Getting right into websites

Website Indexing: Enhancing Access to Information Within Websites

by Glenda Browne and Jonathan Jermey
Adelaide: Auslib Press, 2001
103pp. ISBN 1 875145 48 6
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Reviewed by Roxanne Missingham

Have you ever wondered whether Indexers will become an endangered species, slipping slowly into oblivion as a result of publishing through the Internet rather than in print?

While Indexers and libraries are aware that quality information is required to enable access to any set of information resources (or more crudely, garbage in = garbage out) the development of the Internet has not emphasised indexing/classification skills. The early growth of the Internet has been accompanied by an emphasis on search technology to locate or retrieve information resources. The sheer size of the Internet (millions or billions of hosts depending on your methodology) has meant that to search across it has required automated search software. The early crude searching has been replaced by more sophisticated search tools, such as Google, which weights previous searches as well as occurrences of words, improving recall enormously.

For individual websites, of companies, government agencies, universities or organizations, more sophisticated access based on categorisation of pages (or information resources) is possible. This approach offers greater precision and recall, terms very well-defined in this new book. The net benefits in providing quick and easy access to the right information means the advantages of indexing can be demonstrated to information or website managers. Software has now been developed to enable website indexing – a welcome addition to Internet tools. The new tools include products from the DSTC such as 'Reggie – The Metadata Editor' which enables metadata that can be embedded in documents, and HTML Indexer, the product used in this book, which produces an A-Z index page.

Website Indexing, developed by the authors from materials used for a one-day course on indexing the web, delivered at the University of New South Wales, provides a timely review of indexing principles, the challenges and history of development of web indexing, and a road test of an html index product. The combination of a narrative approach to indexing plus the demonstration of new software is appealing. With individual websites, indexes are generally developed and delivered in three different ways; either through the inclusion of metadata in the pages and the use of a metadata or general search engine to retrieve using this information; through metadata stored in a separate

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Beyond Grammar
With Michael Lewis, BA(Hons), MIPC, language and communication consultant. The Society of Editors (NSW) is presenting a one-day workshop on aspects of language structure that help readers extract meaning from texts:

- **The structure of sentences** Language structure as information structure; Sentence complexity — how readers process text; Ambiguity — types and causes; Misplaced modifiers, including the dangling participle.
- **The structure of texts** Cohesion — what gives text its textuality; Logical relationships — building complex information structures.
- **Visual text** Lists — alternatives to the paragraph; Tables — multi-dimensional information; Forms — where the reader becomes the writer.

The workshop will be based on examples from advertising, the media, and corporate publications. If you have examples that you would like to discuss, please send them with your registration. Cost is $95 for members Society of Editors: $120 for others (includes lunch and morning and afternoon tea) to Society of Editors (NSW), PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007, by Monday 2 July 2001.

Canberra Society of Editors
The Society will meet next on Wednesday 27 June in the Friends’ Lounge of the National Library of Australia, to discuss the issues for the impending August meeting of CASE (the Council of Australian Societies of Editors).

The issues are:

- What structure should CASE adopt to maximise its effectiveness as a national body?
- What types of training are needed to qualify for accreditation, and where are they to be found?
- What form will accreditation take and how will it be administered?
- How should the new National Editing Standards be publicised and reviewed?
- What steps to take in opening a dialogue with the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee about the ethics of editing academic theses.

The meeting will begin at 6.30 pm sharp, after our usual fellowship and socialising from 6.00 pm.

A singular use of ‘THEY’
A web version of the Attorney-General Department’s booklet A singular use of THEY has been put up on the Canberra Society of Editors website at www.editors.dynamite.com.au/they.htm. If you ever worry about apparent inconsistency in using them, their or their after a singular antecedent (such as ‘Has someone lost their pen?’) let AG’s convincing arguments reassure you.

American Society for Information Science and Technology
Special Interest Group: Information Architecture
SIGIA-L: SIG-IA Web now connected and open for business http://www.asis.org/SIG/SIGIA

Check out this site which has some interesting links, sent in by Glenda Browne.

Australian Society for Technical Communication (NSW) Inc
Members’ meeting Wednesday 27 June 2001 at 6 pm at the Rugby Club, 2nd Floor, Rugby Place (between Pitt and George Streets), Circular Quay.

Cost: Members free; Non members $5.

Seminar Saturday 30 June 2001 — ’Wrestling with graphics’


UNSW Faculty of Commerce and Economics
Indexing workshops

**Introduction to Book Indexing**
Those who will benefit from this course include those who are or who are planning to become indexers, editors responsible for indexing, librarians responsible for compiling indexes. The course will cover the following topics:

- Introduction to indexing
- Methods
- Analysis of text
- Selecting terms
- Principles of subject access
- Headings and subheadings
- Cross references
- Alphabetical arrangement
- Style
- Editing for publication
- Dealing with editors and publishers
- Indexing as a business

Three-day workshop held over three consecutive weeks June 29, July 6, and July 13, 2001, cost $420.

**Indexing Technical Material**
This course is a 2-day course and is similar in content and outline to the ‘Introduction to Book Indexing’ course but is designed for those who are producing technical documentation, manuals and technical reports.

Dates to be scheduled, cost $420.
Want to learn MORE about INDEXING?

If you’re serious about indexing, train with the Society of Indexers. Our training course gives a comprehensive introduction to indexing principles and practice. It comes as five open learning units so you can progress at your own pace.

For more information about the course, and our other services to indexers, editors, authors and publishers, contact:

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Visit our website at
http://www.socind.demon.co.uk
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The principles of indexing, describes subject gateways and then summarises the structure of most websites, indicating how websites can be indexed using a back-of-the-book approach. The introductory chapters are very helpful in setting the scene; however the chapter on Subject gateways may be confusing to some readers as while most are, in fact, indexes to subject matter published across the Internet, one is an index to material held on that website (Bright Sparcs). Some more details about why the various information architectures were chosen and which reflect database and which back-of-the-book style indexing would be helpful. The second part, 'Planning, website indexes', builds upon the information contained in the first part. It outlines basic indexing principles, has more on the structure of websites and indexing/access terms. The third section covers 'Indexing software', with a brief introduction to HTML (you should read an html guide before trying to understand the examples in detail) and a demonstration of creating an index using HTML Indexer.

It is a good read and generally well-presented. To use the book successfully you should be experienced with the Internet, have an understanding of when you should use a database approach to indexing a website, and when to use an A-Z list. I would recommend the book to fill general information gaps and suggest that in the next edition the illustrations be increased to demonstrate html coding and also an example of how a metadata tool can be used to generate data for a 'virtual index'.

Congratulations to Glenda and Jon on this volume and we look forward to future books to help develop skills for electronic indexing.

Farewell

Josephine McGovern

Recollections and reminiscences — Josephine McGovern (1924–2001)

The light has gone out but a warm glow remains...

Josephine went into primary teacher training school in Melbourne as her first post-secondary career choice. She completed a DipEd via correspondence and, later on, graduated in Arts from Melbourne University in 1949.

After some time in Europe, where she first caught the ‘travel bug’, Josephine returned home and worked in the libraries of Swinburne Tech and the State Library of Victoria.

In 1957 she joined the staff of the Victorian Parliamentary Library. At that stage there were no female politicians in Victoria, and she was the first woman on the library staff. By 1970, when Josephine was appointed Chief Librarian, she was the first woman to achieve this position in Parliamentary libraries throughout the world. Now there were three female Members of Parliament. In May 2001, the Victorian Parliamentary Library celebrated its 150th anniversary. To honour her work and years of service, 1957–1985, the current Librarian, Bruce Davidson, had arranged for an oral interview to be conducted with Josephine, on Tuesday April 10. Sadly, she passed away on 2 April and this interview will never take place.

She became a Registered Indexer and compiled many indexes for the Parliamentary Library. She was a Life Member of ALIA, a long standing member of Soroptimist International and Graduate House (Melbourne), whose entire library she catalogued. Her membership of this latter body allowed the Victorian Branch to enjoy many evenings and social events amongst its genteel surroundings.

Josephine has been our friend, our ‘meeter and greeter’, our travelling companion, our postmistress, our everything — ‘The light has gone out but a warm glow remains ...’

Jenny Restarick, President, AusSI, Victorian Branch

I remember her lovely smile from whatever vantage point she would station herself at to welcome new arrivals to the various functions she helped organise or presided over. She was tall and graceful and of a most generous nature. I well remember a happy Saturday at Dromana when she invited a group of us (the current committee of the time) to have lunch with her and share her enjoyment of her holiday house there.

Jennifer Pritchard
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From the Editor

My apologies to Jenny Resterick and Jennifer Pritchard that we were not able to include their farewells to Josephine McGovern in the last issue; they are included here.

Aussi traditionally publishes a list of its members (or those at any rate who have not asked to be excluded) once a year to make the membership known to one another. The list, and Indexers Available, found at http://www.aussi.org/indexers available, is prepared by Membership Secretary, Michael Wyatt.

All the best,
Frances Paterson

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Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter
Life after indexing
Glenda Browne

Do the books and other documents you index linger in memory long after the job is finished, influencing other aspects of your life? While most of the information we index slowly trickles away, there are a few times things I have indexed have changed my life.

When I couldn't get paid in kind for indexing an encyclopaedia on wine, we decided to invest some of the spoils in a wine company. A totally whimsical decision-making process led us to choose Petaluma, which dropped in price soon after, but is slowly clawing its way back up. Not daunted, when I read a positive review of a medical company that I had indexed for a website of innovative Australian companies, we took the plunge, and to our joy Resmed is reaching higher day by day.

My knowledge of all the potential health problems we face has vastly increased since indexing a book on diseases, and I am daily grateful for all the illnesses that I don't have. The same feeling comes from working in a hospital library where occasional browsing through illustrated works shows diseases too visually hideous to contemplate. And we all moan and groan and head to the doctor for the slightest sniffle.

My feel for Sydney has increased through indexing books for tourists. One led me to Fagan Park in Arcadia. It is attractive and interesting, with eight separate gardens, each designed in the style of a different country. One of the most significant for me was the story of the building of the Opera House. Much as I admire it, and am glad we have it, my heart goes out to all those who midwived the protracted birth. Snippets that remain with me are the immensity even of the structural base (which was inspired by steps to Mexican pyramids), the fact that a historical building had to be demolished to make space for it, and the amazing concept that we could have had white sails with stripes of black tiles at the joins!

I know I am not alone in enjoying the books I work with. Mary Ann Chulik had the enviable task of indexing a series of mystery novels by Les Roberts. She wrote, 'I'm familiar with some of the restaurants mentioned in the books. Other mentions have been inspirational – I found a very good restaurant named Jack's Deli from the references in two books of the series.' How nice to read, and index, about things in your local area. See the index at www.leviechinc.com.

This is all just one of the aspects of indexing that makes it such a 'delicious' occupation (as Valerie from the UK said at the Canberra Indexers' and Editors' conference).

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June 2001
Indexing Costumes at the MTC

In pursuit of coming attractions for Victoria Branch members, I found myself on the phone with Ms Katie Beck, Costume Hire Manager of the Melbourne Theatre Company. Although she did not feel she had a sufficient quantity of material for giving a talk to indexers on the subject of indexing costumes, she nevertheless gave generously of her time in telling me interesting pieces of information about her department.

Six years ago, when Ms Beck first arrived in the costume hire department, nothing was indexed. She now knows every garment by sight but developed a simple indexing system so that other staff could find a particular costume in her absence and so that they could all be sure they were talking about the same costume at any time.

A three-letter code, followed by a number, distinguishes each costume for hire. They are classified by period or type. For example:

- CAV Cavalier
- CRI Crinolines
- EDW Edwardian
- MED Medieval
- MIL Military
- REG Regency
- REN Renaissance
- ROC Rococo
- SPA Spanish
- VIC Victorian

Each category contains a maximum of sixty or so costumes. An ‘M’ or ‘W’ precedes the three-letter code if the costume needs to be distinguished for ‘Men’ or ‘Women’.

The MTC no longer uses costumes for hire for their productions. Each production has new costumes specifically designed for it and old costumes are not reused. Each costume is designed to fit a particular actor so that none of the sizes of the costumes for hire can be called a standard fit. That is why fittings are necessary for people wishing to hire a garment.

Ann Philpott