PREFACE

A comprehensive technology book for the medical transcriptionist (MT) has been a long time coming and sorely missed. Constant shifts in technology and the tremendous lack of standards within the transcription industry make an all-encompassing technology text for MTs a moving target. Just as the medical landscape is enormous and ever-changing, so too is the technology landscape. As any educator or working MT will acknowledge, there is no single medical reference that will serve the needs of all transcriptionists, so the goal of any educational program is to provide foundational knowledge that empowers the MT to research intelligently when more information is needed. Likewise, there is no single technology book that can serve as an all-inclusive reference for MTs. This text is designed to introduce concepts that will allow the MT to better understand the technology required to work proficiently and to provide the foundation for learning new software applications going forward. In addition, it is dense with practical, useful information that will allow the MT to put concepts and techniques to use immediately. Each of the three major sections—Windows, Electronic Communication, and Digital Transcription—begins with conceptual information that is followed by detailed, practical application of those concepts. The objectives of the book meet or exceed those of the AHDI Model Curriculum.

The book is designed to serve as a textbook for the classroom as well as a reference for the working transcriptionist. Objectives and keywords are listed at the beginning of each chapter to help set the stage and focus the reader on the foundational concepts. Ideas for applying the concepts are highlighted throughout the text to allow both the student and the working MT to see how concepts and techniques can be applied in everyday life. Questions to elicit critical thinking and practical application are located at the end of each chapter for the benefit of both students and practicing MTs. Quizzes and testing materials suitable for classroom grading are located in the ancillary materials provided to instructors.

Technology topics covered are those most likely to touch the working life of a medical transcriptionist. While there are many other technology topics that could be covered, such as digital cameras or managing music, only those topics most relevant to the working MT are included in this particular text. Detailed information is given for the Windows Operating System, Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Windows Live Messenger. Of course, the postgraduate MT may elect to use other software brands, but giving detailed information of these particular applications serves several purposes. First, Microsoft applications are the most commonly used applications and they are available to the student without having to make additional software purchases. In addition, providing detailed

information on these representative applications demonstrates how the particular software class can be applied to everyday tasks.

A focus on efficiency and productivity through the use of shortcuts, shortcut keys, and native Windows tools distinguishes this text from most other software textbooks. Effective and efficient use of the keyboard is the hallmark of a productive transcriptionist, so a heavy emphasis is placed on the use of keyboard commands.

The biggest challenge for any technology writer is keeping up with the constantly changing topology. Developing a technology book that will survive its own publication life-cycle is equally as challenging. To maintain the book's currency and relevancy, the most stable aspects of technology are printed in the text itself. Significant changes will be published on the companion website. Likewise, website addresses for recommended resources and third-party sites are published on the book's companion website in order to maintain the accuracy and currency of the links. Icons are located in the margins throughout the text to direct the reader to online information.

There would be little debate as to the merits of teaching students how to use Windows and Windows-based software applications, but the question of *which version* of Windows to include in a technology textbook is much harder to answer. The release of Windows Vista coincided with the writing of this text, but market indications showed a slower adoption rate for this particular operating system than its predecessors. While technical schools and colleges that teach medical transcription may be advancing to Windows Vista, the medical community is slow to adopt major changes in technology, especially when compatibility issues require significant software changes, as has been the case with Windows Vista. It's not unlikely that the student of medical transcription may learn Windows Vista in school and then actually use Windows XP on the job. To address this dilemma, the book covers concepts that are foundational to all versions of Windows and then provides detailed information of both Windows XP and Vista. Sections of text that are exclusive to one version are clearly marked with a shaded stripe down the edge of the page. Individuals may choose to read the Vista-specific text or the XP-specific text without worrying about missing vital information. This provides students and postgraduate MTs a reference for Windows regardless of the version they are required to use on the job and allows the instructor to tailor the class to the specific needs of the student and the resources available to the school.

I know very few transcriptionists who enter this field because of their love of computers. Most MTs find the medical knowledge and the opportunity to participate meaningfully in patient care to be the more attractive aspects of the profession. The computer knowledge required is often the most daunting and discouraging part of the profession. My goal is to show MTs that technology can be the key to a better future through increased income potential and more job satisfaction. I hope this purpose is evident and that my fondness of technology and my passion for empowering the working medical transcriptionist show throughout each chapter of this text.

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October 2008