Indexing


This is the first in a series of publications from the American Society of Indexers which aims to develop skills in specialized subjects, and to contribute to continuing professional education.

There are six articles in all, each by a different contributor or contributors. The first of these is in the form of an introduction and is aimed more at the new indexer, or the non-indexer. It is followed by five more, each on a specific aspect of history indexing. Although there is a lot of information given, it is not intended to be a straight 'how-to' treatise but to provide discussion as well as to instruct. Neither is it meant to be a comprehensive work, topics having been selected, at least partly, on the basis of the authors' willingness to 'give freely of their time and energy'.

The article on 'Medieval History' starts off with general background on the subject. This is followed by advice on who should attempt to index it and how to set about it for the first time. The approach here is quite good, stressing the importance of background research for those wanting to break into a new field. Much of what is said would be applicable to any subject area and is also likely to have been covered by any trainee. There is a useful section on terminology, particularly names. The author suggests indexing children's books on medieval history (though there are not large numbers of them) as an entry into more advanced indexing. Children's indexing specialists are likely to be less happy with the proposal, preferring to see work in children's books as an entity in its own right.

The following article on Latin American history also provides background to the study. There is good practical advice on foreign-language words, including inconsistencies of accenting and a very useful section on naming in Spanish.

'Indexing History Textbooks' and 'Indexing Art and Art History Materials', as well as picking out specific indexing problems needing specialist attention both devote time to general topics and procedures of particular relevance to the beginner indexer. The subject of names, not unexpectedly, appears in both articles, as they are such a major feature of history indexes. Unfortunately, in her example of a sequence of people whose entry element is an identical forename (Frederick William) the author does not explain her method of arrangement, certainly only one of a number of options. The 'Textbooks' article includes two appendices — a project worksheet and a listing of general indexing procedure. Experienced indexers will all have their own established routines but those given here could still be useful as a check. There are two interesting additions to the 'Art History' piece: an appendix on thesauri deals not only with their application in art history but also their general usefulness to the indexer, and secondly the bibliography which includes a section on 'Web Resources'.

The final article on 'Gender and Sexual Orientation' in indexing history uses the topic to discuss terminology, choice of terms for the index and the problems of bias and balance and draws widely on the author's own experience.

All in all, this is a very readable and useful booklet and an interesting addition to the literature of indexing.

Anne McCarthy, freelance indexer

Inhaltserschliessung durch Indizieren: Prinzipien und Praxis

The author of this German indexing manual is well known to the community of American information scientists through his articles on principles of information retrieval, which appeared in the 1970s and 1980s in the Journal of the American Society of Information Science. In this work, probably the first of its kind in the German language, he explores first the problems of information retrieval systems based on natural language, and the various aspects of indexing languages, including thesauri and classification systems. Next, the practical aspects of indexing are covered, followed by an extensive treatment of back-of-the-book indexing and the special requirements of databank indexing. Throughout the book, the various fallacies of automatic indexing and its sometimes disastrous results are vigorously attacked and the necessity of human indexing for effective and efficient information retrieval is emphasized. The index to the book is somewhat idiosyncratic, but its unusual features are fully explained and it is at any rate quite exhaustive and well cross-referenced. In the chapters on the techniques of indexing, only cards are considered, while no mention is made of computer-assisted indexing, probably because such programs have not yet been developed for German practice, nor are there any professional indexing societies in German-speaking countries.

This book will contribute to the further development of indexers and indexing in those countries in order to reach the level of proficiency in the English-speaking world.

Hans H. Wellisch, Professor emeritus,
University of Maryland

Indexing aids: thesauri


The scope of this second edition is unchanged: '... to cover the fields of information science and librarianship to a depth that will adequately support indexing in these fields'. The related fields covered include computer science, linguistics, behavioural and cognitive sciences, with limited coverage of education, economics, management, statistics and sociology, with terms included for the subjects being indexed, e.g. music, physical sciences. New, changed and deleted terms are listed. With the explosive growth of the Internet and World Wide Web, jargon is avoided as this might be superseded.

In the alphabetical display, in addition to the usual broader, narrower, related and used-for terms, there are scope notes that cover definitions and use of terms, and this can also be used as a glossary, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SN: Terms, frequently single words, used in uncontrolled indexing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UF: keywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural language indexing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncontrolled indexing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT: index terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT: full text databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword indexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword searching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stoplists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject headings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This display is well set out and easy to use. The hierarchical display shows facets based on the BT/NT relationships that are used to group related concepts but which are not authorized for use in indexing and are in parentheses. For example,
(activities and operations)
  (information and library operations)
    organization of information
      indexing
      automatic indexing
      automatic categorization
      book indexing
      database indexing
      machine aided indexing
      manual indexing
    name indexing
    periodical indexing
    subject indexing
      (incl.) chain indexing
      coordinate indexing
      string indexing

This display is not so easy to use and the different levels are separated by only one point (full stop) in the left-hand indentation. This is probably best approached from the list of 36 facet indicators, which includes two levels of heading with 16 main headings.

The rotated (KWIC) display lists terms containing a particular word, and includes 39 terms for index/indexer/indexes/indexing, e.g.

index terms
  indexer consistency
  indexes (information retrieval)
  alphabetico classified indexes
  author indexes
  book indexes
  indexing
  abstracting and indexing services
  links (between indexing terms)
  exhaustivity (indexing)

This display is particularly useful for spotting ambiguity of vocabulary, e.g. architecture, computer architectures. It is also useful for searching for indexing keywords, but it would then be necessary to refer back to the alphabetical and hierarchical displays for cross-referencing ideas.

The thesaurus is comprehensive and user-friendly while necessarily including American spellings. There is a useful bibliography of 15 references relating to thesauri, terminology and standardization.

Caroline Barlow, freelance information scientist

Indexing aids: dictionaries and related sources


What is an idiom? We all know the answer, but most of us would have difficulty in putting it into words. From Greek ‘idiōs’, ‘one’s own’, an idiom is basically an expression peculiar to a language. The Oxford English Dictionary states it as ‘a group of words established by usage and having meaning not deducible from those of the individual words’. Indeed, the meaning of the separate words may not help at all in the understanding of the phrase as a whole. Many idioms represent a metaphorical use of language – ‘to put all your eggs in one basket’, ‘to leave no stone unturned’.

The Cambridge University Press book deals specifically with idioms, as its title indicates. It is a reference book, but is also directed particularly to students, and claims their ‘language skills will increase rapidly if [they] can understand idioms and use them confidently and correctly’. It stresses that it is often impossible to guess the meaning of an idiom from the words it contains.

So far as students are concerned, the Theme Panels, drawing together groups of related idioms under such headings as Business, Health, Money, will be found useful, as also the Exercises (with their Answer Key) covering a variety of aspects of the idiom. These Exercises may be photocopied. In addition, certain idioms are highlighted in the body of the book as being very common and useful to the learner of English.

A feature of the book is the example sentences which are added to each entry and further explain the meaning of the idiom and illustrate its use. It is almost essential to consult the book before looking for a particular idiom in the book. For example, ‘be your own worst enemy’ is indexed under ‘enemy’, ‘own’ and ‘worst’, but appears in the book under ‘own’. ‘A voice in the wilderness’ is indexed under ‘voice’ and ‘wilderness’ but in the book ‘voice’ is taken as the keyword. ‘Sing from the same hymn-sheet’ is indexed under ‘hymn-sheet’ and ‘sing’ but ‘same’ is the place where we find the idiom in the book. ‘The greatest thing since sliced bread’ is indexed under ‘bread’, ‘greatest’, ‘sliced’ and ‘thing’ but is shown in the book under ‘thing’.

The origins of idioms are always of interest (e.g. doldrums, fig-leaf, forbidden fruit) but a few idioms are not followed through to their sources, e.g. ‘bread and circuses’, ‘purple prose’, ‘Pyrrhic victory’, ‘your road to Damascus’.

At first sight there is a common element between the Cambridge University Press book and the Cassell book, as both are concerned with the idiom. There are differences, however, in the subject matter and treatment. The Cassell book, which is somewhat shorter, includes a guide to idiomatic phrases, as does the other book, but also, additional to phrases, includes explanation of many single words, e.g. berk, gap, twerp, yuppie. Whilst explaining the meaning of words and phrases, it seeks in every case to trace their origin. It deals also with some that appear to have been neglected hitherto in reference books. Where there are several explanations of an entry, these are tested and possible misconceptions pointed out, as also are time-honoured explanations of origins unsubstantiated by evidence. Where no hard-and-fast explanation seems possible, no solution is offered by the author. This book does not have a back-of-the-book index, but entries are themselves in alphabetical order with cross-references.

The Cambridge University Press book represents the work of a large number of lexicographers, consultants and other contributors. The author of the Cassell book is Nigel Rees, a broadcaster on news and current affairs programmes, and deviser and presenter of BBC Radio quizzes and so an authority on idioms and quotations. Both books cover words and phrases from the English-speaking world and include those that have only recently entered the language, such as ‘full monty’ and ‘loose cannons’. It is certain that neither book could ever be fully comprehensive, if only, of course, because language is constantly receiving new words and idioms.

Britton Goudie, freelance indexer

Information technology


Michael Hill was the keeper of the Patent Office Library (now Science Reference Library) and served on, or was chair of, many important library committees, both national and international. Clearly aiming at library/information students, he discusses here every conceivable type of information used in the modern world (with a glance or two at the future). Chapters deal with the nature of information and knowledge; quality and reliability of information; comprehending; communicating; information management; and information ethics. Hill then goes on to discuss some social and cultural issues; economic factors; information and the environment; education now and in the next decade; and information in politics and government. The final chapter looks at where the information society is taking us.

To my mind the book has a rather naive flavour, though why this should be, given the eminence of the author, I cannot work out. It is almost magpie-packed with facts and observations, many of them pretty obvious; indeed the author’s phrase about the world’s ‘gallimatury of raw [information] materials’ seems an uncomfortable echo of the content of his own book!

That could have been a positive advantage were it not that the index is so odd as to be quite unserviceable. (Why is it that books on information studies, of all disciplines, are almost without exception badly indexed?) Do not try to use this index to find anything, not even an
obvious term like ‘information retrieval’, because all we have is an ill-
stocked bratub with entries seemingly plucked capriciously out of the
text, and not even edited into some sort of structure. Just one example:
dozens of authors are cited, but Susan Greenfield is one of very few
who make it into the index. However, tracking the locators reveals no
‘Greenfield’ on the page, only a couple of square-bracketed numbers
which lead, after initial puzzlement, to the chapter endnotes several
pages later! The author seems to think throughout the book that infor-
mation can be found merely by seeking it—there is scarcely a clue that
retrieval is a difficult and tricky business which deserves close study in
itself.

As Miss Jean Brodie did not quite say, for those who need this kind of
book, this is the kind of book they will need. But they will have to
mine out what they are looking for.

Cherry Lavell, formerly Council for British Archaeology

Visualizing subject access for 21st century information: papers
presented at the 1997 Clinic on Library Applications of Data
Processing, 2–4 March 1997. Edited by Pauline Atherton Cochrane
and Eric H Johnson. Urbana-Champaign, IL: Graduate School of
Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-
ISSN 0069-4789 (cased); $30.00. (Clinic on Library Applications of
Data Processing, 1997.)

The Proceedings of the 34th Annual Clinic on Library Applications of
Data Processing, 2–4 March, 1997 report research and development in
the US and Europe. As large portions of some of the presentations were
live connections to the Internet they were difficult to report, therefore
URLs are given throughout the proceedings.

The growth of the Internet only foreshadows what will happen with
globally distributed information resources in the coming century.
Coping with current problems of organization and retrieval using
present-day technological solutions will not be enough for tomor-
row’s users.

The questions posed included: What interface, browsing and naviga-
tion tools are on the drawing board or in prototype systems? Do the
designers of digital library systems envisage a role for more traditional
library classification schemes and thesauri? What new tools exist to
create visual displays of vocabulary choices and term relationships for
Internet, CD-ROM or OPAC (online public access cataloguing)
browsing? How will the new systems handle the Interspace where
switching vocabularies will be needed to access and search repositories
of full-text information? Have cognitive research and user-modelling
efforts produced results which could impact subject access tool design?

New vocabulary is used in describing the management of dynamic
document collections. Hypostatization is the treatment of concepts,
ideas, etc. as distinct substances or realities; sensualization, other than
visual, encompasses the multimedia nature of electronically held infor-
mation and virtual reality; metadata may not be as relevant as in static
library catalogues and classified collections; information filtering is a
method of coping with information overload when a model is made of
users’ interests.

The mode of use of thesauri is changing in the electronic environ-
ment and complements full-text access by establishing the relation-
ships between terms and by using cross-references. Machine-aided
indexing systems will rely on thesauri for term selection. It is hinted
that the long-term value of indexing will depend on its integration with
full-text searching and intelligent retrieval systems. There will be a
continuing need for controlled vocabulary and preferred terms, but this
will be incorporated into a more classified approach. At present web-
engine searching is too shallow and only accesses collections. In the
future repositories, e.g. Library of Congress Catalog, will be searched
completely as in online searching, and colour and sound will be more
frequently used.

As expected, it is considered that there is no time for indexing by
humans and therefore it is necessary to develop tools to index. The
computer IT community, alas, still does not know enough about
indexing. Research is needed to find out more about users and to deter-
dine cognitive differences by matching cognitive style to information
style.

Many speakers pointed to a future of computer-assisted indexing
where experts choose the vocabulary from thesauri-based resources.
‘However, if you try to solve the indexing problem for specialized
communities by letting individual people from that community do
indexing, you discover the value of using trained professionals.’

Thankfully, indexers are still valued for their expertise, and there is
ample scope for indexers to be involved in the construction and use of
specialized thesauri.

Although these proceedings are already over two years out of date
they do give an indication of trends in Internet analysis and retrieval.

Caroline Barlow, freelance information scientist

Publications received and publications noted

by committee representing USA, Australia, UK and Canada. Ottawa:
Canadian Library Association; London: Library Association:
676 pp. 25 cm. Index. ISBN 1-85604-313-4 (LAP) (cased); £55.00;
and CLA editions.)

Collection management in academic libraries. Clare Jenkins and
Mary Morley. Aldershot, Hants and Brookfield, VT: Gower

Effective library and information centre management. 2nd edn. Jo
Bryson. Aldershot, Hants and Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing,
(pbk): £25.00.

Encyclopedia of mineral names. William H. Blackburn and William
H. Dennenn. Nepean, Ontario: Mineralogical Association of Canada,

How classifications work: problems and challenges in an electronic
age. Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star. Champaign, IL:
Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1998. 23 cm.
Pbk: single copies £18.50. (Library Trends, Fall 1998, 47 (2),
185–340. ISSN 0024-2594.)

Organization of multimedia resources: principles and practice of
information retrieval. Mary A. Burke. Aldershot, Hants and
Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing, 1999. xii, 224 pp. 25 cm. Illus,

The principles and future of AACR: proceedings of the Interna-
tional Conference on the Principles and Future Development of
AACR, Toronto, Ontario, Canada October 23–25, 1997. Edited
by Jean Weils. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association: London:
Library Association Publishing; Chicago: American Library Asso-
(CLA); 1-85604-303-7 (LAP); 0-8389-3493-5 (ALA) (pbk):
$19.95.

The wordwatcher’s guide to good grammar and word usage: au-
thoritative answers to today’s grammar and usage questions.

You have a point there: a guide to punctuation and its allies.
(pbk): £10.99. (A reissued edition of this well-known work.)