Evaluating indexes;
an overview for editors & indexers

Presented by
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What’s an index?

An index is a systematically arranged (usually alphabetical) list of significant items (names, concepts, topics) with locators (usually page numbers) indicating where information can be found, and the extent of the discussion.

An index is **not** a list of the words in the book – that’s a concordance.
Index:

- water reform, 2–6, 10–12, 40
- access and entitlements, 23–4
- plans see water planning
- supply, 27–8
- surface and groundwater, 30

Water Services Association of Australia, 28

Water Symposium 2014, 39

Water Thematic Oversight Group, 22, 23, 34

water trading see water markets and trading

water utilities, 28

work health and safety, 49, 50, 60–1

Work Health and Safety Committee, 49, 60

workforce capability development, 3, 54

workforce statistics, 55–7

workplace consultative arrangements, 49, 60

Concordance (same content):

- arrangements, 49, 60
  Association, 28, ...
  Australia, 28
  Capability, 3, 54
  Committee, 49, 60, ...
  consultative, 49, 60
  development, 3, 54, ...
  entitlements, 23, 24
  groundwater, 30
  Group, 22, 23, 34
  health, 49, 50, 60, 61
  Oversight, 22, 23, 34
  reform, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 40, ...
  resources, 23, 24
  safety, 49, 50, 60, 61
  Services, 28,
  statistics, 55, 56, 57
  supply, 15, 23, 27, 28
  surface, 30
  Symposium, 39
  Thematic, 22, 23, 34
  utilities, 28, ...
  water, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 39, 40, ...
  [626 occurrences]
  work, 49, 50, 60, 61, ...
  [61 occurrences]
  workforce, 3, 54, 55, 56, 57, ...
  [12 occurrences]
What does an indexer do?

- Reads
- Seeks to understand the text
- Identifies subjects, concepts, names
- Analyses context and topical relationships
- Compiles and organises information into headings & related subheadings, with locators
- Links related concepts with cross-references
- Edits
- Produces a systematically arranged finding aid

Indexers work with readers in mind – both the new reader and the returning reader
Index/indexer?

Evaluating indexes, by Sherrey Quinn. Presentation at the Write|Edit|Index Conference, Canberra, May 2015
Working with indexers

• Involve indexer in planning process
• Advise scope of job, audience, schedule & schedule changes
• Advise requirements:
  • Publisher style guide & layout requirements
  • Format required for index file
  • Any constraints on number of pages for the index.
• Agree fees, deliverables, schedule
• If content changes or text flows due to layout changes during indexing, tell the indexer
• Discuss concerns about the finished index with the indexer
• If possible, give indexer an opportunity to review the designed version of index

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indexing terminology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- bell-bottoms, 59, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Belle Epoque, 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bill Blass (brand), 225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- black (colour), 42–7</td>
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<td>- little black dress, 21, 42, 46, 96, 321</td>
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<td>- symbolism , 57</td>
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<td>- black market, 25, 111–12, 126</td>
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<td>- blue jeans see jeans</td>
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<tr>
<td>- body decoration, 54–8 see also cosmetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- bubble-up theory see trickle-up theory of fashion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Locators (page numbers)**

- bell-bottoms: 59, 60
- Belle Epoque: 72
- Bill Blass (brand): 225
- black (colour): 42–7
- little black dress: 21, 42, 46, 96, 321
- mourning dress: 51–3
- symbolism: 57
- Black, Barbara: 98
- black market: 25, 111–12, 126
- blue jeans: see jeans
- body decoration: 54–8 see also cosmetics
- bubble-up theory: see trickle-up theory of fashion

**See also cross-reference**

- See cross-reference

**Main heading**

Evaluating and editing indexes

Criteria:

• Subject analysis
• Coverage & comprehensiveness
• Clarity & consistency
• Accuracy
• Style of headings & locators
• Layout, presentation and navigation
Sampling the text

1. Look through the Contents pages

2. Read some sections, check the index

3. Sample the index, follow the references back to the text

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Subject analysis:

- What is the text *about*?
- Does the index cover subject content adequately and consistently?
- Are there entries for subjects, concepts and proper names?
- Are both broad subjects and specific subjects listed in the index?
- Are ‘like concepts’ gathered together?
- Is the subject matter of diagrams, tables and significant illustrations covered?
- Are subjects with lengthy discussion and numerous mentions in the text analysed into sub-topics in the index (headings and subheadings)?
Subject analysis

Are broad concepts indexed, as well as specific ones?

Index headings:

- colour consultants
- conglomerates
- contractors
- cosmetics
- fashion industry
- business models
- history
- structure
- magazines
- manufacturers
- mass media
- safari suits
- supply chain
- sweatshop labour
- swimwear
- wholesalers

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Subject analysis

Are ‘like concepts’ gathered?

Poor synonym control, failure to gather:

- employees, 21
- human resources, 20
- learning and development, 49
- sales office network, 57
- sales offices and representatives, 2
- staff, 49–56, 64–67, 69, 70, 78
- training and development, 55–6, 66

Solution – analyse, gather, cross-reference or double-enter:

- employees see staff
- human resources see staff
- learning and development, 49, 55–6, 66
- sales offices, 2, 57
- staff
  - [appropriate subheadings for pages 20, 21 49–56, 64–67, 69, 70, 78]
- training and development, 49, 55–6, 66
No long strings of undifferentiated locators: *

* In general. There are exceptions in some cases

celebrities, 72, 73, 83, 86, 89, 118, 125, 132–3, 135, 166–7, 179–80, 233–6, 268, 271, 290

More than about 7 locators? Break them down into subheadings:

celebrities
celebrity models, 86, 233–6

and hippy subculture, 290

influence on fashion, 118

as role models, 86, 166–7, 179–80

self-promotion, 72, 89, 268, 271
Coverage & comprehensiveness

- Is all significant subject matter covered by the index?
- Is all the text indexed?
  - Main body of the work
  - Front matter, acknowledgements (not usually)
  - Introduction (sometimes)
  - Appendices (usually)
Clarity & consistency

- Succinct language
- Terminology appropriate for audience
- Index reflects language of text
- Subject terms in natural order
- No ambiguity:
  - use of qualifiers (glosses) for homographs
  - prepositions to clarify meaning

bridges (road/railway structures)
bridges (ship superstructures)
Burton, Richard (actor)
Burton, Richard (explorer)
mercury (metal)
Mercury (planet)
political control
training
  for managers
management of
Accuracy: Alphabetical order

Word by word sorting
Spaces count
Normal in Australia & UK

New England
New South Wales
Newcastle
Port William
ports
snow ploughs
snowdrops
West Cape Howe, WA
*West Side Story*
West Wyalong, NSW
Western Australia
Westmead, NSW
Weston Creek, ACT

Letter by letter sorting
Spaces ignored
Common in North America

Newcastle
New England
New South Wales
ports
Port William
snowdrops
snow ploughs
West Cape Howe, WA
Western Australia
Westmead, NSW
Weston Creek, ACT
*West Side Story*
West Wyalong, NSW
Accuracy

• Correct alphabetical order
• Correct spelling
• Spelling follows the usage in the text
• Accurate locators
• Locators indicate extent of discussions (en dash or hyphen between page numbers)
• ‘Double-entered concepts’ have the same locators
• Typographic conventions (e.g. italics) in text are also used in the index

- English textiles, 64–5, 85, 124–7
- textiles
  English, 64–5, 85, 124–7
- Vogue (magazine), 88, 271
Accuracy

• Cross-reference targets are accurate

• No cross-references to non-existing index headings

• No circular cross-references

body decoration, 54–8 see also cosmetics
...
 cosmetics, 130–4
...
 lingerie, 129, 261, 263, 278–80
 [subheadings]
...
 underwear see lingerie

lingerie see underwear
...
 underwear see lingerie
Checklist for **Style** of headings (1)

• **Nouns or noun phrases** for main headings:
  • **Plural for things** (countable items: *How many?*) *
  • **Singular for qualities, properties, activities, abstract concepts** (non-countable items: *How much?*)
  • Proper names have initial capitals; other headings do not (usually)

* Some exceptions in scientific, medical works
Checklist for **Style** of headings (2)

- Adjectives are **never** used alone as main headings

```plaintext
black  (crossed out)
dress  (crossed out)
symbols (crossed out)
market (crossed out)

black (colour)
little black dress
mourning dress
symbolism
black market
```
Checklist for **Style** of headings (3)

- **Personal names** are inverted (note there are special rules for different languages and some types of names)
- Honorifics included? – depends on type of book
- Corporate & organisation names are generally not inverted

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Chanel, Coco
David Jones, Sydney
Department of Consumer Affairs
Bacon, Sir Francis
Garavani, Valentino, 60 see *also* Valentino (couture house)
Lagerfeld, Karl
Valentino (couture house), 76, 79, 88 see *also* Garavani, Valentino
Checklist for **Style** of headings (4)

**Subheadings:**

- Concise wording
  - Parallel construction – not this:
  - No over-analysis of few pages:

Instead, sub-concepts separated out to main headings:

- fashion capitals, 14–15
  - Asian cities, 15
  - London, 14
  - New York, 14
  - Paris, 14

- Asian cities, 15
  - fashion capitals, 14–15
  - London, 14
  - New York, 14
  - Paris, 14
Checklist for **Style** (5)

- Index conforms with publisher’s style guide (language, layout, locator format)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locator spans:</th>
<th>en dash (–), or hyphen (-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Various styles for locators:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviated:</td>
<td>23–4, 145–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23–4, 145–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In full:</td>
<td>23–24, 145–149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers in teens usually include last 2 digits:</td>
<td>15–17, 111–12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Layout & presentation

Indented

black (colour), 42–7
  little black dress, 21, 42, 46, 96, 321
  mourning dress, 51–3
  symbolism, 57
Black, Barbara, 98
black market, 25, 111–12, 126
blue jeans see jeans
brand names and logos, 50, 228
  couple brands, 235–6
  conglomerate-owned, 220
  recognition of, 75–6, 80–1, 237

Run-on (or Run-in)

black (colour), 42–7; little black dress, 21, 42, 46, 96, 321; mourning dress, 51–3; symbolism, 57
Black, Barbara, 98
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blue jeans see jeans
brand names and logos, 50, 228; couple brands, 235–6; conglomerate-owned, 220; recognition of, 75–6, 80–1, 237
Layout & presentation

- Progressive indents for different levels of headings and turn-over lines
- Line spacing (readable but not double-spaced)
- Continuation lines for interrupted columns of subheadings
- Links (if any) work properly

anti-establishment politics of fashion, 287–92 see also subcultures
bell-bottoms, 59, 60
black (colour), 42–7
little black dress, 21, 42, 46, 96, 321
mourning dress, 51–3
symbolism, 57
body decoration, 54–8 see also cosmetics
Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne, 73, 76, 81, 92, 267
Evaluating and editing indexes – summary

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Please understand that indexing is an intellectual process that takes time.
References & further reading


Information on indexing, including resources & training: Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers, [www.anzsi.org](http://www.anzsi.org)