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# Index

This headnote, much longer and more analytical than anything I would write for a typical index, describes some of the choices I made in designing this index, and points out some issues of interest.

Indexing a book on indexing is an exercise in metacognition. In facing this text, the result of my analysis of my own thinking process, and then using that same thinking process to analyze and make accessible its contents, I felt as though I was looking into mirrors in mirrors. At times the indexing process became somewhat surreal: I found myself cross-checking the “Cross-checking” entry, and making sure that the entry for “Undifferentiated locators” did not have too many undifferentiated locators. I was tempted to include page references to the main text from this headnote, and I contemplated indexing the headnote material, which, after all, discusses indexing.

In several places the text discusses its own index. I gathered these discussions into a main entry, “*Facing the Text* indexing,” and referenced them in subheadings as appropriate. Similarly, in several places I used qualifiers to distinguish self-referential headings: “Definitions (in *Facing the Text*)” vs. “Definitions (in text being indexed).”

On page 28 of the text, I assert that the places in which I explicitly state my argument metatopic should be gathered in the index. Here is that argument: “The index must arise from the needs of the reader, informed by—but independent of—both the structure of the text and external, abstract rules.” I indexed this concept, when I stated it in the text, under its two basic parts: “Context-specific decision making” and “Text/index distinctions.”

Book types (encyclopedias, reference books, scholarly books, textbooks, and trade books) provide an alternative conceptual structure in this index. All discussions addressing a particular book type (in general, or via a particular book example) are indexed under these types. Thus, the reader especially interested in scholarly book indexing will find all information about scholarly books in the collection of main entries beginning with “Scholarly books.”

Readers who are interested in following the multiple discussions of particular indexes used as examples will find the locators for each citation in the Reference List itself.

This book contains intricately interwoven concepts and topics. Everything is related to everything else. Furthermore, after a straight-through reading, this book will be used as a reference guide to particular indexing problems. Therefore, the index is highly detailed (averaging thirteen entries per page) and somewhat repetitive. Large entries have overlapping subheading locators so that connections are explicated. I double-posted extensively. I also provided separate subheadings for features such as definitions and overviews, and for short but important topics within a section. For instance, in the “Breaking down spans” entry, page 178 is covered in the subheadings for “local main topic overviews,” “need for,” and “span-length guidelines.”

Writing this book, I found myself discussing concepts that do not have official terms. I defined new terms in the text (ancillary topics, local main topics, metatopics, the subheading types). But as I indexed, I found many topics that I had described in the text with informal wordings. Here are some examples: subheadings that cannot stand alone as main headings, moving down a level in the text headings when higher levels are vague, and the need for an open mind in decision making. Inventing wordings for these concepts was a difficult task, one with which many colleagues helped. In some cases, given the luxury of self-publishing and a flexible designer, I went back into the text to reword using the new terms the index demanded. The final wordings for the three examples above are “Subheadings, dependent,” “Section topics, lower-level,” and “Flexibility, need for,” respectively.

This index uses letter-by-letter alphabetization. Leading function words in subheadings are not alphabetized. *See also* references appear at the end of the list of subheadings, or at the end of the locators if there are no subheadings. Page number spans are expressed in full. The first letter of each main entry is capitalized, which increases readability in an index with few proper names.

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