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Book Review

Browne, Glenda and Jerney, Jon. *The Indexing Companion*. Published by Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftsbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8RU U.K. 2007, xii, 249 p., Paperback, ISBN 0-52168-988-0, £21.99

Indexing is a crucial part of any information retrieval system. It is a challenging task requiring paying attention to many theoretical and practical issues. While the move towards digital information systems and automated indexing is thought to have reduced the need for indexers in some areas, professional indexers are still much needed and as a matter of fact electronic environment has posed new challenges for the indexers.

The book '*The Indexing Companion*' written by two professional indexers is an up-to-date resource for learning how to index. The book consists of eleven chapters. The first two chapters of the book present some information about the basics of indexing. Chapter one, The Indexing Work Environment, introduces the industry and the people who provide the context for the indexing process. The chapter gives a good overview of the people with whom indexers need to work and cooperate. It presents some general information about indexing and indexers such as what an index is and what indexers do as well as some information about different working environments. The second chapter is about standards and definitions related to indexing.

From the third chapter afterwards the content of the book is related to the actual process of indexing itself. The authors divide the indexing process into four main groups of steps including:

- 1) Planning; scope, personnel and processes. The third chapter discusses these steps by delineating the issues that need to be considered for planning an indexing project.
- 2) Words, including concepts analysis, term selection and controlled vocabularies. The next three chapters (chapters 4 to 6) deal with these issues. While chapter four dissects the issue of analysis of concepts, chapter five deals with term selection. The sixth chapter discusses controlled vocabularies, a critical issue in selecting terms that is applied in collection indexes rather than book-style indexes.
- 3) Structure, including subject headings, cross-references and filing rules. The seventh chapter of the book has been allocated to the important issue of structuring indexes and it includes discussions about non-displayed index search design, notes in indexes, subheadings, cross references, locators, filing rules and a few other related topics.
- 4) Evaluation, output and interoperability. These have been dealt with in chapter eight. Evaluation is critical especially for information retrieval tools and components. The evaluation section of the chapter is rather similar to a check list that indexers can check to be sure about the quality of the indexes they generate. This section could perhaps be somewhat extended given the importance of the issue of evaluation and wide range of

issues pertinent to the quality of indexes and their usability. The chapter also delineates the issues of consistency and interoperability. The latter is essential in the digital environment and the authors sensibly discuss matters such as mark up languages, XML and RDF.

In a book of this size quite reasonably it is not feasible to discuss all types and formats of indexes. Generally, the book has been written with two main types of indexes in mind, book-style indexes and collection indexes. These two types of indexes have some fundamental differences for example book-style indexing is a stand-alone process while collection indexing is a long term process. Most of the aforementioned steps have been discussed for each of these two types of indexes separately in each chapter. However, quite naturally some issues such as controlled vocabulary and interoperability are more relevant to collection indexing. The information presented in the first eight chapters of the book can be considered general rules of indexing and indexers who work on those types of indexes that are not covered in the book still can benefit from the information presented.

The authors have wisely allocated the ninth chapter to 'specialised source material: formats, subjects and genres', in which they briefly present some key points and tips for those who index material with specific subjects, formats or genres such as biographies or e-books. This helpful chapter helps recover the drawback of not covering all types of indexes.

Chapter ten is about software and hardware applied for indexing and it includes discussion of specific software packages such as MS Access as well as more specialised software packages such as thesaurus or taxonomy management software packages.

The last chapter of the book contains a general discussion about threats and opportunities in indexing. As it is expected from the book, examples have been provided wherever appropriate to make it easy for readers to understand the steps discussed in the book. Besides bibliography, the book includes a list of selected Websites that indexers might find helpful. The book also has a detailed subject index that has been prepared by the first author and can be used as a good example for book-style indexes.

Overall, '*The Indexing Companion*' is a well-titled and valuable book. The value of the book lies in the fact that it has been written from the practical point of view of indexers and by two professional indexers. A strong point of the book is its structure and organization of its contents. It does not have to be read from cover to cover and could be used like a reference book. It can be used as a manual by indexers. It is also a helpful and enlightening book for graduate students or information professionals that wish to get acquainted with indexing.

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