

Index it right! Advice from the experts, volume 2. Eds. Janet Perlman and Enid L. Zafran. Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc., 2010. 170pp. ISBN: 978-1-57387-396-3 (pbk) US\$ 40.00 (US\$32 for members of the indexing societies/networks*).

Following the subjects already covered in the first volume of *Index it right!* (see review in *The Indexer* 25 pp 62-3) - indexing art, biographies, computer manuals, encyclopedias, gardening and horticulture, philosophy, theology, and websites - the editors were looking for 'hot' topics, i.e., topics discussed at recent indexing workshops. Hence this second volume includes databases, embedded techniques, locators, navy and military indexing, public policy, subheadings, taxonomies and thesauri, technical writing, and textbooks. For those unfamiliar with the names of the authors, they include three winners of the H.W. Wilson Award for Excellence in Indexing, an impressive group for so slim a volume. To assist the reader, panels containing useful 'tips' are placed strategically throughout the book. Many of the tips will be familiar to indexers from their training experiences, nevertheless, it is good to be reminded of them, particularly if faced with an imminent deadline and simultaneous panic.

Subheadings (subentries), their relationship to main headings, and the need for 'the creation of useful, accurate and concise subheadings' form the substance of the first chapter. Victoria Agee and Margery Towery (co-authors of this chapter) deal with both 'what to do' and 'what not to do' in different situations, the perennial challenge of excessive numbers of locators after each main heading, and the dual components of subheadings, that is both the wording of the subheading itself and its relationship to the main heading. Lucid examples are used to clarify the text, supplemented by endnotes, acknowledgements, and references from indexing literature and from examples of published indexes.

Reading a social science book recently, I was enjoying the writing by a renowned author writing in a field for which he had been awarded international honours, until I came to the index which I considered to be a disaster (main headings with no subheadings and with as many as fifty or more locators!). Since I needed to refer to the book professionally, I rewrote the index, and in doing so, compiled an index that would lead me directly to the information I needed. It was gratifying therefore, to find an accomplished indexer like Janet Russell advocating putting the indexer in the place of the reader in order to compile a practical index. Janet's discussion of locators goes on to remind us that 'it depends' is not *carte blanche* to break all the rules, but rather a reminder to know the rules, which ones can be broken, and when.

Leoni McVey's experience as a student, a teacher, and an indexer qualifies her well to clarify the specifics of textbook indexing. What makes textbook indexing different from scholarly or trade book indexing is the function of 'educating' in addition to that of 'directing the reader to the information'. Leoni lists and discusses no less than 18 potential issues in textbook indexing, including that of audience level and the subsequent needs for clarity and brevity.

'Public policy indexing' is dealt with by Enid Zafran. She starts by explaining what public policy is and how much of the indexing required in this field is published by 'government agencies and quasi-government agencies', as well as university presses and mainstream publishers. Enid advises us to align our political views with those of the publisher while indexing, as even think tanks and foundations do not always take a neutral stance. Another potential challenge is that of multi-authored works with inconsistencies in terminology. While many readers of *The Indexer* are accustomed to similar linguistic pitfalls in everyday usage of English on either side of the Atlantic, not to mention South Africa or

Australia, we are also aware that many of these inconsistencies are scarcely noticeable. The same applies in public policy tracts.

Naval and military books may seem like a niche market for indexers and possibly an unusual choice for a short book such as this, yet economists are quick to point out that military matters loom large in most countries' economies. However the challenges here may be just more concentrated forms of challenges faced in memoirs and histories in general, such as indexing military ranks that change through an individual's career, ships' names that may change under different owners, and numerical unit names in an otherwise alpha index.

Both Deborah Patton (naval/military) and Jan Wright (technical writing) provide invaluable insights into how they became employed in these fields. Marketing one's services does not necessarily always need to be either formal or very high tech. Word-of-mouth is still not entirely out-of-date. Indexing cycles in technical writing include new indexes, slightly revised and radically changed indexes. Detailed guidelines deal with such matters as: cross-references; plural phrasing; 'bold', 'italics' and 'formatting'; page ranges; prepositions; and sorting, among others. At the end of her chapter, Jan Wright concludes with some notes on the future of technical indexing. While each improvement only encourages ordinary writers to try their own indexes...success is not guaranteed. Good news for any indexer looking to get into this field. The next chapters ('Database', and 'Embedded indexing' by Linda Mimassian and Lucie Haskins respectively), continue this discussion on technical indexing, removing some of the mystique for those of us not so technically minded.

The final chapter is about controlled vocabularies, thesauri, and taxonomies (Heather Hadden). Beginning with definitions of her title themes, Heather continues with a discussion of how each theme relates to regular indexing, and advising the reader on such decisions as when to double-post and when to cross-reference.

Compiling an index for a book on indexing, for sale to an audience of indexers, must be a truly daunting experience. Nevertheless, Jennifer Burton has risen to the occasion with a double column, 12 page index of extreme elegance.

Michael E. Jackson, freelance indexer

The Indexer Vol. 28 No. 3 September 2010