

D-I-Y indexing

The successful author's handbook by Gordon Wells (Macmillan, 1981) 'is about the professional approach to non-fiction writing', and aimed at, among others, 'the specialist who wants to write a book about some aspects of his work'. It includes advice on research, developing the idea, selling the idea to publishers, the mechanics of writing, illustration, preparing typescripts, publication technicalities, and business matters. The book hardly seems intended for the academic specialist, as may be seen from such advice as, 'Always use a short word in preference to a long word—even if this means that you need two or three short words. Short words are more easily understood than long ones. Try to keep sentences as short as possible. I try to work to an average sentence length of 16 words and a maximum of 25 words. The basic rule should be to restrict all sentences to a single statement. Short sentences are easier to write . . . and have the added advantage of being simpler to punctuate.'

Why, then, does this journal notice this book? Because it includes three pages of advice on preparing the index (without any hint that it may not in fact be necessary or advisable for an author to do this himself). It was suggested at a recent SI meeting that authors are obliged by their contracts to provide the indexes to their works, but never advised where they may find experts in the craft, or even told that such exist, and may think that they *must* prepare their own indexes. So perhaps many may turn to the advice given in this book. Let us examine it.

The method advocated for index compilation is to underline in coloured ink all items for inclusion, on the author's retained copy of the typescript, immediately after despatching the final text to the publisher, writing extra phrases for inclusion at the top of the page. These index items are then copied onto 10 A4 sheets of paper, one for A, one for B, one for IJK, etc. The resulting lists are numbered for alphabetical order on a principle expressed as 'I treat all letters in the index item as of equal weight and ignore word-splits'. Whatever this may mean, it results in the following sample given in the text as an 'Example of the listing, ordering and typing of index items':

Word processing equipment
Word-splits
Words
 counting

The index is then typed, with page numbers omitted, but folio page numbers pencilled in on one carbon copy. When page proofs arrive, the underlinings from typescript are copied onto these, and the printed page

numbers entered in the typed index, working both from carbon copy and printed proof.

The author explains, 'Other advice, particularly specialist advice on indexing, suggests what I consider to be a slower and more complicated method'. He does not mention the possibility of commissioning another hand to compile the index, nor state where the 'specialist advice' may be obtained; in Appendix 1, 'The writer's library', the only work cited as referring to indexing is *Hart's rules for composers*, for guidance on index layout.

Let us look at the index of this book as an example of such simple, unadvised index compilation. We find such odd choice of headings as:

Associated activities 148 (Not further specified, but from the text one finds these are activities associated with publication. There is no entry for publication.)

Chasing publishers 48

Yellow pages (author's carbons) 109, 111, 115, 131 (with no entry under carbons nor Author's copy of manuscript.)

There are such extraordinarily muddled compilations (some with attendant inconsistencies) as:

Approach, professional 2-3, 28, 136

Approach from publishers 57

Approaching publishers 46

(The third, but not the second, is listed also under Publishers.)

Date for delivery of manuscript 56, 116, 136

Delivery date 56, 116, 136

 of illustrations 101

 of manuscript, etc. 106, 114

Equipment, writer's 74

Necessities and niceties, equipment 75

Chapter content 63-6

Chapter, word budget within 66

Chapters, sample 52, 55

Summary of chapter content 69 (this is found only under S)

Alterations in proofs 127, 141

Author's corrections to proofs 128, 141

Proofs and proofreading 125-9, 130
 correction marks 157

 (no further entries under proofs.)

Writing:

 ABC of 79

bug 151
down 80, 85
good 78
numbers 89

There is no subheading under this last entry for 'preparedness', but we do find 'Preparedness for writing' under P.

Omissions include: 'Carbon copies' (for which see 'Yellow', as above); 'Charts' (we have 'Bar charts' and 'Pie charts', under B and P); 'Drafts' ('Number of drafts' is under N); 'Rights' (only found under S for 'Subsidiary rights'); 'weights of headings' as a subhead under 'Headings' (to be found only under W).

A distinguished name is misspelt; Gowers, Sir Ernest, is correctly cited thus in Appendix 1, but appears in the index as Gower, Sir Ernest.

There are simple inconsistencies in page numbers, as:

Counting words 72, 83

Words: counting 62, 72, 83

Handbooks 7, 58, 90

Uniformity of appearance in handbooks 91.

And there are headings that seem to require qualification:

Editor, copy (providing editor with? No, copy-editor)

Signatures (not the value of the author's autograph; 16 pages of the printed book)

Royalty jump (A challenge to the mind's eye, especially as it follows the heading 'Royalties' with 7 undifferentiated references. But no—it's just royalties, jump in.)

As to punctuation: the colon following 'writing' was superfluous, but colons are lacking where needed in:

Book, length 51, 136
next 141

Size, book page 97
drawing 99
paper for typing 107.

The admirable sentiment is expressed, 'It requires considerable skill, both professional or [*sic*] technical and literary, to edit a compilation of others' work'. How deplorable that a related truth is not recognized about indexing! But there can be no doubt that the quality of this index disastrously demonstrates that the do-it-yourself indexing here advocated simply will not serve.

H.K.B.

Indexes Past

Let us hope that such entries as these from *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* with introduction and notes by G. Gregory Smith (Macmillan and Co, 1925) are indeed past for ever.

Whitehall, 2, 5-9, 12, 14, 15, 36-50, 52, 54-63, 65, 66, 68, 69, 73-5, 88-90, 93, 95, 96, 98, 99, 102-104, 109, 111, 113, 114, 119-24, 127, 138, 140-42, 146, 149, 150, 152, 156, 158-62, 165-70, 174-6, 180, 183, 186-9, 191, 192, 106, 107, 202, 209, 212, 215, 216, 219, 220, 230-33, 236, 239, 244, 246, 248, 249, 251, 253, 254, 260, 265-7, 271-3, 275, 277, 285, 287-9, 291-3, 296, 298, 299, 302, 304, 306, 310-12, 315-17, 319, 321-3, 328, 351, 360, 364, 368, 370, 373, 378, 379, 381, 382, 385, 387, 388, 390, 391, 393, 394, 402, 403, 411, 413, 414, 417, 418, 421, 422, 424-8, 430, 432, 434-40, 442, 444, 445, 448, 449, 451, 453, 456-8, 460, 462, 466, 468, 471-3, 475, 479, 482, 484, 487, 497, 498, 504, 509, 513-16, 523, 529, 535, 536, 538, 541, 543, 545-7, 549, 551, 554, 559, 563, 568, 569, 573, 577, 578, 580, 582-4, 591, 593, 597, 598, 600-604, 607, 608, 610, 616, 618, 619, 621, 623, 625-35, 637, 640, 641, 644, 647, 652, 656, 657, 663, 664, 666-9, 671, 673-9, 681-5, 688, 689, 691, 692, 695-7, 700, 704-715, 717-719, 722, 724, 725, 727-9, 731, 732, 735, 737-44, 748, 750-54

York, James, Duke of, 23, 24, 29-36, 38-40, 42, 47-51, 54, 58-60, 62, 70, 71, 75, 79, 83, 89, 90, 95-9, 107, 109, 115, 119-21, 123, 124, 126, 127, 129, 147, 149, 150-52, 155, 156, 159-62, 164, 165, 167, 169-71, 173-5, 180, 181, 184, 188-95, 198, 199, 203, 205, 207, 210, 212, 213, 219-21, 224, 225, 231, 233, 234, 238-40, 242, 244, 245, 248, 249, 253-7, 260-263, 265, 267, 270, 273, 275, 277-81, 283, 285-8, 291-4, 296, 298, 299, 302-307, 310, 311, 316-23, 328-30, 335, 336, 338, 350, 352-4, 356, 358, 364, 367-369, 371, 374-9, 381-3, 385-91, 396, 397, 399-405, 407, 408, 410, 411, 413-15, 420, 421-423, 426-32, 434-6, 438-45, 447-9, 453-5, 460, 464, 466, 467, 469, 471-81, 483-90, 492-495, 498, 500, 502, 504-506, 511, 513-19, 521, 524, 526-8, 531-3, 535-7, 539-42, 544-52, 554-6, 558, 560-62, 567-71, 573, 576, 577, 579-83, 586, 588-91, 595-9, 603, 604, 607, 608, 611, 612, 615-19, 621, 623, 625, 626, 629, 630, 632, 633, 635-645, 647, 650, 652, 653, 655-7, 662-7, 669-75, 677-85, 687-97, 700-702, 704, 705, 707, 708, 711, 715-17, 719, 721-6, 728, 730-35, 737-42, 744, 746, 748-755

At the other extreme we find such examples of 'mini-encyclopedias' (castigated by Professor Wellisch, *The Indexer* 13 (1), 4) as these, cited by E. M. Hatt in *The Indexer* 3 (2) 1962, 61-2, as 'leisurely index items designed for more spacious times' from 'old editions of Froissart's *Chronicles*, Fabyan's *Chronicle* and the like':

LONDONERS, the: dissatisfied with King Richard and his council apply to the Duke of Gloucester to take upon him the government of the realm, 503; wait upon him at the instigation of the Duke of Gloucester to demand the real . . . etc.

MONTFORD: the Lord John de, excuses himself to the Duke of Buckingham, who had come to his assistance, for not meeting him on his march.