



INDEXING: A GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

October 2001

INTRODUCTION This guide is intended primarily for authors who, for the first time, need to index their own work; it also includes information on how indexes should be formatted and submitted to Boydell & Brewer. It is not intended to be exhaustive. If you want to know more about indexing see the Further Reading section at the end of the guide.

CONSIDERATIONS Although you will be very familiar with the material, you should bear in mind that the index needs to be easily usable by readers coming to your work for the first time; their terminology or conceptual grasp of the subject may be different from your own. This is particularly true if you are writing a book for a general readership rather than for the academic community.

If possible, arrange with a colleague or friend to (a) review the index at an early stage to see if you're going in the right direction and (b) try using the completed index to look up a few topics.

The amount of time required to produce a good index should not be underestimated. Indexing is a creative task in its own right and a good index will make a good book immeasurably better.

PROCESS The indexing process breaks down into stages.

1. Preparation before you receive page-proofs
2. Compilation of the index entries and their page references from page proofs
3. Editing the index

You will receive a separate set of page-proofs for the purpose of indexing. You will normally be given three weeks from page-proof stage to compile the index.

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1. PREPARATION

Before you receive page-proofs, it is useful to plan the headings you will use for the main people, places and subjects. Major themes need planning because they are referred to frequently and extensively. It is not useful to give long strings of page references for major themes. Such themes need to be broken down into sub-entries (and possibly sub-sub-entries) to indicate particular aspects of the themes as they are treated in the book. For instance, a book about the Norman Conquest of Britain will probably be full of references to William the Conqueror: under William the Conqueror, king of England and duke of Normandy, the index would need several sub-entries: e.g. coronation, gathers his army, and Harold Godwinson, lands at Hastings.

Minor entries can be dealt with later, when you compile the index: they only need a few page references and can simply be entered as you work from the proofs.

2. COMPILING THE INDEX

Whichever method you use to compile the index, you will probably find it useful to work from the page proofs by highlighting names and terms to be indexed. In the margins you can note additional cross-references or the heading you want to use to index a subject if it is different from the wording in the text.

Methods available

An index can be compiled on a set of cards. The indexer uses a separate card for each index heading and adds page references on the card as necessary while working through the page-proofs. Separate cards are needed for sub-entries and sub-sub-entries. The cards are kept in alphabetical order and added to as the work progresses. When the card collection is complete, the information on the cards is typed out in index format.

Dedicated computer programs for creating indexes (such as CINDEX™ or MACREX™) are effectively a computer equivalent of the record card file described above. However, they provide additional facilities such as consistent formatting of entries, a certain amount of consistency checking, perhaps a spelling checker (not very useful if your index contains obscure names), automatic sorting of entries and generation of the final index file. The disadvantages are that these programs are expensive and time is needed to learn how to use them.

The index can be compiled directly as a document in a word processor. Start with your first entry and add others in their correct position in the index as you go along. Before you receive the page-proofs you may already have set up an alphabetical list of the headings you intend to use; once you have the page-proofs, you can add page references and further minor headings to the existing structure.

Some word-processing applications offer indexing facilities. These facilities rely on you 'marking' words or terms in the text of your document which will be collected and sorted by the program to create the index. Although this sounds attractive it can lead to a number of problems, particularly if you attempt to create the index in the course of writing:

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The task of indexing may distract you from the task of writing and so reduce the quality of your text.

The task of writing may distract you from the task of indexing. It may be difficult to index themes while concentrating on the details of your writing.

The marked term may not be what needs to appear in the index. For instance the text ‘the Steward’ may need to be indexed as ‘James the Steward’, ‘Lennox’ as ‘Lennox, Earl of’. In addition, indexing of themes and concepts in this manner can be difficult. (Microsoft Word does allow the insertion of terms other than the actual words in the text and supports page ranges and cross-references. However, if you make use of these features you are effectively moving to a recording system as described previously.)

You will need to ensure that the pagination of your text exactly matches the pagination of your proofs.

What to index

Names of people and places; major concepts or themes.

Include any mentions of people and places that convey information about them. Be more selective about subjects. Cover the main themes and topics in the book. It helps to have planned the main subject headings and sub-entries before you start compiling the index. As you work through the page-proofs, other subjects that seem important can be added.

If you are uncertain about whether something should be included in the index, it may be better to include it at this stage: at the next stage it is easier to edit out too many entries than it is to go back and find new entries to build up an index that is too sparse.

In some books it is worth indexing illustrations (but see more below). References to illustrations should be distinguished from other references, say by printing them in bold.

If notes contain information that should be indexed and that is not covered in the main text then that information should be indexed thus (e.g.): 143 n.3

What not to index

Don’t include passing references: if a mention in the text provides no useful information it should not be indexed. E.g. ‘Wallace rode south via Glasgow’ – ‘Glasgow’ should not be indexed.

Preface, foreword, acknowledgements and bibliography should not need indexing. Notes and appendices should only be indexed if they contain information that cannot be found in the main text; however, if the most useful index heading is exactly the same as the appendix heading in the table of contents there is no point in repeating the work done by the table of contents. In many books it is not worth indexing illustrations. Notes should only be indexed if they contain indexable information that isn’t covered in the main text.

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Personal names

A detailed treatment as to how names should be presented is beyond the scope of this guide. In general names should be shown as ‘last name, title first name/initials’, e.g. ‘Smith, John’, ‘Grey, Lady Jane’. It may help to refer to existing indexes.

Where names exist in more than one form or spelling, are more famous under a pseudonym, or change due to marriage or ennoblement, cross-references should be provided. E.g. ‘Clemens, Samuel *see* Twain, Mark’, ‘Leicester, 3rd Earl of *see* Sidney, Sir Philip’ (in this last example the heading referred to would be ‘Sidney, Sir Philip, Lord Lise, 3rd Earl of Leicester’).

Further guidance on personal names can be found in Mulvany (see Further Reading below).

Place names

Invert geographical terms – e.g. ‘Deben, River’ or ‘Deben (river)’, not ‘River Deben’ – but do not invert compound names such as ‘East Anglia’. Add a qualifier if necessary, e.g. ‘Buckland (Devon)’, ‘Buckland (Surrey)’.

Subjects

Index the major topics and themes.

The headings you choose should be those that readers are likely to look for in order to find information on these subjects. The most useful wording for the headings is not necessarily the same as wording in the text.

In general, entries should not start with an adjective. However, this may be necessary where an adjective is part of the usual form of the term e.g. ‘military intelligence’.

Italicisation

The following should be italicised:

Published works and other major works, as in normal text
e.g. ‘*Beowulf*’, ‘*Life of King Alfred*’

‘*see*’, ‘*see also*’, ‘*see under*’, ‘*see also under*’ in cross references

Words from other languages may need to be italicised, consistent with usage in the rest of the book.

Note that books of the Bible should *never* be italicised.

Sub-entries

Subject entries may be needed under main headings, in order to avoid too many undifferentiated page references to them. E.g. a book about Queen Elizabeth I, might have a main index heading 'Elizabeth I, Queen' followed by sub-entries such as 'accession of', 'appearance of', 'birth of', 'court organisation of'. They can also be used to provide necessary distinctions.

It is easier to create too many sub-entries and remove them at the editing stage (see below) than it is to go back and break down a heading into sub-entries.

Do not use sub-entries for different places or different meanings:

Correct

Buckland (Devon)
Buckland (Surrey)
milk thistle
milk vetch

Incorrect

Buckland
 Devon
 Surrey
milk
 thistle
 vetch

You may need to break some sub-entries down into sub-sub-entries. Avoid going any deeper than this if possible.

Page references

Give separate pages when the referenced term is mentioned separately on consecutive pages. E.g. 'jewellery 14, 15, 16, 17'.

Use page ranges when a topic is covered continuously over several pages. E.g. 'jewellery 14–17'. When indicating ranges, use elision (note that numbers between 11 and 19 are not elided). E.g.

<i>Correct</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>
11–15	11–5
27–31	27–31
42–4	42–44
111–15	111–5, 111–115
127–31	127–131
142–4	142–44, 142–144

Where a note is referenced, show the reference as '142 n.7'.

If you have a large number of page references for a heading (say more than six) you should consider using sub-entries under this heading.

Cross references

'*see*' is used to indicate a preferred term. E.g. 'Saint Edmundsbury *see* Bury St Edmunds'. There should be no page references associated with a '*see*' entry.

'*see under*' is used to indicate that a term exists in the index as a sub-entry under some other heading. E.g. 'shears *see under* tools' or 'shears *see* cutting implements *under* tools'. There should be no page references associated with a '*see under*' entry.

'*see also*' should be used after (or before) a set of page references to indicate further information. E.g. 'jewellery 15, 17, 19 *see also* brooches'

Do not use a *see* or *see also* cross reference if the entry referred to only has one or two page references associated with it: provide entries at both headings.

Avoid chains of cross references; the reader should not need to follow more than one cross reference to reach the required index entry. In particular, avoid 'circular' chains of cross references such as 'journeys *see* pilgrimages' and 'pilgrimages *see* journeys', and 'blind' cross references where the cross-referenced heading does not exist.

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Sorting of entries

The two main sorting schemes for indexes are ‘word-by-word’ and ‘letter-by-letter’. Word-by-word arrangement sorts by the letters of only the first word in each entry; subsequent words are only considered when a number of entries have the same first word. Letter-by-letter arrangement sorts on the full text of the entry, ignoring non-letter characters such as spaces and punctuation.

Word-by-word

Caster, Donald
Caster, William
Casterton, John
Casterton, Michael

Letter-by-letter

Caster, Donald
Casterton, John
Casterton, Michael
Caster, William

In general, word-by-word sorting will provide a more obvious order to names. However, you should choose the method which is most appropriate for your material. Obviously, whichever method you do choose should be used consistently.

You may need to ensure that entries containing accented or unusual characters such as Å, Æ appear in the correct order. A computer sort may not give the result you intend.

Correct

Adelantado
Ælfhere
Aelfwine
Ælis
Agamemnon

Sorted by ASCII character value

Adelantado
Aelfwine
Agamemnon
Ælfhere
Ælis

3. EDITING

When the index entries have been compiled they need editing to form a coherent and consistent whole.

Unless you intend a particular distinction, eliminate synonymous headings e.g. ‘United Kingdom’ and ‘Great Britain and Northern Ireland’ or ‘clergy’ and ‘priesthood’. However, if you do keep separate headings for closely related topics, you will probably need to provide cross references.

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Consider whether any headings should appear as sub-entries under some other heading, and vice versa.

If you have a large number of page references for a heading (say more than six) you should consider using sub-entries to make the index more effective.

You may find you have too many sub-entries where a heading and its sub-entries only have two or three page references.

Make the usual checks for spelling, punctuation and consistent presentation.

If for any reason you use italic or bold for some of the page references, make sure that the intervening commas all appear in normal text, not in italic or bold.

Recheck that your cross references are not circular or blind.

If you have used any special conventions in the index add a brief note at the head of the index. E.g. 'Page numbers in bold type refer to illustrations and their captions.'

Format of the index

Present the index in a single column with generous interline spacing (approximately equal to double-line spacing).

Use tabs to indicate sub-entries: place a single tab character before each sub-entry, two tab characters before each sub-sub-entry, and so on.

Each entry should terminate with a paragraph marker (carriage return character). Do not insert line breaks, tabs or paragraph markers within an entry.

At the break between heading/sub-entry and the page references, we generally use an em-space (which is larger than a normal space) or a comma. It would be helpful if you could use something distinctive at this point such as an em-space or any other character (e.g. an asterisk) that is not present elsewhere in the index.

Put a line space (more if the document is double-spaced) at alphabetical breaks. Do not insert alphabet headings.

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Correct

Judith, duchess of Normandy
Jumièges, abbey of

Knowles, Dom David

Lanfranc

Laodica

Laporte, Dom J

Incorrect

Judith, duchess of Normandy
Jumièges, abbey of

K

Knowles, Dom David

L

Lanfranc

Indexes of Biblical or manuscript references may need special treatment: please contact us for guidance.

Submission of your completed index to Boydell & Brewer

Unless otherwise agreed, send your index as a single Word Perfect or Microsoft Word file on a 3.5 inch floppy disk formatted for PC, along with a matching printout.

FURTHER READING

Mulvany, Nancy C., *Indexing Books*, University of Chicago Press, 1994. A very good comprehensive guide to all aspects of indexing.

Other publications that may be useful:

Anderson, M. D., *Book Indexing*, Cambridge University Press, 1987

Hunnisett, R. F., *Indexing for Editors*, British Records Association, 1972

Knight, G. Norman, *Indexing, The Art of*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1979

Wellisch, Hans H., *Indexing from A to Z*, New York: H. W. Wilson, 1991

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OTHER RESOURCES

The Society of Indexers, Globe Centre, Penistone Road, Sheffield S6 3AE; tel. +44 (0) 114 281 3060; www.socind.demon.co.uk

American Society of Indexers, 10200 West 44th Avenue, Suite 304, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033; tel. +1 (303) 463-2887; www.asindexing.org

CINDEX™: Indexing Research, 100 Allens Creek Road, PO Box 18609, Rochester, New York 14618-0609; tel. +1 (716) 461-5530; www.indexres.com

MACREX™: Macrex Indexing Services, Beech House, Blaydon Burn, Tyne & Wear, NE21 6JR, England; tel. +44 (0) 191 414 2595; www.macrex.com

Indexes in other books

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