160

Knowl. Org. 32(2005)No.4
Book Reviews

The total number of preferred terms is 1970 against 1316 in the 2nd edition. The number of preferred terms (descriptors) per top term is uneven: 4 in "buildings and facilities" and about 400 – one fifth of the total – in "activities and operations." The number of non-preferred terms I estimate as around 1000. In the second edition there were about 700 non-descriptors. The terminology itself is modernized compared with the 2nd edition, a must in a field that is changing rapidly. Just one example: in the 2nd edition "gateways," in the 3rd edition "portals UF gateways." In this thesaurus a few multihierarchical subdivisions are found, e.g. "collection management" has two broader terms: "information resources management" and "library technical services."

The usability of this new edition is better than that of its forerunners thanks to a better literary warrant, and also thanks to a better layout. At the other hand comparing the 2nd and 3rd edition shows how well Jessica Milstead did her work. But it also shows once again that to make a good documentary language it is necessary to use it for indexing a collection in the field.

Gerhard Riesthuis

Dr. Gerhard J.A. Riesthuis. Guest-Researcher, Department of Information Science and Archivistics. University of Amsterdam. Address: Voorsterbeeklaan 136 NL-3521 DG Utrecht (The Netherlands). E-mail: g.j.a.riesthuis@xs4all.nl

MULVANY, NANCY C. *Indexing Books*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, c2005. xiv, 315 p. ISBN 0-226-55276-4.

This update maintains the place of Mulvany's 1994 work as an essential indexing resource. Addressed to indexers, authors and editors, it provides a thorough introduction to the field of back-of-the-book indexing, while providing context and direction for dealing with some of the more arcane problems that can arise.

Book indexers must analyze text rapidly and organize the "map" that they are creating in a manner that fits the anticipated cognitive patterns of potential readers, is internally consistent and corresponds to standards. Intuition, high-level analytical skills, pattern-recognition abilities, commonsense and the ability to communicate the big picture as well as the details in few words are signs of a gifted indexer. Thus, it makes sense that Nancy Mulvany's conviction that indexers are born, not made, underlies the purpose and structure of *Indexing Books.*

> Indexing books is a form of writing … a mixture of art and craft, judgment and selection. With practice and experience, indexers develop their own styles …. The best we can do as teachers of indexing is to present the rules and offer guidance (p. x).

> The indexer's ability to recognize patterns and relationships is a unique human skill that cannot be automated … (p. 271).

Consequently, this is a book that focuses on best practices and acceptable options, not on specializations. While it provides contexts and procedures for the practice of indexing so that individuals new to the field may use it as a textbook, it goes beyond this to suggest avenues and resources for decision-making. Established professionals as well as students will therefore find it useful. Mulvany speaks directly to the readers, engaging them with the material; her philosophy comes through clearly.

Mulvany refers extensively to current authorities throughout, linking practice to ISO standards, the British standard, NISO guidelines, *AACR2R*, the *Chicago Manual of Style*, as well as to more specialized resources. Citations have been meticulously updated and references to the latest research and discussions included.

The book starts with a discussion of what an index is, its purpose and how it may be used. "As a rich paratext, the index mediates the book to the reader" (p. 15). Chapter two is addressed to authors. In most cases American publishers hold authors responsible for indexing their own books, whether through their own labour or through hiring an indexer. With this in mind Mulvany provides an overview of contractual issues and the process; the on-going debate on author-indexer versus professional indexer is thoroughly explored. Pointing out that the "art and craft of indexing is mastered by few" (p. 31), Mulvany nevertheless encourages authors who are seriously interested to learn how to index since "[i]ndexing one's own book is certainly not an impossible task, but it is a demanding task when done well" (p. 31).

Knowl. Org. 32(2005)No.4
Book Reviews

161

After an overview of the book publishing process, the book gets down to the essentials of indexing practice – term selection, the structure of entries, the complexities of alphabetical and specialized filing orders, format and layout. Names – personal, corporate and geographic – merit an entire chapter. The chapter on "Special Concerns in Indexing" provides guidance on such potential problems as acronyms, international characters and symbols, as well as the broader issues of multivolume works, cumulative indexes and translations. It also addresses the new challenge of single sourcing, "the creation of a single set of documentation files that will eventually be converted to multiple formats and localized for various global markets" (p. 153).

Canadian indexers and others working in multilingual environments where there may be numerous non-English words in the index should note that following the advice that "Diacritical marks are usually ignored in alphabetizing" (p. 117) could cause problems in indexes in which the distinguishing differences between two or more words are the diacritics. True, this is less likely to happen in book indexing than in database indexing, but it is possible, especially with proper names. Diacritics form an integral part of the spelling and filing order problems need to be addressed in these cases.

The subsequent chapter focuses on editing as "an integral component of the indexing process" (p. 222).

> A biological metaphor for this process would not be far off the mark. New cells grow and old cells divide; synergy is at work …. Index writing integrates substantive editing into the initial creative writing process (p. 222).

Ideally, the indexer, the author, and the copyeditor work as a team. Mulvany puts a sensible emphasis on this, making it clear how important it is for the author to be actively involved in the process and what steps copyeditors should follow. The guidelines on assessing index quality, dealing with ill-prepared indexes, and reducing index length expand on the basic copyediting checklist.

The final chapter looks at the mechanics of indexing. Although it might seem odd that manual techniques are included, particularly the traditional, but reliable, index card method, the reality is that there is no need for a neophyte or an author to purchase expensive software for a single project. In fact, it can be more effective for neophytes to learn the process of indexing if they are not caught up in the software-learning curve, or dazzled by automated sleights of hand. So this inclusion is very useful. Mulvany also goes into considerable detail concerning the difficulties associated with embedded indexing software. Many technical indexers, particularly, are given no choice by the publisher but to use embedding software. Having an awareness of the issues involved may be a matter of "forewarned is forearmed." A brief overview of the advantages of dedicated indexing software finishes the chapter. The appendices include various resources for indexers including a specification worksheet and lists of professional organizations, standards organizations and training resources.

The layout and font of this second edition make it easier to read and to skim than the previous one. Headings are flush left instead of centred, and are bolded; pages are wider, the text is darker, and examples are highlighted in bold. In addition to a detailed main table of contents, each chapter begins with its own contents list that is specific down to the subheading level. These refinements enhance the usability of *Indexing Books* as a reference tool, and, in general, make it easier to read and follow.

The index to a book on indexing merits close scrutiny, as it should make evident the principles within the text. The twenty-four page index by Victoria Baker follows the same structure as that of the 1994 edition. It is meticulously conceived and detailed; space was clearly not an issue. However, details can get in the way of usability and in some cases this index slips in that direction. Unlike Mulvany's examples in the text, which are always admirably succinct and clear, some of the index entries are grammatically unclear and/or unnecessarily cluttered.

> gazetteers, for place names, 180 (p. 299)
>
> illustrative material
> .
> .
> list of, as nonindexable, 51 (p. 300)
>
> index-writing process
> .
> .
> in sorted order, advantages of, 223 (p. 301)
>
> thesauri
> .
> design of, reference for, 147 (p. 313)

In the first instance the further qualification of "gaz-etteers" is unnecessary and adds to visual clutter. In the remaining examples, the structures are grammatically incorrect or the meanings are not immediately evident, and the reader must stop to reason out what the indexer probably meant.

There are also some slips in the cross-reference structure:

> taxonomies imposed on an index, 12, 81. *See also* classification (p. 312)

but, under "classification," the same phrase and page numbers appear as a subheading, so the reference is unnecessary.

> controlled vocabularies. *See* taxonomies; thesauri (p. 295).

None of these terms has a cross-reference to "vocabulary control," under which there is a fair amount of information that might be of interest to someone looking up the concept of controlled vocabularies.

Also, the target term "taxonomies" has been abbreviated, which is allowable, but not done consistently within the index (there are some target terms that are longer). Obviously, these are not major problems, but they do mar an otherwise exemplary work.

This is a highly-recommended resource, both for established professionals and students. If you own the earlier edition and refer to it only occasionally, you probably do not need to buy this one unless you teach indexing. However, this edition has the benefit of extended and/or new sections on term selection, single source indexing, forms of entries in cookbooks, usability, names of works and electronic displays, as well as revisions throughout the text in general and references to the latest standards.

Christine Jacobs

Christine Jacobs, Chair, Information and Library Technologies Dept., John Abbott College, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Québec H9X 3L9. E-mail: cmjacobs@johnabbott.qc.ca