And You Can Quote Me …

What is the deal with quotation marks? It used to be, among the punctuation marks, just the apostrophe that I felt sorry for, but lately quotation marks have run into trouble.

If in the book the author puts a phrase in quotation marks to indicate it is an idiom or special use of the term, then I pick up the term in quotation marks for the index. If, however, it is the first occurrence of the term and the author has set it off to define it and then subsequently uses it without the marks, I leave off the quotation marks in the index. But if the term remains in quotation marks throughout the book, I follow suit in the index. This practice, which I assumed to be the norm has been changing, as I hear from some indexers that they do not use quotation marks in the index for these author-created instances. They only apply quotation marks to titles in accordance with the *Chicago Manual* rules. I have recently worked for a publisher that does not allow quotation marks on main headings for any reason, so I had to find creative ways to put titles of articles on sublevels in order not to violate the in-house rule.

It is true that some authors tend to overdo the quotation marks for emphasis or to denote their clever phrases. Nevertheless, my policy is to conform to the book. This can create situations in an index entry where I have to pay attention to where I place a comma. The grammar rule is to place the comma within the quotation marks, like so:

>   Direct infringement
>   "totality of circumstances," new drug applications

Although some indexers may place the comma outside the closing quotation mark by reasoning that the quoted phrase does not contain a comma, that punctuation usage is incorrect. There are some punctuation marks that cannot be inserted inside the closing quote – question mark, semi-colon, and colon – but periods and commas always go inside. In fact, it would be a good check to search indexes for this error prior to turning them in.

Lately the quotation marks in my indexes have become a real thorn in my side. The problem comes from cutting and pasting from PDFs into the index. My index ends up with two types of quotation marks: the ones I input from my keyboard which are straight up-and-down marks and which look the same for both opening and closing versus the ones from the PDFs which are curly and look different for opening and closing. I have to remember to substitute one type to the other, and I usually put them all into the straight version to match the ones I created. I don't think it is a good idea to turn in the final index with a mix although I am not sure if most typesetters will convert them anyway to their own format. (By the way, this problem of the keyboarded versus the PDF style can apply as well to the apostrophe and sometimes even the comma.) However, the indexer needs to pay attention here because they can have the identical text with the two

different types of marks and then they appear in the index as two separate entries. Imagine how dumb that looks!

"Michigan Mediation"
"Michigan Mediation"

Hopefully this will be caught in proofreading, but the use of PDFs can create a whole new set of problems for indexers to be aware of when proofing. I use software from Leverage Technologies, IndexCheck™, that reports punctuation inconsistencies (among its many other proofing benefits) so I don't have to rely on my eyes alone.

There may be a way in your software (indexing-specialized software or Word) to set it so it always creates curly quotation marks. I have not figured this out how to use them myself, but I am leery that they will necessarily match the ones that come from the PDFs or typeset documents. They may introduce another inconsistency instead of curing the problem. In fact, your client may not want curly quotation marks as they are a special character that may need to be converted or tagged in their data so before you start submitting indexes with them, you may want to confirm with your customer that they will be acceptable.

Cutting and pasting from PDFs into my indexes has become a major way to work. I copy in all sorts of phrases – especially foreign words – that I don't want to retype and worry about typos. But it does have this down side, especially with quotation marks, accents, etc. After all it is "progress." And please note that period placement in the closing quotation mark!

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