

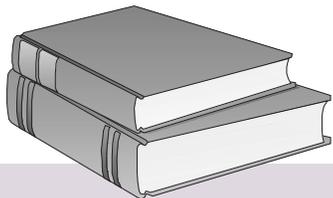
An index is much more than an alphabetical list of topics with page numbers attached . . .

At least, it should be. A good index is a road map that leads both experts and novices in your field to every pertinent sentence you've written, regardless of their point of departure and without dead ends or annoying detours.

An index is a tool that helps users locate information.

Users of indexes include:

- **Potential buyers and bookstore browsers**, when deciding whether to buy your book.
- **Librarians and educators**, when deciding whether to acquire or adopt your book.
- **Book reviewers**, when deciding whether to recommend your book.
- **Your peers**, when judging your book's completeness in their (and your) area of expertise.



Creating a good index takes understanding of the *reader* as well as the *subject*.

It takes objectivity, perspective, a sense of proportion and priority, patience, speed, technical training, and experience. If you have all these qualities, if you can apply them under deadline pressure, *and* if you would rather index your current book than start writing your next one, then you, the author, are the best indexer for your book. If not, then hire a professional.

But *I'm* the expert on this topic.

True, you are the expert on the topic of your own book. However, the index is meant for the reader, often a nonexpert who may not be as familiar as you with the concepts, thrust, or vocabulary of the topic.

A professional indexer will look at your book from the reader's perspective, using synonyms, main heading and subheadings, double postings, and cross-references to guide the reader efficiently back into the book.

" . . . an index by a professional indexer can give the author a new perspective on the effectiveness of her or his presentation."

—**Martha Osgood**
Back Words Indexing

There are other considerations, too:

A professional indexer

- knows and understands the many established (and often contradictory) principles of information retrieval
- knows and follows the publisher's index style guidelines
- uses fast, efficient indexing software able to provide the index in a variety of print or electronic formats
- meets strict deadlines

Think of an index as a collaboration . . .

"I believe the most useful, accessible, market-savvy indexes are produced by a professional indexer collaborating closely with the author. The author brings subject-matter knowledge deeper—though not necessarily broader—than an indexer is likely to attain. A qualified indexer brings professional skills, objectivity, and a fresh approach to the topic—the potential reader/learner's point of view."

—**Lillian R. Rodberg, ELS**
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The American Society of Indexers (ASI) can help you or your publisher find the right indexer for your book. Since 1968, indexers have been demonstrating their commitment to their profession by joining ASI, honing their skills through meetings and communication with a worldwide network of peers.

ASI's *Indexer Locator* is a directory of freelance indexers, including contact and background information for each as well as indexers by subject specialty, type of material indexed, and geographic location. The *Locator* is available both on the Web and in printed form. The online database is found at www.asindexing.org. The printed version is available free to authors and publishers from the ASI Administrative Office.

ASI's *Job Hotline* is an online service that is free to ASI members. Publishers who need indexers provide information to ASI, and those jobs will be posted for indexers to respond directly to the publisher.



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Authors and Indexers: Do It Yourself *or* Hire a Pro?

