract Writer in the House?

When I speak with clients about the various ways I can be of assistance through editing, indexing, or technical writing services, I have a tendency to unintentionally mention abstract writing as an afterthought.

While it's easy to leave abstract writing out of the limelight, its importance and tentacles of effect on documentation should not



Chatting about all things indexing, tech writing, and abstracting-related with colleagues in Minneapolis.

be underestimated. While abstracts are a completely different animal from indexes, they share the fact that they both serve as portals leading readers to the documentation in question. While indexes work on the back end through numerous entry points, abstracts serve on the front end as a short synopsis of the larger work at-hand.

The usefulness of abstracts extends beyond the typical theses and dissertations one might imagine from university settings. They are useful for summarizing in industry journals, acting as "mini-readers digests" to assist researchers who are limited on time and unable to dive into a plethora of unnecessary details.

It might be easy to surmise that an abstract writer takes a "skimmed version" of a read, and as such reduces the content into a summary. I disagree. I see it as a bit more delicate than that; in that as the abstract writer, part of the goal is to create focus and generate interest in the content—not just summarize it.

I like to keep three main components in play when abstracting. The first involves establishing the metatopic of the content, which actually borrows a method used with indexing; working with the metatopic helps to filter and reduce the summary so the relevant components can remain in focus. Secondly, critical keywords from the content should be included in the abstract.

Finally, if possible I like to include an example picked up in the content to add some interest, as a sort of hook. All of these components should create the result of a holistic and compelling abstract that serves the "motherhood document" it's intended to sell.

### A big day in Minneapolis for *The Commuter*

Prior to heading out to Minneapolis last May for the National Conference for ASI, I passed an email along to Frances Lennie, the incoming President for the organization. I mentioned how I started up [The Penny Farthing Commuter](#) earlier in the year, and that I planned on blogging to cover the events that week.



The "blogging lounge" at the Marriott hotel in downtown Minneapolis

The response I received was overwhelming. Frances expressed excitement over the notion of an attendee blogging the conference on a day-by-day basis. She immediately posted a message to the ASI listserv to share the blog with members unable to make it to the conference.

Frances was dialed into something that had not occurred to me; in how a blog could serve as an immediate payoff for indexers unable to make it to Minneapolis. Apparently there had never been a blogger to cover the conference as it was happening, so this was a big development.

Prior to this year, those who did not attend the national conference exercised extreme patience as they anticipated the next issue of *KeyWords*, ASI's national publication...and while the post-conference issue of *KeyWords* brings helpful (and hopefully numerous) articles of the conference workshops to its readership, it tends to lean less in the direction of overall conference impressions and anecdotes.

If *KeyWords* articles on the workshops represent bricks of information on key conference components, I see the role of the blog as the mortar between those bricks. By taking such an approach, I provide something different from the org newsletter, and by avoiding commentary about workshop specifics I also avoid stealing thunder from the hard work the authors of those articles put into them.

Still, I wanted to figure out how to write several posts over the span of the conference to maintain reader interest, and present a holistic analysis of what was taking place. Based on the comments from readership and the number of hits I received, it looks like ongoing reader interest was sustained throughout.

My attendance at the 2009 conference in Portland ended up being of help, as I was actually able to begin blogging about Minneapolis before I arrived with [the first post](#). By the time I made mentioned of the blog to Frances, there was something posted for indexers to read and cue them to return for future posts.

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.

### Publisher Marketing Strategies



This summer represents a time to retool the marketing plan for Top Hat Word & Index going into the latter half of 2010.

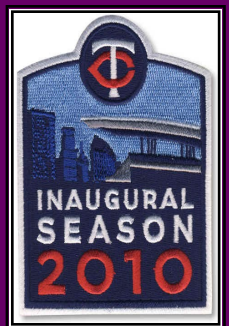
Part of a marketing plan for a small company involves "rogue marketing," — taking every single component that is used to "sell" the company, and treating it as 1% — in an overall effort to achieve a 100% "full court press" for a marketing plan.

For example, the company profile, marketing materials, tactics, and staff each represent 1% apiece. The challenge is putting it all together in a way that's effective.

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!



### Target Field: the latest baseball gem



For those of you who saw the Ken Burns documentary on baseball, you might recall Babe Ruth's reaction to the new Yankee stadium in the early 1920s.

"Wow, some ballpark!"

I had a similar reaction to Target Field, only open for a month when I flew into Minneapolis a couple days early to check out two games with a buddy from Chicago (the White Sox were in town). See [this link](#) for more details!