How the publishers want it to look

Jean Simpkins

As indexers, we are not short of advice as to the actual compiling of indexes. We have several respected manuals as well as the British Standard and the new SI training modules. The style of presentation is covered in these texts to some extent, but it seems to be regarded as something that follows naturally on the procedure for producing a good index.

The people who actually have to be satisfied as to the final form of an index are the editors working for the publishers who commission indexes. For this reason it seemed a good idea to find out just what they had to say about their requirements as to indexing style, and whether there were any serious divergences from the instructions and advice received by indexers from other indexers.

Some publishers have already explained their policy to the SI. One of the most interesting and illuminating papers given at the Cheltenham conference in 1988 was by Claire Andrews of Blackwells.1 In this, the details of the whole procedure for commissioning and producing an index to a given text was described. Members present on this occasion were able to appreciate the importance attached by publishers to the observation of prescribed requirements. Our new survey was of publishers' printed guidelines only.

Several members of the SI were kind enough to send in copies of instruction leaflets supplied by their respective publishers, and the following comments are the result of examining these documents to see how they compare one with another, and with standard practice.

The publishers represented are: Blackwells; Butterworths; David and Charles; HMSO; Hutchinson; Oxford University Press (OUP); Routledge; Sage Publications; Unwin Hyman. It should be mentioned that some publishers do not appear to issue style specifications specifically to indexers; only to such people as authors, editors and printers, so that matters affecting an index have to be assumed. Butterworths and Hutchinson are examples.

On many points remarkable unanimity is apparent on the part of the publishers—as though they had all been studying the same handbook before compiling their lists of requirements. Indeed, often the very wording of their specifications is identical, and when several quote the same source of reference, the reason becomes clear. The most popular source seems to be M. D. Anderson's authoritative booklet Book indexing, published by CUP in 1971 as one of its series of authors' and publishers' guides and revised in 1985.2 Other sources quoted are Judith Butcher's Copy editing, G. V. Carey's Making an index and R. L. Collison's Indexes and indexing.

General unanimity of requirement occurs in the following areas:

1. Presentation The index is to be typed on A4 paper, double-spaced, in single columns and on one side only of the paper. A line of space to separate each alphabetical section of the index.

2. Main entries Specific nouns are to be used where possible, with a deliberate choice made where alternative synonyms present themselves.

3. Punctuation and capital letters Minimal use of capital initial letters; comma not required (except by David and Charles) after the entry and before the location reference.

4. Abbreviations and acronyms No full point after these; some detailed exceptions are given, such as p. for page, and other lower-case abbreviations. The need for consistency is emphasized.

5. Sub-subentries These are generally to be avoided (the type of text under discussion is apparently a general interest book).

6. Prepositions These are to be ignored in alphabetization of sub-headings, even if the phrases are not inverted to move them from the start of the entry.

7. Not to be indexed Passing mentions; preliminary pages; bibliographies.

8. Introductory note This should be provided where necessary to explain use of different type and abbreviations.

9. Alphabetical order Word-by-word is preferred over letter-by-letter (except by David and Charles). Alternative arrangement allowed for some sequences of sub-headings. Treatment of names beginning with Mac, etc., are as the old standard arrangement (no new specifications available produced after the new British Standard revision.)

10. Page numbers Elision usually required with standard instruction for 'teen' numbers. Avoid using ff; et seq.

11. Indexing of footnotes The use of the suffix n. for footnotes.

Apart from these general requirements, certain publishers have more specific instructions:
HOW THE PUBLISHERS WANT IT TO LOOK

**Blackwells**
(a) accept the use of 'passim';  
(b) give instructions for indenting sub-subentries;  
(c) run-on subentries to be typed as for set-out.

**Butterworths**
(a) page numbers to be given in full, not elided;  
(b) sub-sub-subentries acceptable for law texts.

**David and Charles**
(a) mention treble as alternative to double-spacing;  
(b) place a comma after the main heading before page location reference;  
(c) place see also at the end of a sequence of headings;  
(d) letter-by-letter order preferred;  
(e) Carey and Collison cited as authorities;  
(f) prefer -ise to -ize.

**HMSO**
(a) accept that several separate indexes may be needed to some scientific works;  
(b) state straightforwardly that acronyms are to be listed at the start of alphabetical sections;  
(c) direct that entries of names are to be under the most-used form;  
(d) accept alphabetical or page number order for subheadings where appropriate.

**Hutchinson**
(a) specify -ise not -ize;  
(b) give detailed instructions as to the forms in which names and numerals are to be presented, and special instructions on the preferred form of problematical words and phrases such as 'no one', 'inquiry', 'Third World'.

**OUP**
(a) run-on subheadings are to be submitted typed in set-out style, though the run-on style may be the chosen style for publication;  
(b) entries where the wording ends in numerals should use brackets to distinguish these from page reference numbers;  
(c) cards or slips are acceptable forms of presentation;  
(d) consistent form of order for subentries required;  
(e) letter-by-letter alphabetization preferred but not insisted upon;  
(f) reference is made to the convention whereby the sequence of alphabetization ceases at the first comma or other punctuation point;  
(g) space required after all punctuation.

**Routledge**
(a) run-on subheadings preferred;  
(b) punctuation point after lower-case abbreviations, and comma in lists after the penultimate item. (e.g. dogs, cats, and mice)  
(c) numbers to be spelled out under 100; numerals for measures, ages, and dates;  
(d) word-by-word preferred;  
(e) sub-subentries to be avoided;  
(f) an instruction for dealing with the he/she problem.

**Unwin Hyman**
(a) set-out subheadings preferred;  
(b) 'type subentries as indented lists';  
(c) refer to tables as the word Table, not underlined.

One point not mentioned in detail in any of the publishers' specifications is the required length of the index in relation to the length of the text. The index to the Anderson booklet (which devotes almost two pages to the topic) gives this information at the beginning. 'About 8%' may seem rather generous, but this is an unusually compact text, full of useful advice.

**References**

**Any fool can do it**

Using search-only software is the high-tech equivalent of picking up a book and flipping through the index. Like a book index, it is designed to be used with text created with the same family of software—in one case, the brain; in our example, INMAGIC software. The searching front end' enables novice or occasional users to find information quickly and easily without learning search commands or knowing anything about the structure or contents of databases. Like human indexers, the software installers can tailor access during set-up to meet various users' needs, with the result that search terms may be chosen from a browse list of current entries, then pasted into search requests without re-keying, and results may be displayed in both brief and full formats. The SearchMAGIC software encourages the sharing of information within an organization—because it cannot be used to create or alter databases, it protects information against accidental or unauthorized changes. Which is perhaps more than can be expected of disgruntled users of books?