

Spanish personal names

Francine Cronshaw

Introduction

The purpose of this article is provide guidance for those who encounter Spanish names in English-language materials they are indexing. Some historical notes on general Spanish-language practices relevant to indexing personal names are provided in the introductory section, but they may be skipped over and the pertinent naming protocols consulted directly.

The word *índice* commonly refers to a list or an enumeration.¹ Thus, the sequence of chapters presented in the front matter (which we know as the ‘table of contents’) is just such a list. In the past, many tables of contents in Spanish books have also listed the major topics after each chapter title. It was common practice in learned tomes published in English in the 19th century as well. In Spanish such detailed tables of contents persisted well into the mid-20th century and even later. What has endured that is recognizable to 21st-century indexers is an alphabetized personal name index at the back of the book (*índice onomástico*). Such attention to personal names is a time-honored tradition and even that has largely fallen from favor. It is the organization of personal names and their presentation within an alphabetical listing for English texts that we shall focus on in this brief commentary.

A good example of an *índice*, in the sense of a listing or table, is the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (1559–1948). The Inquisition was initially responsible for the creation of this list of banned books, which were thought to contain serious errors and therefore presented dangers to the mortal souls of readers. The Index does not analyze or categorize by content the books censored by the Catholic church during the Counter-Reformation, but lists them only by title. The history of indexing in Spanish-language publishing in modern times is less ruled by dogma and more by the discipline of the marketplace.² But let’s proceed to the heart of the matter, and look at the Spanish personal names themselves and how they should appear in English-language indexes.

Three broad groupings of personal names

In general, names of people in Spanish fall into three different categories. The first category is the traditional usage of compound surnames (father’s last name accompanied by mother’s last name). An understanding of the traditional forms is the basis for appreciating the variants presented by modern and celebrity usages. The second category includes modern usages that are generally simpler in structure (often using only the father’s last name and/or no married name). And finally, the third category is comprised of the names of famous individuals and pseudonyms which are often highly idiosyncratic.³ Overall, prepositions or particles follow the main part of the name (rather than preceding it).

It is worthy of note that telephone directory listings are not reliable guides for indexers to follow, and that computerized listings in general may generate chronic patterns of errors with Spanish personal names. Though conventional authorities for indexing will be cited below, the main authority for name listing conventions in Spanish is the Hispanic American Periodicals Index (HAPI), located at the University of California-Los Angeles, USA. The *HAPI thesaurus and name authority 1970–1989* is the source for many of the examples listed below. Other examples are based on the author’s personal and professional experience working in and with Spanish.

A. Traditional forms of personal names

The paternal surname

The traditional usages reflect the preferences and structures of patrimonial or patriarchal societies. Within the Latin American family, names were and are used in very specific ways. Compound given (first) names are very common, as well as compound surnames. With regard to surnames, not only was an illustrious family name (*abolengo*) and distinguished lineage conferred by leading family names, the very structure of personal names spoke volumes as to social position and future marriage prospects of their bearers.

Consistent with the emphasis on the paternal surname as the anchor of a respectable social identity are the frequent cases of the *hijos naturales* or illegitimate children. ‘Natural’ children, those born out of wedlock, do not have access to use of the paternal surname (unless the father decides to legally acknowledge them). They have to go through life with only their mother’s last name and the concomitant stigma attached to single motherhood. In the traditional social order, such distinctions as the surnames appearing on a person’s identification papers and other official documents maintained and reinforced perceived differences of social class and respectability.

Patronymics and matronymics

Patronymics and matronymics refer to the surnames of fathers and mothers respectively. The patronymic precedes the matronymic in all cases. Sorting by the final element when it is a matronymic would be in error.

Camacho Roldán, Salvador
Díaz Callejas, Apolinar
González Padilla, María Enriqueta
González del Valle, Luis
Huerta Lara, María del Rosario
Lleras Camargo, Alberto
Tovar Pinzón, Hermes

Compound names

Mulvany (1994) cites the AACR2 to the effect that the name be entered 'under the first element.' In his discussion of compound names, Wellisch (1991) points to the use of hyphens to connect the two surnames, which are then sorted under the first element in the unit. (The rest of his discussion centers on English-language usages.) The *Chicago Manual of Style 15* (2003) contains a concise summary of current family name usages (8.14).

Monjarás-Ruiz, Jesús
Pérez-Gamboa, Julia
Pérez-Gavilán Arias, David
Pérez-Stable, Marifeli
Rodríguez-Alcalá, Hugo

As seen in the first section above and frequently in Latin American Spanish, we not only see compound first names, we also hear both parts of the first names in everyday speech, such as 'José Luis Soto Rodríguez.' It would not be appropriate to change that usage to Soto Rodríguez, José L., abbreviating the second first name, unless the text indicates that the latter is the preferred usage or it is the author's use of his own name. Abbreviations can also be employed with matronymics, at the discretion of the person named. (In those cases, usually the indexer does not know what the initial stands for. Following the author's usage is the best policy.)

Rodríguez, Abelardo L.
Rodríguez-Domínguez, Víctor M.
Duarte O., Norma Ofelia
Camacho B., Nancy

In historical texts, compound first names can present a challenge, especially for pre-modern eras when humble folk often lacked surnames. Thus, the Mexican peasant who witnessed the miracle of the Virgin of Guadalupe would be listed by his compound first name only:

Juan Diego (not Diego, Juan)

Married women

Married women traditionally took their husband's name along with their father's name and so, firmly anchored between two male identities, could sail smoothly through married life. However, it is the father's family name that dictates the sort order. In the first example below, the surname of María Luisa's father is Rivera and her husband's family name is Montoya. The article *de* (meaning 'of') is commonly used to show possession (*el libro de Juanita*). In the present case of a married woman it firmly communicates her role and position in society, as a possession of her husband, or at least as an appendage of the family name.

Gómez de las Heras, María Elisa
Pérez de Turvey, Constanza
Rivera de Montoya, María Luisa
Santiago de Curet, Ana Patricia

At the level of the next generation, the naming situation seems much more democratic. The children born to Señor Montoya and Señora María Luisa Rivera de Montoya take both their parents' surnames to form a new compound surname. Their children's names could be listed as:

Montoya Rivera, Ana Margarita
Montoya Rivera, Luis Miguel

Names of royalty

Whether or not to translate the Spanish royal personage's name might seem perplexing, but simply following the author's usages solves that dilemma. Whereas earlier writers might have translated Felipe II to Philip II, it is more common now for authors to use non-Anglicized versions of royal names in Spanish, although the titles will be in English.

Carlos III, King of Spain
Carlota, Empress of Mexico
Felipe II, King of Spain
Isabela, Queen of Spain

Names with prefixes (particles) or definite articles

As previously mentioned, surnames with prefixes (or particles, in the argot of linguists) present special challenges. Older forms, as cited by Wellisch, are no longer useful. Contrary to Wellisch, the name of the famous 16th-century crusader for Native Americans is most usefully listed as 'Las Casas, Bartolomé de' (in speech, he is referred to as 'Las Casas,' not 'Casas'). Otherwise, one should avoid breaking up 'de la' or 'de las' names and list them after the main elements.

Madrid Hurtado, Miguel de la
Rosa Martínez, Luis de la
Torre, Alfredo de la

According to the linguistic experts, the prefix (or particle) 'de' should follow the body of the name if uncapitalized, but precede the first element if given in the text as 'De' (Foster). At times, it is hard to know whether the particle is capitalized or not; following the author's usage or querying the author is the safest approach.

Echeverz, Fernando de
Landa, Diego de
Río, Dolores del
Rosario, Leticia del
De León, Hector F.
De Soto, Hernando

The particle 'y' has no influence since it occurs between elements of a compound surname.

Lozano y Lozano, Carlos
Ortega y Gasset, José
Reyes y Borda, Manuel José de

In summation, the traditional usages are still a good guide for the systems underlying Spanish personal names, especially for those dealing with historical materials. Having texts on similar subjects handy to consult the indexes is one approach to checking one's naming choices; biographical dictionaries are another resource.

B. Modern usages with personal names

Modern usages, whether in Spain, Latin America or the United States, tend to simplify the traditional usages. The simplification occurs with sole use of the patronymic (similar to Anglo-American personal name practices), and frequently the use of a single given name. Hyphens between double surnames are also seen in modern practice, to maintain surnames in the preferred order in modern databases, as seen in the examples following the Wellisch discussion of compound names (above).

Alvarez, Mercedes
Chávez, Denise
Font, Mauricio
Valdés, Nelson P.

C. Names of celebrities, artists, historical figures, authors and pseudonyms

The famous and the notorious have always configured their personal names according to individual taste, without regard to the naming practices of ordinary citizens.

Bolívar, Simón
Borges, Jorge Luis
Braga, Sonia
Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de
García Márquez, Gabriel (never sorted under 'Márquez')
Gardel, Carlos
Jara, Víctor
Paz, Octavio
Santana, Carlos
Zorro

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Victoria Agee and Barbara Valk for their professional advice about this article. A publishing guide for Spanish-language editions in the United States is forthcoming. For more information on indexing in Spanish, including a list of frequently asked questions, or to contact the author, please consult www.spanishindexing.com

Notes

- 1 In Spanish, a *lista* or *tabla*. According to etymological authority Corominas, *índice* is derived from the Latin *indīcĭum* (c. 1440), which in modern Spanish means variously '*indicación, revelación, signo, prueba*.'
- 2 The type of index that requires professional expertise is still rare in the Spanish publishing world, outside of the United States. It seemed in the early 1990s many publishers in Mexico City were adeptly incorporating professional indexes in some better non-fiction books, but subsequently indexes seem to have disappeared from the publishing scene. There are occasional exceptions for indexes directly translated from their counterparts in other languages, although indexers and translators should avoid the practice for reasons related to the nature of translation itself. Given the lack of experience among Spanish speakers with indexes (either as users or writers of indexes), and the more generalized notion that an indice is a list, one needs to distinguish what kind of list is being offered. Back-of-the-book indexes need to carry a qualifier, such as *índice analítico* or *índice de términos*.
- 3 One might surmise that Portuguese names would follow protocols similar to those of Spanish, but they are in fact quite distinct, and require a much greater background and attention to content on the part of the indexer to render correctly.

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