habit of offering all clients a 5% discount on bills should the account be settled within a fortnight; the more sensible accounts departments realize that this is a good rate of interest, and settle up like a shot. In my normal fashion I stamped this offer at the bottom of an invoice to Barabbas for a reproduction fee of £15—but, in my haste, I gave the discount as 25p instead of 75p. It took Barabbas eight months to pay the fee and, when they did, they sent a cheque for £14.75.

Now, I should have expected this. After all, they'd operated the same trick on larger amounts in those hazy days before I'd decided to start a blacklist. In terms of time and out-of-pocket expenditure, getting my hands on that 25p cost me pounds, but I think it was worth it. Every time I think of offering a book to Barabbas I remember the 'case of the 25p' and think again. Imagine it: one of the company's directors actually sat down and took the time to make the decision that it was worth while underpaying me by 25p! I think my blacklist has probably saved me a fortune.

**Conclusions**

I'm only too aware of the fact that all freelance indexers must have experienced horror stories much like the ones I've related—probably worse. I realize, too, that I've forgotten about some of my own worst experiences. I wonder if there's room on the market for a book on indexers' ghastly experiences—and ghastly compilations. Probably not, which is a pity: many of my friends find that tales of bad indexes and idiotic publishers (and authors) help them forget that the wine I've produced is appellation contrôlée Chateau Paintstripper.

At times like these I fall back upon the index entries for The origin of human reason (1889) quoted in Curious facts by John May et al., and cited in my own A book of numbers (1982). These concern an improbable tale about a cockatoo, and read, in part:

'absurd tale about a cockatoo
'anecdote, absurd one, about a cockatoo
'cockatoo, absurd tale concerning one
'incredibly absurd tale of a cockatoo
'invalid cockatoo, absurd tale about
'preposterous tale about a cockatoo
'very absurd tale about a cockatoo
'wonderfully foolish tale about a cockatoo'.

Now there's an indexer with his heart in the right place!

**References**


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**Printed versus online indexes**

Jennifer E. Rowley

The availability of machine-readable indexes must affect both the continuing importance of printed indexes and the style and comprehensiveness of the future printed index.

The accompanying table makes a simple comparison between printed indexes and access to information via an online terminal linked to a computer data base. As with any simplification or generalization the table cannot cover every specific case. However, some features of the two methods of organization and retrieval are identified and differentiated.

An index provides some type of access to documents (including books and non-book materials, such as maps, charts, sound recordings and video tapes) or to information contained in these documents. Traditionally, indexes were printed, mostly on paper, but more recently they come also on microfilm and microfiche. Such indexes are utilized in a variety of different contexts, including books, periodicals, quick reference directories, and abstracting and indexing services. In some applications printed indexes have existed alongside online access to computer data bases for some years. This represents a different and more flexible method of retrieval.

Abstracting and indexing services have been using computers to generate indexes, usually either subject or author indexes, or both, for about two decades. It was quickly recognized that computers offered a more efficient means of arranging large indexes. In particular, the cumulative of
large indexes over several volumes became very much more straightforward, and large backlogs of index production tasks could be eliminated. The possibility of searching the computer-held data bases from which the printed indexes had been derived was soon examined. First experiments in machine searching related to batch mode searching of the computer data base. Now most searching of computer-held data bases is conducted via online access to computer-held data bases.

Online access to computer-held data bases certainly offers many economies in connection with the production of indexes. There are opportunities for easy re-arrangement and editing of entries and index records. A variety of products may be derived from the same data base. Microcomputers and word processors offer the same opportunities for small applications and small indexes. Microcomputers in stand-alone configurations could be used both to aid in the creation of, and to store for subsequent retrieval, indexing data. Considerable unexploited potential remains in this area.

As a retrieval method, online access offers additional access points. Access may be offered from as many keys as required, or as the hardware or software of the computer system will permit. Search keys may include not only the conventional subject indexing terms and authors' names, but also trade names, title words and chemical formulae, to identify only a few examples. In addition, searches may be performed on combinations of terms in each of these categories. In a printed index, on the other hand, the searcher must accept the search terms given, and has no opportunity to co-ordinate search terms or formulate complex subject descriptions. Online search strategies are easily modified, and the output from an online search can be a list of references to further information. In a printed index, any record of the search or its outcome can be achieved only by the searcher making notes of his work.

Yet, despite some apparent disadvantages in retrieval, the printed index is still widely used. Maybe it is its physical form that is most important. The printed index is easy and convenient to consult, being in the same physical form as the documents which it indexes. It needs no intermediate machinery, nor any familiarity with sophisticated and complex command languages. Whether convenience or improved retrieval will appeal to the seacher in five years time remains to be established.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1: Printed Indexes v Online Indexes</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Printed Indexes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Basically pre-coordinate, and headings and terms for searching are set prior to searching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Modifications in search pattern lead to laborious searching under alternative terms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. May be in the same physical form as the documents that they index.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Mostly uses controlled-language indexing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Output from index must be determined in advance, and necessitates considerable clerical manipulation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Additional access points are shown by see and see also references.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Portable if not too bulky.</td>
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<td>9. Coverage may be broad or narrow, local or national.</td>
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<td>10. Cost is per copy, regardless of number of consultations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Tiedious to search many sources if there are only one or two items that are relevant, and neither data nor author is known.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Printed indexes are one product of computerized data bases.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Online Indexes**

- May be pre- or post-coordinate, with terms and links between them established either before or during searching, or a combination.
- Choice available in search strategy.
- Search strategy is flexible; it is easy to modify a search.
- Until documents are also stored extensively in machine-readable form, the index will be in a different physical form from the documents that are indexed.
- Free or controlled-language indexing, or both, are possible.
- Great flexibility of output from data base, e.g. bibliographies, selective lists.
- Additional access points are suggested by thesaurus-type displays and other aids.
- Needs online terminals which must be relatively fixed.
- Current coverage includes many large data bases, also an increasing number of smaller ones.
- Cost is related to number of consultations and time spent searching.
- Becoming increasingly easy to search a number of data bases.

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