

**SLIDE 1:** (I will read this): Presentation Script

Wooly the Frog Group

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**SLIDE 2:** (I will read this): Presentation Elements-and stuff on screen

**SLIDE3:** (I will read this): **INTRODUCTION by John Brown**

**SLIDE 4:** Our group participated in the VSU Archives Campus Canopy project, which involved indexing assigned pages from and entering our results into a prepared database. In order to evaluate the project, identify its strengths, and make suggestions for improving it, we combined our indexing experiences with research into the indexing literature to discover best practices for newspaper indexing.

**SLIDE 5:** The Campus Canopy project uses a pool of volunteers, primarily students from the history department, to create the index. Students are given photocopied pages and blank paper indexing templates; they fill out the templates, then enter the index terms into a password-protected web page linked to a MySQL database maintained by an Archives assistant.

**SLIDE 6:** Students are given minimal training and work 10-30 hours per week, usually as part of a class assignment. The newspaper is indexed at the article level by date, page, title, author, subject, and persons named.

**SLIDE 7:** There is a minimal controlled vocabulary, and names are limited to ten per article. The resulting database can be searched via the Archives web site. The VSU archivist supervises and manages the project, with help from the assistant.

**SLIDE 8: (John will introduce) INDEXING PRINCIPLES & PLANNING by Carolann Curry**

**SLIDE 9:** The group reviewed the literature for best practices in newspaper indexing.

Basic principles include:

- Ensuring that the index must be as accurate as possible,
- Maintaining consistency,
- Pointing the user concisely to the desired information,
- Not editorializing on content, and
- Containing no superfluous information.

**SLIDE 10:** Like any other indexes, newspaper indexes must be carefully planned before implementation, in order to maximize cost benefits. Factors to consider include:

- Scope of content, subject, geographical coverage, as well as depth and exhaustiveness of indexing.
- Purpose. How will the index be used, and by whom? An index should have a “mission,” taking into account differing needs and types of users.
- Total expense, which must be calculated before embarking on the project.
- The bibliographic unit, usually the article in a newspaper index.
- Whether to include a controlled vocabulary or thesauri.
- Whether to include graphics is a cost and usability consideration, as they are difficult and time-consuming to index.
- Edition. It is rarely feasible to index all editions of a newspaper.

- Indexers. Some projects are designed make use of volunteers. Others use full- or part-time professional indexers. The majority opinion seems to be that using any but a long-term, committed staff for periodical indexing is questionable.

- Rules of entry to suit local needs.

- Estimation of total number of entries.

- User testing should begin at the planning stage. Who are likely users, how will they use the index, and what will they expect to get out of it?

- Display. The final display of the index and search results is an important factor in usability and expense.

Once planning has been completed and funding obtained, indexing can proceed according to standard indexing practices.

**SLIDE 11: (Carolann will introduce) INDEX PROCEDURES by Carly Blackwell**

**SLIDE 12:** The newspaper index user, like any index user, will expect to find relevant information grouped by subject in a systematic order, with various access points and cross-references to help facilitate discovery. The indexer must determine the “aboutness” of the item, deciding what is relevant to the user, assigning entry terms, headings, and subheadings, using locators that will help the user find the desired information. The steps typically taken by any indexer are germane to the newspaper indexer:

1. Record the bibliographic data.
2. Analyze the content.
3. Determine subject facets.
4. Convert to the indexing language.

5. Review what has been done.

**SLIDE 13:** In addition, there are a number of procedures that are specific to newspaper indexing:

- Index locally, though an exception might be when the item has a local connection.
- Index selectively. For a student newspaper like Campus Canopy, indexable items might include athletic events, student government activities, building programs, university politics, student opinion pages, and social gatherings.

- Local Vocabulary Control. A local thesaurus is essential for a controlled vocabulary. Names in particular will require study of local sources..

- Locators. Refer to publication, date, page, and column, using consistent abbreviations.
- Keywords. Entry terms should be taken from the words of the newspaper itself, since that is what users are likely to search for. Use subject headings, including acronyms, for all stories and articles.

- Persons. Names of persons are particularly important to local newspaper index users. Though some advocate selectivity in personal names as well as events, this will limit the usefulness of the index.

- User testing should take place throughout index creation, informing the process as it goes along.

**SLIDE 14: (Carly will introduce) SOFTWARE REVIEWS by William H. Shepherd**

**SLIDE 15:** The group reviewed a number of software options for newspaper indexing, including Archivists' Toolkit, Authex Plus, CINDEX, Index Assistant, Macrex, MultiTes, SkyIndex, and wIndex. Unfortunately, many software packages mentioned in the literature are

defunct, outdated, or unavailable to and/or out of the price range of smaller projects. Many newspaper indexes make use of off-the-shelf database programs such as FileMaker, but this requires a certain amount of computer expertise on the part of the indexers and administrators.

We did find one program that might prove suitable to a newspaper indexing project: Archon. Archon is an easy-to-user web-based program designed to make archival materials available on the Internet; it is highly-customizable and works with current data standards such as MARC, XML, HTML, and EAD. This open-source software is the right price: free. As an open-source project, it is highly customizable. It offers levels of controlled user access and makes provision for flexible controlled vocabularies. There is easy import and export of data, which makes possible not only the incorporation of existing data, but exportation to other systems such as OPACs. It is now installed in over a hundred archival repositories.

Archon is thus a turnkey solution to archival management, and a good fit for the Campus Canopy project. It is conceivable that student workers could work directly on the subject index, using controlled vocabulary, with changes shown in real time. The data could then be output not only to the web, but also to an OPAC. These are great advantages in efficiency, usability, and interoperability, at virtually no cost. Its main disadvantage springs from its main advantage: as an open-source system, it is subject to the whims of volunteer developers and the vagaries of funding, and it requires tech-savvy administrators, as there is no commercial support system.

**SLIDE 16: (Bill will introduce) CLIENT REACTIONS & CONCLUSION by Andy**

**Wallace**

**SLIDE 17:** Our group contacted VSU Archives in the course of the project to the feasibility of applying newspaper indexing best practices to the Campus Canopy project. We received the following responses from Deborah Davis via email:

- There are “hundreds of pages” left to index.
- Controlled vocabulary was neither desirable nor necessary for this project, “since the vocabulary for this thing is so unique”.
- We were instructed to use a maximum of ten names per article.
- Archon was too complicated for volunteer student workers, and exposes too much of the underlying data..
- Indexers: Paid indexers are out of the question, due not only to the budget, but the basic plan of the project, which has a primarily educational purpose..
- Testing: There has been no systematic user testing..

In summary, the VSU Archives reports that their current procedures are good enough for their purpose and budget.

**SLIDE 18:** Our conclusion is that the VSU Archives would have to make several changes in order to comply with best practices in newspaper indexing, including:

- The use of professional indexers to assign subject headings and create controlled vocabularies, if not to do the indexing itself. There is widespread agreement that not everyone is suited to be an indexer; our group has noted the difficulty current Campus Canopy users have in following simple instructions such as “Enter names Last Name, First Name.” We will recommend that VSU Archives hire an indexing consultant to assign subject headings and create controlled vocabularies.

- Creation of a thesaurus and controlled vocabularies for names and subjects. No item was more often cited in the literature as essential to a successful newspaper indexing project. If volunteers continue to be used, a coded subject thesaurus might be desirable, and an automated controlled vocabulary would greatly increase the productivity, accuracy, and consistency of student workers.

- Indexing every personal name found in the source, made easier by selection from a controlled vocabulary list.

- Use of Archon to control both user access and controlled vocabularies, as well as publish the index on the Internet and to the VSU library's OPAC..

- User testing should be done on actual users of the index, to determine if the current implementation is meeting their needs..

- Since we have only vague figures for the amount of work left on the project, it is impossible to estimate either a budget or timeframe needed to implement our recommendations.

However, our recommendations have been relativized by the purpose of the Campus Canopy project, which is not to create an index using best indexing practices, but to involve students in an educational endeavor through participation in a real-life indexing project at VSU Archives. Since the client is perfectly satisfied with the present nature and implementation of the project, and has no interest in using different procedures, standards, or software, we conclude that this assignment has been purely academic. **SLIDE 19**