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This publication is indexed and abstracted by The Australian Clearing House for Library and Information Science for Australian education index and Library and information science abstracts.
The word 'index' is derived from the Latin word with the general meaning 'the pointer'; the function of an index to a document is to point out where in the text may be found information about particular people, places, or subject topics. The unique value of an index in information retrieval is that each name or topic-description is treated independently; this is expressed by an arrangement - almost always alphabetical - that does not depend upon the order or the emphasis of the text. The index serves, in particular, a researcher who seeks to find what (if anything) the text has to say on some topic of interest, and a reader of the text who wishes to refresh his memory of the treatment of a topic within it.

A common criticism made by book reviewers is that the book under review either has no index at all, or has an index that is inadequate. The value of most publications is enhanced by an index, although its scale will vary: in some works a simple index of proper names is adequate, in others only a comprehensive index will suffice. When a publication needs an index, do not publish without one.

There are some excellent works of reference on the preparation of indexes, including *Book Indexing*, by M.D. Anderson in the Cambridge University Press series *Authors' and Printers' Guides*; *Indexing, the art of*, by G. Norman Knight, George Allen and Unwin, London 1979; and the British Standard BS 3700: 1976, *Preparation of indexes to books, periodicals, and other publications*. A general introduction only is possible in this manual.

Although the preparation of the index is often regarded as - in some sense - the responsibility of the author, most authors are unwilling to undertake the task, and few can match the skills of the professional indexer. The author's wishes as to the scope and scale of the index should not, however, be ignored; and it is obviously essential for author, editor and indexer to reach a common understanding of what is desirable and practicable before the index is prepared.

**The form and layout of an index**

**Components of an index**

An index consists of two basic parts: the headings which are (almost always) words, representing some feature of the content of the main text; and the references, which are (almost always) numbers, indicating the precise occurrence of those features within the text. Together, these make up the index entries.

The headings may be subdivided into main headings, which are arranged in alphabetical order to provide the general sequence of the index; subheadings which are subordinate to the main headings, and arranged in a new sequence under each main heading; and sub-subheadings, similarly subordinate to the subheadings.
The references are arranged in numerical order at the end of each entry.

- **sheep**
  - blowfly, 35
  - measures to counter, 120, 310
  - breeding, 65, 110
  - introduction to Australia, 5, 9
  - numbers in Australia, in 1850, 259; 1851-61, 270; 1870, 304; 1970, 400
  - runs, 63, 75, 420
  - fencing, 197, 304; ownership, 205-6, size, 202
  - stations, 300
- **ships**, 64

In the example, 'sheep' and 'ships' are main headings; 'blowfly' and 'stations' (and those between) are subheadings; 'measures to counter', 'in 1850', 'fencing' and the terms running-on from them in each case, are sub-subheadings.

The references here are to page numbers; the burden of the first two complete entries is, then, that on page 35 of the text, blowflies in relation to sheep are discussed in a general way, while, specifically, measures taken to counter them are discussed on pages 120 and 310.

A special form of entry is the cross-reference, which directs the reader from one part of the index to another, rather than directly to the text.

A see cross-reference directs the reader from a heading after which there are no references, to a heading, or headings, under which the relevant references will be found. The relationship between the headings is normally some form of synonymy, whether in general use:

- companion animals, see pets
- or reflecting a particular emphasis of the main text:
  - conscription, see National Service
- or a convention adopted by the indexer:
  - Charts, wall, see Wall charts

A see also cross-reference directs the reader from one complete entry (with references) to another complete entry. The relationship between headings in this case may be any of a number of kinds, which cannot be enumerated here; the general purpose of the see also cross-reference is to 'remind' the reader of other headings potentially relevant to someone interested in the topic referred from:

- pets, see also cats; dogs
  - care of, 69-70

The selection and use of appropriate cross-references is among the principal skills of a good indexer.

A problem often encountered in this field is typified by the legitimate use of different names for the same person, place or thing in different parts of the text. The subject of a biography, for example, may at a particular time of life have become widely known under a pseudonym, or by a title; the subject of a history may be a place that was renamed during the period covered. Two solutions are available, and the choice between them requires informed judgement. One is to adopt in the index the name most appropriate to the text as a whole, and to provide a see reference from the other name(s).

Van Diemen's Land, see Tasmania
The other is to use each name for the appropriate entries, with see also references between them.

Tasmania, see also (to 1855) Van Diemen's Land
Van Diemen's Land, see also (from 1855) Tasmania

Of these, the first course is generally preferable, as it brings all references under a single heading; but if the adoption by the author of a 'new' name represents a distinctly new direction of the text, the second course must be taken to avoid misleading the reader.

Alphabetical arrangement

When compound headings (i.e. those consisting of more than one word) arise, a choice must be made between two systems of alphabetical arrangement, word-by-word and letter-by-letter. In the word-by-word system, the space between words is regarded as a character preceding the ordinary alphabet, and thus each word is ordered separately. In the letter-by-letter system, the space is ignored.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>letter-by-letter</th>
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<td>New Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new broom</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>Newbury, Major M. W. H.</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
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<td>Newington</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newspapers</td>
<td>newspapers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Either system is acceptable in an index, provided it is consistently adhered to.

When names are included in an index, the prefixes Mac, Mc and M' are best arranged as if all were spelt Mac:

MacArthur, A. B.
macadamia nuts
M'Cay, Sir James
McEwan, E. Frederic
machines
Macintosh, C.

When indexing names with prefixes such as de, von, la and so on, place the form most used by the author of the text as a main heading and provide a cross-reference from the other:

Kluck, Alexander von, 64, 76
von Kluck, see Kluck

References

The references in indexes are normally to page numbers; if in a particular case they are, say, to paragraph numbers or item numbers, this should be stated at the beginning of the index (and preferably at the head or foot of each page of the index). References may be distinguished typographically for a number of purposes, for instance, bold type to indicate the reference leading to the fullest information on the topic, italics to indicate references to illustrations, a suffix 'n' to indicate references to notes. Such conventions should also be explained at the beginning of the index.

When a subject is dealt with over consecutive pages of text, only the first and last pages of the sequence need be specified:

Australia, 116-21
On the other hand, if references to a subject occur *incidentally* on successive pages, the pages should be listed separately:

Australia, 19, 20, 21

The indexing process

The indexer's first task is to understand the text, not just as a reader might, but with explicit attention to its scope, its development of themes, the specialist competence demanded of its intended readership, and the extent and manner of its potential use as a reference source. This stage can be accomplished from galley-proofs, and should issue in a provisional system, at least of main headings, and decisions on such matters as whether or not illustrations and subtitles (introduction, footnotes and the like) need to be indexed in detail, and whether the index should be subdivided into, say, a 'names' and 'subject' index.

In general, this subdivision is undesirable, and should only be resorted to when (as in, say, a taxonomic work) the preponderance of name entries in a single index would seriously obscure the structure of the index as a whole.

When final page-proofs are available, the major task begins. Each page of the text has to be read line by line to record significant occurrences of items to be indexed. At the same time, the adequacy of the headings being used must be monitored, with a lively eye to shifts in the meaning of particular terms, or the use of different terms with the same essential import. If a heading is being used with unexpected frequency, if a topic is observed to occur only in a particular context, consideration must be given to 'reducing' the corresponding heading from the status, say, of main heading to that of sub-heading.

The indexer must strive to maintain the viewpoint of a reader of the publication, to ensure that no significant passage of text remains unindexed, and that no index entry is obscure or misleading. Beyond that, no two publications present the same problems, and few general rules could be given, even if space allowed. The index to a well-recognised work of a similar nature is often an invaluable aid.

Indexing equipment

What is needed is a system whereby headings can be recorded, and references added to them, progressively as the text is examined; and in such a form as to allow convenient arrangement of the records in order as required for the final index.

Manual systems

Indexers have developed a number of systems based on cards, or slips, on which entries are hand-written or typed.

The main features of one such system are briefly described here.

Plain white cards of small, uniform size are used. As headings are devised, they are written at the centre-top of a card (for easy sorting), a separate card being used for every complete entry as it arises in the text. Thus the first five cards used for the example above would read:

sheep, introduction to Australia, 5
sheep, introduction to Australia, 9
sheep, blowfly, 35
sheep, runs, 63
ships, 64
As the indexing proceeds, these are simply stacked (or placed in a sorting-box) in groups according to the initial letter. When the text is completed, they are fully sorted, first by main heading, then by subheading and so on. References to each complete entry can then be consolidated on a single card (e.g. the first two entries in the example above), and the complete sequence edited to comply with the conventions of the index. Some book-printers will accept copy for an index in this form; otherwise, a typed version of the final index can be prepared by transcribing from the cards in order.

Computer-based systems

A number of commercially-available systems, suitable for use on 'personal' microcomputers, have been developed specifically as aids to indexers. The features of, and functions performed by these systems, vary, but from the indexer's point of view, their effect is to remove the need for handling cards and slips, and the concentrated effort involved in alphabetical arrangement and ordering. They may also provide for automatic page-layout and typesetting.

It should be emphasised that although these systems are essentially combinations of 'sorting' and 'word-processing' functions, many systems that offer such functions for general use are not well-adapted to the particular requirements of index-preparation. They may not, for example, be designed to sort upper- and lower-case initial characters in a single sequence; or to produce two-column copy with the typical layout of an index. An indexer who is not also a computer-programmer is well advised to seek out a system specifically designed for the task.

Some printers are equipped to accept copy for an index in the form of computer 'disks'.

The finished index

In general, and most emphatically if the index must be revised (usually, shortened) at editorial stages, the index should be proofread by the indexer, who must also of course be notified of any change whatsoever in the pagination of the text.

An index should be preceded by an introductory note, at least to indicate the significance of any typographical variations, but preferably also referring to the system of alphabetical arrangement employed, any omission of indexable material (such as footnotes), and explaining any outstanding features of general indexing policy.

The indexer should be acknowledged, if not by a specific attribution at the head of the index, then at least in the 'acknowledgements' section of the publication.

* * * * *

BOOK REVIEW


This volume contains the Proceedings of the Style Council 1986 held at Macquarie University 17-19 February 1986. It contains fifteen papers and five appendices (alas, no index) and the etc. in the sub-title covers papers on problem word endings, pronunciation, foreign words, abbreviations contractions and acronyms, formats for business correspondence, comparing style manuals, sexism in language, colloquialism, trademarks and technical language.
The book is not at all prescriptive. At the end of each paper there is a short record of the discussion which followed each presentation, so a range of views is available.

The great value in this scholarly work is in its illumination of the subject of language. It discusses why we use language the way we do; why we should think about how we use language and why we should think about change. And it is a great lesson in the use of gentle tolerance.

P. I. Leehy

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

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Mrs G. Triffitt, 16 Blackburn Street, Pearce, A.C.T. 2607

* * *

BOOK REVIEWS – INDEXES MENTIONED


MCLAREN, Ian F. *John Dunmore Lang: a comprehensive bibliography*. University of Melbourne Library. Reviewed by David Headon, *Australian book review* no. 89, April 1987. "McLaren divides his bibliography into seven sections and thirty-two appendices. The seven sections are: publications by Lang, unpublished titles, parliamentary acts and papers, Lang's contributions to other publications, his three newspapers (and three proposed publications, the most interesting being 'The Australian League', announced in 1850 when republicanism was in the air, but alas, never published), cutting books and a select index to newspapers"
and monographs to 1878. Appendices include an index to newspapers and journals post-1879, works on Lang by others, dedications to and commemorative verse for Lang, a listing of his numerous overseas shipping movements and his cameo appearances in two early Australian works of fiction: Henry Savery's Quintus Servinton (1830) and James Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh (1929).

'There is an institutional index, a subject index and a list of names and addresses of contributing libraries... A further problem with information provided by questionnaire is the question of balance. Although one expects some libraries to have more entries than others the imbalance revealed by the institutional index is rather surprising. The largest number of entries, 71 page references, are for the University of Melbourne libraries. The State Library (27 page references) and Monash University (19 page references) seem, by comparison with the University of Melbourne, to be under represented.'

'The commercially produced index takes up nearly one quarter of the book, bringing together entries that are otherwise separated. It lists all items both by title and author/editor and provides subject access to most major topics, regions or persons, but obviously not to every single work included. 'South Pacific' is not a subject heading, but I stumbled across a bibliography of bibliographies on that area only because it happened to originate from the South Pacific Commission. It might be a good idea to investigate the feasibility of a keyword index for a future edition.'

WOOLLS, E. Blanche & LOERTSCHER, David V. (eds.) The microcomputer facility and the school library media specialist. Reviewed by Anne Harris, Australasian college libraries vol. 5, no. 1, March 1987.
'There is no index, which would be useful in such a broad work, although it is fairly easy to home in on a topic through the table of contents.'

'However, if you were interested in the subject of one of the dissertations you would be lucky to find it unless you read through all the abstracts. For a work on librarianship the subject index is appalling. For example, the only subject index entry I could find for a dissertation called 'A comparative study of the career development patterns of male and female library administrators in large public libraries' was under 'Women, in library administration'... It needs to encourage its monograph reviewers to be more critical and to make substantial improvements in its subject index.'
We welcome contributions to the Newsletter. If you have any material you feel would be suitable for inclusion, please send it to the Editor, Australian Society of Indexers, G.P.O. Box 1251L, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, by Monday 3 August 1987.

INDEXING SOFTWARE
INDEX4 is a software package designed by and for professional book and periodical indexers, and has been under continuous refinement since 1977. As each entry is keyed it is instantly sorted, merged where necessary, and displayed in context (all in less than one third of a second). Any entry can be viewed in context and easily edited on screen at any time. Instant lookup of thesaurus or main/subheadings (no rekeying of previously used headings). Supports BS 3700 conventions, letter-by-letter or word-by-word, line-by-line or run on format; alphabetical or page order sub-heading arrangement. Upper/lower case letters and punctuation may be mixed freely. Marked text ignored for sorting purposes. Auto merging of separate indexes, Bold and italic type, typesetting; microfiche production. Simple built-in macro-language/dictionary allows for powerful and time-saving (user-definable) manipulation of text and entries (e.g. auto-flip an entry, single key input of frequently used text). Fully word processor compatible. Many more features not listed above.

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We require an Indexer for about six weeks, from early September 1987, while our Indexer is overseas. Experience in newspaper indexing would be an advantage. 20–25 hours per week (negotiable). Interested? Contact Prue Lovell, Information Service Manager, on (03) 67 5831, or write to GPO Box 257C, Melbourne, 3001.

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