

What we say...and what we do (rules that are not rules)

Glenda Browne

www.webindexing.biz



The rule about...

- ❑ The ‘rule’ about not indexing chapter headings has led to silly indexes
- ❑ The ‘rule’ about not writing the index in the book has led to weaker indexes
- ❑ The ‘rule’ about using specific not classified **entries** should probably be reworded to say ‘Create specific not classified **indexes**’



Rule 1: Don't index chapter headings

- Why ever not?



OK, don't index them all as is...

Not on the Mayflower? Then Leave!

So You Want to Kill the President!

Steve Forbes Was an Alien

A Sperm's Right to Life

Free Us, Nelson Mandela!

Mike's Milita

From the Michael Moore FAQ



...but don't ignore their topic

- Surely no-one would do that!



Oh dear...

- Archives text, 1987
- Introduction to the index 3) Because the CONTENTS present the main topical divisions, and serve as a form of index to chapters, these main divisions were generally **not used** as index terms. Thus there is no main entry for ‘finding aids’. Instead the reader will find entries for ‘bridging aids’, ‘descriptive inventories’, etc. thus providing quicker access to specific types of finding aids.



and again...

- Records management text, 1995
- You look up ‘indexing’ and find:
 - indexing
 - computer-assisted 95-6
 - definition of 85-8, 93-4
- Go to page 95 and find it is in the middle of a 30-page chapter titled ‘Indexing records’.
Where have the other 28 pages gone?



You find entries for them at:

computer-assisted indexing 95-6

consistency: importance in classification and indexing
63-4, 98, 102

derived indexing 97-8

full-text indexing 119-20

hierarchies in indexing 102-4

KWIC indexes 96-7

KWOC indexes 96-7

rotary indexes 94

strip indexes 94



and again...

- A broadcaster's annual report 2007-08

In general, this index does not include topics listed in the Contents (page 1).

- So for the **Vision**, you go to the TOC, but for the **Code of Conduct**, you go to the index.

- You find **News** in the TOC (p.86), but **news and information** in the index (pp.10, 12, 18, 45, 64, 113, 240). No overlap.



So, if it's OK to index chapter headings, is it compulsory?

- Not every chapter will generate one index heading that is co-extensive with its content, but in all cases the contents of a chapter should be accessible for someone who looks up the topic/s of that chapter.



Extrapolation of rules is a problem in library cataloguing too

Cutter says ‘Enter books under the word which best expresses their subject, whether it occurs in the title or not’; and Metcalfe adds ‘but this is misread by some cataloguers, who almost make the rule: enter under a word which is not in the title.’

Metcalfe, John. 1959 *Subject classifying and indexing of libraries and literature*



Rule 2: You don't have to write the book in the index

- Whenever example index entries on Index-L are wordy, someone is likely to point out that index entries should be *pointers* to information in the text; they should not *contain* the information



Vigorous writing is concise.

William Strunk Jr., "The Elements of Style", 1919



The skill of writing is to create a context in
which other people can think.

Edwin Schlossberg



Why flesh out entries

- Principle of safe arrival
- Full expression of concepts/Essence of the book



Principle of safe arrival – acronyms

ABA 15–17

EAD 56–58

or

ABA (Australian Broadcasting Authority) 15–17

EAD (Encoded Archival Description) 56–58

Assume they are also indexed at their full name.



Principle of safe arrival – acronyms 2

This needs to be judged in context. In my view:

EAD 56–58 will often be enough, but

ABA 15–17 could be

Australian Booksellers Association

Australian Broadcasting Authority

Australian Business Academy, etc

and more likely needs to be qualified.



Principle of safe arrival – homonyms 1

- How would you index the following in a book about satirical Australian TV shows?

John Howard, the actor, said ‘Sorry’ to Indigenous Australians for their treatment at the hands of the English settlers and their descendants on the mock 24 hour news channel comedy series CNNNN.



Principle of safe arrival – homonyms 2

Howard, John: ‘apology’ to Indigenous
Australians

would be misleading compared to:

Howard, John (actor): ‘apology’ to Indigenous
Australians



Principle of safe arrival – homonyms 3

- How would you index the place in the sentence below?
- ‘The librarians and IT representatives met in Dublin to discuss the future of metadata standards’.



Principle of safe arrival – homonyms 4

- Even if there is just one Dublin in the book, the city name alone is not enough. It would be better to use:

Dublin, Ohio



Full expression of concepts/ Essence of the book

ancient typographers

Block cursors, horrible memories of
remembering the days before color separation
previews

runts as banes of existence for

typesetting purists, *vs.* typesetting realists

Real world Adobe InDesign CS3 (Kvern and Blatner)

Index by Jan Wright, winner of 2008 ASI/HW Wilson Award



When should you omit detail?

- When it can be meaningfully made shorter
- Too much info in an index entry usually means that
 - the indexer didn't understand the topic well enough to step back and pull out the key features.
 - the author was the indexer and couldn't step back and see things from the user's point of view.



The book, unchanged, in the index

Malingering, techniques for identifying, 40-43

“I heard about this thing called ‘Klonopin’ from a friend who has what I have”, 43

interviewing clues to, 41-43

“nothing works, Doc,” 42-43

tale is just too perfect, 41-42



-
- So, you don't **have** to write the book in the index, but if space permits, and you think more detail would add value, go for it!



Rule 3: Use specific entries

I always wanted to be somebody, but I should have been more specific.

Jane Wagner, (and Lily Tomlin)



Problems with the specific entry ‘rule’

- While emphasising specific entry when I teach indexing, I realised that it’s not as simple as I thought...



Problems with the specific entry ‘rule’

sentencing

see also suspended sentences

discount for guilty plea, 13–14, 29–30

parity in, 38–39

purposes of, 83–84

two-stage sentencing, 29–30

- Sometimes we want to break the rule. When should we?



Complexity about the specific entry 'rule'

- Indexes provide access to the content of a document:
 - Alphabetical (or other logical order)
 - Specific/Direct
 - Selective




Three options in specific/classified distinction

- Specific, direct (alphabetico-specific)
 - micro-blogging
- Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified)
 - blogging: micro-blogging
- Classified
 - Blogging
- In book indexing, specific, indirect entry is usually called classified entry. Metcalfe (p.268) also groups these as alphabetico-classified entries.




Specific, direct entry is preferred in indexing

- ❑ It means users can look up a topic under it's own, specific name – they don't have to know the broader term (class) selected by the indexer.
- ❑ It means users can find information on the precise topic they are interested in – they don't have to wade through irrelevant content.
- ❑ It is easier to keep subheadings logical, and to avoid subsubheadings.
- ❑ If they want an overview of the general area their topic is in, they can search for the general area as well.



Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entry causes problems because users don't always know what broader term the indexer has used.

- ❑ But why is it so hard – of course a ‘collie dog’ is a dog.
 - ❑ Yes, but perhaps ‘micro-blogging’ could be classed under ‘social networking’ not under ‘blogging’.
 - ❑ And where would you look for ‘tailors’ in a book called ‘The Complete Tradesman’?
 - ❑ They are be found under ‘occupations’, not ‘trades’, and ‘tinkers’ can be found under ‘itinerants’.
- (Berson, 2007)




Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entry causes problems because users don't always know what broader term the indexer has used.

- ❑ Where would you look for 'computers'?
- ❑ In one early classification, 'computers' was a subheading of 'calculating machines'!
- ❑ Is 'metadata creation' in the class 'cataloguing', or is 'cataloguing' a member of the class 'metadata creation'?
- ❑ Information professionals can't agree.

Borko and Bernier 1978: p.14

SIGCR-L discussion 29 May to 11 June 2009



Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entry causes problems because users don't always know what broader term the indexer has used.


□ The fatal defect of every classified arrangement is that nobody understands it except the person who made it and he is often in doubt. (Poole, quoted in Wheatley's *What is an index?* p.56).

□ But in indexing this page, alphabetical arrangement fails! It is indexed at:

Classification v. the Alphabetical Arrangement56

but not at 'Specific' or 'Alphabetical'.

(It's clearly an emotive subject. The index to Wheatley's *How to make an index* has the entry 'Classification within the alphabet, Evils of, 58, 67')



Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entry may be effectively used:

- To give an overview of the topic (eg, in legal indexes)
- Where the specific terms are not so likely to be consulted, eg, names of made-up case studies; ‘Group Functions’ under ‘Public Service Commission’
- Where narrower terms may not be as important to users – where specific is **too** specific
 - Knight (pp.98-99) quotes Metcalfe’s example of the topic ‘Model T Ford Motor Car’ and concludes that in general literature ‘the indexer might have to invert it into “Ford motors, Model T” and that it is not necessary to descend to the *infima species*
 - He also concluded that ‘circular flying saucers’ could be inverted as ‘circular’ can be treated as a mere aspect or qualification. (Could also be classified just at ‘flying saucers’).
- As a supplement to specific entries, especially to avoid the need for cross-references



Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entry for a topic overview

- ❑ Mainly in legal indexes
- ❑ ‘...is it in the purpose of an index to pre-arrange the concepts dealt with in the text? Or is that not the function of a table of contents, while an index is a more democratic instrument, giving rough equality of access to all the concepts? (Green, 1989)
- ❑ 6 lecturers at the Law School in Cardiff were given 6 topics that were found at different levels of subdivision in the index to the Law Quarterly Review. None were able to find all of them.
- ❑ And pity the poor beginner who doesn't know that ‘defective premises’ are to be found at:
 - Torts: negligence: duty of care: defective premises

How would you index this?




...or this





Narrower terms not important or not known

- fusilli
- rotini
- spiral pasta
- pasta



Specific entry sometimes demands indexer knowledge and user knowledge and interest


- AC Foskett p.27: Whatever system we choose to use, there are two persons who must find it usable: the person responsible for the input, ie the *indexer*, and the person trying to obtain an output, ie the *user*.
- *Non omnia omnes possumus*: we cannot all be omniscient (or, we can't all do everything. Virgil)



Sometimes narrower terms are important

At the cookery and food indexing panel discussion at the 2007 ANZSI conference Tricia Waters presented a reading from Anne Tyler's novel *The Accidental Tourist*.

Rose's brothers were helping her to unpack the shopping. 'Rose stood on a stepstool in front of a glass-fronted cupboard, accepting the groceries which her brothers, Charles and Porter handed up to her. 'Now I need the N's – anything starting with N?' she asked. 'How about these noodles?' Porter asked. 'N for noodles or would that be P for pasta?' 'It's E for elbow macaroni, Rose retorted, you might have passed those up earlier'.



Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entries as a supplement to specific entries

sentencing

see also suspended sentences

discount for guilty plea, 13–14, 29–30


parity in, 38–39

purposes of, 83–84

two-stage sentencing, 29–30

two-stage sentencing, 29–30

- So long as we have a specific entry for ‘two-stage sentencing’, it is quicker for the user to double it as a subheading under ‘sentencing’ than to add a cross-reference leading from the broader term to the specific entry.



Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entries as a supplement to specific entries

- ❑ ‘hospital libraries’ at ‘libraries, hospital’ as well as at ‘hospital libraries’
- ❑ ‘chicken noodle soup’ as a sub under ‘chicken’, ‘noodle’ and ‘soup’ as well as under its specific name
- ❑ ‘MS-Access’, ‘MS-Excel’ and ‘MS-Word’ as subheadings under ‘software’ as well as being as entries in their own right.

~~Specific, indirect (alphabetico-classified) entries~~ as a supplement to specific entries – problems with

- When you choose to index a topic in its own right and as a subheading of a broader term, it's best to keep the entries in one place with a see reference to the other until the last minute. This avoids problems such as:

- Genres in film, 94-109


- analysis of genres, 96-97

- definition of word, 93, 94

- westerns, 101-102

- westerns, 97, 99, 101-102

Subset of example from Stauber, p. 164. Indexed as 'Subtopic categorical subheadings', with a reference from 'Classified subheadings'



Classified entry (not co-extensive with topic) may be effectively used:

- When the specific entry is just too specific
 - rotini
 - North Queensland
 - corporate libraries
 - Here the broader term is easy to find, as it is a component of the narrower term. Eg, if you find nothing at ‘corporate libraries’ you are likely to then try ‘libraries’
- When indexing at different levels of granularity
 - ‘indexing’ for whole chapter, and ‘strip indexing’ for a page.

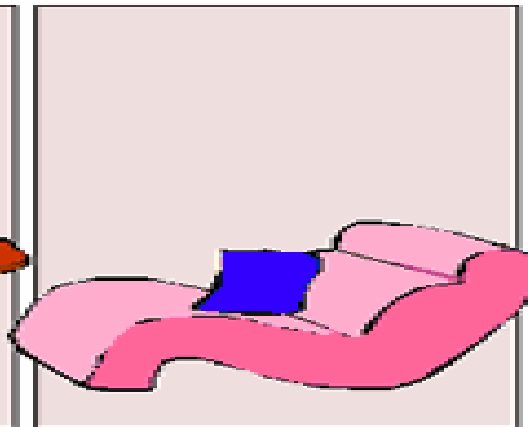


Classified entry (not co-extensive with topic) doesn't work when:

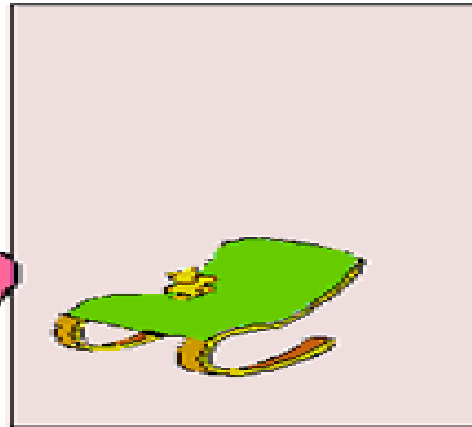
- It stops you going straight to the topic of interest, especially when you can't quickly tell what is relevant
 - If a discussion of 'micro-blogging' is indexed at 'blogging', and there are 5 references there, it won't be clear which of those 5 locators refers to micro-blogging (rather than blogging in general).
 - Yellow Pages has a category 'Editorial Support Services'. This is a class entry for 'Indexing' (one of the editorial support services) but most callers are looking for broader-services.



Too high!



Too low!



Just right!

Too classified Too specific Just right



Classified entries in periodical indexing

- ‘book reviews’, ‘editorials’ etc. Best in addition to specific entries, but may be used alone to save time and space.



Classified entries in database indexing

- Formal classification schemes may be used in bibliographic database indexing.
- Lancaster (2003: pp.270-271) suggests that keyword search (supplemented with a synonym ring) works relatively well for specific terms, and that intellectual indexing effort is best directed towards indexing showing broader classifications. These are useful for:
 - Broader searches, eg, ‘toxins’, places
 - Eliminating irrelevant hits for terms which have different meanings in different fields, eg, ‘sentencing’, ‘mass’, ‘irrigation’.

Classified (hierarchical) vs categorical (concept) groupings

- Overviews for biographies, eg headings such as ‘Early years in France’, ‘In Germany’ and ‘Voltaire and social reform’ (Wellisch, 1st ed, pp. 148-149).
- Where grouping is considered more important than specific entry, eg titles of books under the name of the author.
- Making interesting connections. Gather threads you discover that weave their way subtly through the work. Do Mi’s rule – if you pick it up, pick it all up.
 - serendipitous discoveries
 - indexer confusion.



How to get specificity ‘just right’, like Goldilocks

- ❑ Audience of book – book on pasta, or book on simple cooking for students.
- ❑ Specificity of book.



How to get specificity ‘just right’, like Goldilocks

- ❑ Quality indexing has multiple access points – people like a TOC-style broader entry to lead them elsewhere.
- ❑ Double entry and cross-references mean never having to say you’re sorry.
- ❑ Check specific article and quote him



But the key point is...

- ...specific entry is still the **FIRST** choice.
Classification is then fine as a **SECOND** choice.