Hedden Information Management.
"Creating Web Site Indexes,"
www.hedden-information.com.

Hedden Information Management offers a series of online courses on indexing web sites. The core course, "Creating Web Site Indexes," consists of eight weekly lessons, and is geared toward indexers who already are familiar with the basics of HTML.

There are three other variations, depending on whether the student needs to learn indexing techniques or HTML. I took the full, 13-week course, "A course on web site indexing that includes additional instruction in both the basics of HTML and indexing techniques for those inexperienced in both." Although I am a professional indexer with some knowledge of HTML, I felt that a formal review of HTML would benefit me, as well as the lessons on indexing from a web indexer's perspective. Having completed the course, I feel I made the right decision.

KEY WORDS

No purchases of software or books are required for this course. There is one recommended book, *Website Indexing: Enhancing Access to Information within Websites, 2nd edition*, by Glenda Brown and Jonathan Jermey, 2004. It is available to download as a PDF, and students of the course get a 15% discount off the price of $20. [*See also* the review in this bulletin earlier this year, pages 32-33.] Although I didn't keep up with the optional reading assignments during the course, I find this book to quite useful now that I am attempting to index sites on my own. Students can download trial versions of the software and tools used in the course.

I enrolled in the spring 2005 session and enthusiastically started in on the first three lessons covering HTML basics (a new lesson was emailed to students each Sunday night). Although I had learned most of what is in these lessons before, I found the review of HTML tags, different types of links, viewing code, etc. to be very helpful, especially as taught from the standpoint of one who creates web indexes.

Each lesson includes exercises to practice what was just learned. Lesson 3 included an introduction to many of the available HTML Editing programs and how they work, and then went on to cover detailed use of Mozilla Composer, which is free and offers many options.

Also covered (and explained very well) were obtaining a web hosting service, and uploading web pages. These were quite helpful for me, as one of my goals of late has been to finish and upload my own web site (still a goal at the time of this writing, but getting closer to reality!).

An online discussion board is available to all students of the course, and although I found it helpful to read others' observations and questions, I participated only a few times.

Unfortunately, I started getting behind with the course soon after completing the first three lessons. This had nothing to do with the course itself, rather my own crazy schedule and personal obligations that popped up. I continued to work on the course, but at a very slow pace for about a month before I was able to return to the intended pace of one lesson per week. For that reason, I was hesitant to post comments or questions which would draw attention to my lagging progress. I chose instead, to correspond by email

directly with the instructor, Heather Hedden, when I was in need of assistance.

Hedden's responses, both on the discussion board, and to my emails, were surprisingly quick by comparison to instructors of other online courses I've taken. I think the longest I had to wait for a response was, at most, a day, and usually I heard back within a couple of hours.

Lesson 4, the beginning of the "core" component of the course consists of a thorough introduction to web site indexes – what they are and aren't – with links to excellent articles and encouragement to join the Web Indexing discussion group on Yahoo, which I did. (Some of the discussions at first seemed a little beyond my scope of knowledge, but I found that the more I follow the discussions, the more I understood).

The different structures and styles of web indexes are explained, including how they can vary, depending on what type of web site it is (whether a book-like document, an entire web site, or periodicals), with links to examples of each type. In addition, there is more about HTML coding, this time specific to index links and indention of subentries. Although using an HTML editor or software dedicated to web indexing minimizes one's need for learning these codes, it is still quite handy for times when hand-coding is necessary.

The "meat" of the course. and the real hands-on assignments are in Lessons 5 through 8. Lesson 5 takes students through the steps of creating a small index using either Cindex, SKY, or a word processor, and then converting it to a web index using an HTML Editor, HTML/Prep, and finally FAR HTML (an online help authoring tool). Though somewhat tedious, all were a big improvement on the hand-coding process.

Lesson 6 covers the types of sites suitable for indexing, how to obtain web site files, and preparing to index.

One of the chapters is devoted to the use of "Grab-a-Site," a program created specifically for downloading entire web sites while retaining their file structure. While it sounds useful, I had a lot of trouble using Grab-a-Site successfully, and was mostly just frustrated by it. In talking to Hedden about it by email, she assured me that the program has many limitations and that she may not include its use in future sessions of the course. (Students who

were unable to download sites with Grab-a-Site were able to use the files of the course for their practice indexes).

For me, the fun really began with Lessons 7 and 8, which take students through the process of creating indexes in XRefHT32 and HTML Indexer (both stand-alone, dedicated web site indexing tools), respectively. [*See also* the New Products column in this bulletin, page 141.] This is where I had many "AHA!" moments.

I recall being ecstatic when, halfway through entering my entries, I generated the index and it not only looked like a professionally done web index, but it worked like one, too!

Hedden's explanations and instructions, as throughout the entire course, were easy to understand and follow. Both lessons covered everything from extracting data, viewing pages, and adding anchors, to cross-references and editing. At the end of each of the lessons was a link to a printer-friendly version of the basic instructions for using that program, which I still find quite handy to have. Completing lessons 7 and 8 made me feel, for the first time, like I could really index a web site on my own.

Once an index is created, there are many options for format and style, which is the focus of Lesson 9. Knowing what revisions should be made within the indexing program and what is better done in the HTML editor can save much time and frustration when the index needs to be updated later on. Special situations for indenting and handling multiple entries for the same topic (an issue with periodical indexes, especially) are also addressed.

The amount of information and useful advice that is packed into Lesson 10, "Web Index Market" was astonishing to me. The first chapter gives a detailed overview of the types of web sites suitable for indexing, which is followed by "Competition from Other Search Methods," which explains why each of those methods is inferior to a web site index – valuable information when trying to convince a web site owner that they need our services! Explicit suggestions for marketing, methods for figuring out rates and handling index maintenance, and a compilation of useful discussion lists and other resources make Lesson 10 a gold mine of useful information, which can be referred to again and again as

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one dives into the web indexing market.

While the course deals mainly with the creation of A-Z back-of-the-book style indexes for web sites, Lesson 11 deals with other types of web indexing, specifically taxonomies (including periodicals and thesaurus creation), database indexing, and metadata indexing. There is a chapter for each type, with clear descriptions, advantages/disadvantages, other skills and expertise that may be necessary, and links to examples. The chapter on metadata indexing includes an assignment to create a metadata index based on keywords created and added by the student.

This sounded complicated to me at first, but Hedden's ability to break down even complex processes into easy-to-follow, understandable steps made it achievable even for me. An additional, optional assignment for the same chapter was to assign meta keywords to a site of the student's creation, add a search engine to the site, and configure it to search on keywords only (again, with clear, detailed directions). Time hasn't allowed for me to attempt this assignment yet, as I need to create the web pages first, but I plan on trying it out eventually.

The final three lessons (12-14) consist of techniques for choosing what to index, choosing index terms, and refining and editing the index. I assumed that this would be mostly review for me, but that wasn't the case. Although there was a lot of information which can be applied to back-of-the-book indexing, Hedden presents it from a web-oriented mind-set.

In order to create a really useful web site index you need to think differently and remember that people use web sites in a much different way than they use books. I found the chapter on variant terms quite helpful, especially the exercise for seeing which hyperlinked terms change color when just one is clicked on.

Also, the editing checklist at the end of Lesson 14 is something I know I will refer to again and again.

At the time of this writing, I am still finishing up the final assignment, to complete and edit a web site index and submit it for feedback. I submitted one draft, and am working on the (extensive) revisions that need to be made for it to be publishable. As throughout the course, though, instructor feedback has been timely and constructive.
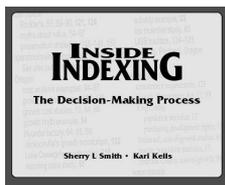
There is no doubt that Hedden is extremely knowledgeable about this complex field and committed to promoting the need for web site indexes and educating web professionals and site owners of their usefulness. I would have no hesitation in recommending "Creating Web Site Indexes" to anyone who hopes to add this skill to the range of services they offer.

Additional courses available from Hedden Information Management include "Creating Web Site Indexes & HTML Basics," "Creating Web Site Indexes & Indexing Techniques," and "Creating Web Site Indexes: Full Course."

Heather Hedden will offer the core lessons of the online course through Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science Continuing Education program starting in February 2006, rather than directly through Hedden Information Management.

— Review by Wendy Catalano, Last Look Editorial Services

Smith, Sherry, and Kells, Kari. *Inside Indexing: The Decision-Making Process.* Northwest Indexing Press. 2005. 189pp. [Available from *www.insideindexing.com*.]

INSIDE **INDEXING**
The Decision-Making Process
Sherry L Smith • Kari Kells

You say "po-tay-toe," I say "po-tah-toe"

Kari Kells and Sherry Smith's new book is a must-read for any indexer. Experienced indexers will find it illuminates many of their intuitive practices. New indexers will find illustrations of terminology selection so many say they want more information about.

The authors tested the waters before publication to see whether there might be a market for a book on the thought process in indexing. The international acclaim for *Inside Indexing* that followed is posted on the web-