Indexing and Abstracting

Introduction

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Purpose

- Indexing and abstracting are practical arts
- What is important is the information in those records founded, and the validity and completeness of that information still relies on the expertise of human indexers and abstractors.
- The purpose of this text is to present the fundamentals of indexing and abstracting as a foundation for entry-level professional practice.
The Need for Indexes

- The function of an index is to give users systematic and effective shortcuts to the information they need.
- Indexes are needed for any information collection, except the very smallest.
- An index has two general purposes:
  - Minimize the time and effort
  - Maximize the searching success

Dual Spaces

- Document space: Original documents
- Surrogate space:
  - Indexes
  - Abstracts
- Indexing and abstracting are to ensure surrogate space similar to document space
Nature of Indexes

- Come in many forms and formats
  - Printed
  - Electronic
  - Both
- Serve many purposes
  - Name indexes
  - Subject indexes
  - Map indexes
  - Artifacts indexes
  - Address indexes
Nature of Indexes (continued)

- Surrogates of different materials
  - Books
  - Periodicals
  - Images
  - Database
  - Numerical data
- Compiled by
  - Human being
  - Computers
  - Both

Makers of Indexes

- Being a good, fast reader is also a real plus for an indexer
- The good indexer becomes the surrogate of the reader
- Makers of indexes are also censors
  - Unrecognized bias
  - Prejudice
  - personal agendas
Related Books

- 1878 - Henry Wheately
  *What Is an Index*

- 1975 and 1976 – Alan G. Brown
  Volume 1 –
  *Introduction to Subject Indexing: A Programmed Text.*
  Subject Analysis and Practical Classification.
  Volume 2 –
  *Introduction to Subject Indexing: A Programmed Text.*
  UDC and Chain Procedure in Subject Cataloguing.

Related Books (continued)

- 1975 – Harold Broko and Charles Bernier
  *Abstracting Concepts and Methods*

- 1978 - Harold Broko and Charles Bernier
  *Indexing Concepts and Methods*

- 1979 - G.Norman Knight
  *A Guide to the Indexing of Books and Periodicals*
  - Eugene Garfield
  *Citation Indexing-Its Theory and Application in Science, Technology and Humanities*
Related Books (continued)

- 1979 — Jennifer E. Rowley
  *Abstracting and Indexing*

- 1983 — Hilda Feinberg
  *Indexing Specialized Formats and Subjects*

- 1986 — Timothy C. Craven
  *String Indexing*

- 1991 — F. W. Lancaster
  *Indexing and Abstracting in Theory and Practice*

Indexing -- Historical Background

- Bible
- Alphabetic order
  - Witty (1976)
    - Although we have in Graeco-Roman times the use of alphabetic order of certain non-fiction works, we do not...have anything like an alphabetic index to a work before the Middle Ages.
  - 12th century:
    - social institutions
    - intellectual discourse
Indexing -- Historical Background
(continued)

- 14th century: annotation
  - Manuscripts
  - Library catalogs bibliographies

- Blank space
  - Clerics
  - Bibles

- Early indexes
  - Concordances indexes
  - Topical subject indexes

18th century – indexes to books were prepared primarily by their authors
19th century – compile indexes to cover entire fields
20th century – subject index consisted of a list of terms with no subdivisions or with subdivision in a simple hierarchical structure of two or three levels (main heading and modifier or main heading, subheading, and modifier)

- Scholarly journals – with the rapid growth of journals, subject access become necessary
- Late 19th century - taxonomy
- W.F. Poole – single publication indexing
Indexing -- Historical Background
(continued)

- 1882 – ALA
  - *Index to Periodical Literature*
- 1892 – Paul Otlet, Henri La Fontaine
  - International Institute of Bibliography
  - Title – word indexing
- 1900- H.W.Wilson
  - *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature*
  - “Information explosion” during and following World War II

Indexing -- Historical Background
(continued)

- 1950s –
  - Computers had entered the indexing and abstracting arena and efforts were begun to evaluate indexing using quantitative methods.
  - Hans Peter Luhn - KWIC indexes
- Cranfield Project
  - 2 stages: 1957, 1963
  - C.W.Cleverdon
  - Major values of the Cranfield Project was the development of techniques for the quantitative evaluation of indexing
Indexing -- Historical Background
(continued)

- 1957 – Sputnik
- Many of the current ideas and applications in indexing, abstracting, and information retrieval in general have as an antecedent the groundwork laid in the 1960s.
- 20th century –
  - Indexing has outstripped the ideas of previous ages. We have progressed from indexes to individual works, through indexes to several volumes, to cooperative indexes on an international scale.

Abstracting - Historical Background

- 1665 – Journal des Scavans
- 1700s – other abstracts began to appear
  - 1703: Monatsextracte
- 19th century – abstract journal proliferate
  - American Eclectic (1841)