



# Indexes for Digital Publications: “The Battle of the Books”

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# Battles of the (Indexes in) Digital Books

- ▶ Battle 1) Index vs. No index: which side are you on?
  - ▶ Battle 2) Page-hyperlinked vs. Precision-hyperlinked indexes: which side are you on?
  - ▶ Battle 3) “We can’t” vs. “we must” have fully functional hyperlinked indexes: which side are you on?
- 



# Battle 1: Index vs. No index

- Search function (with or without non-hyperlinked index)
- Kindle X-Ray
- Hyperlinked index without page numbers



# Search function with non-hyperlinked index

## Index

The pagination of this electronic edition does not match the edition from which it was created. To locate a specific entry, please use your e-book reader's search tools.

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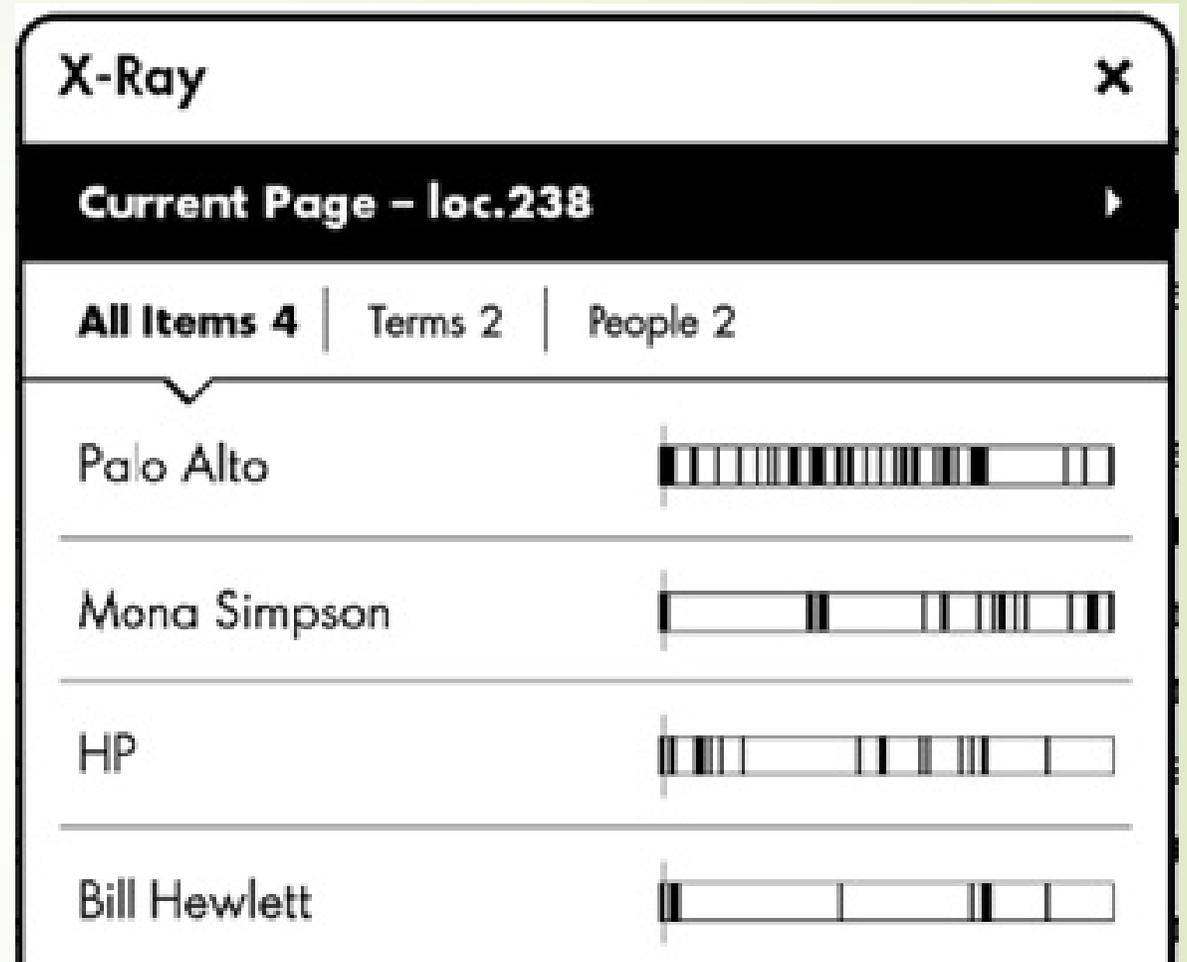
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# Kindle X-Ray

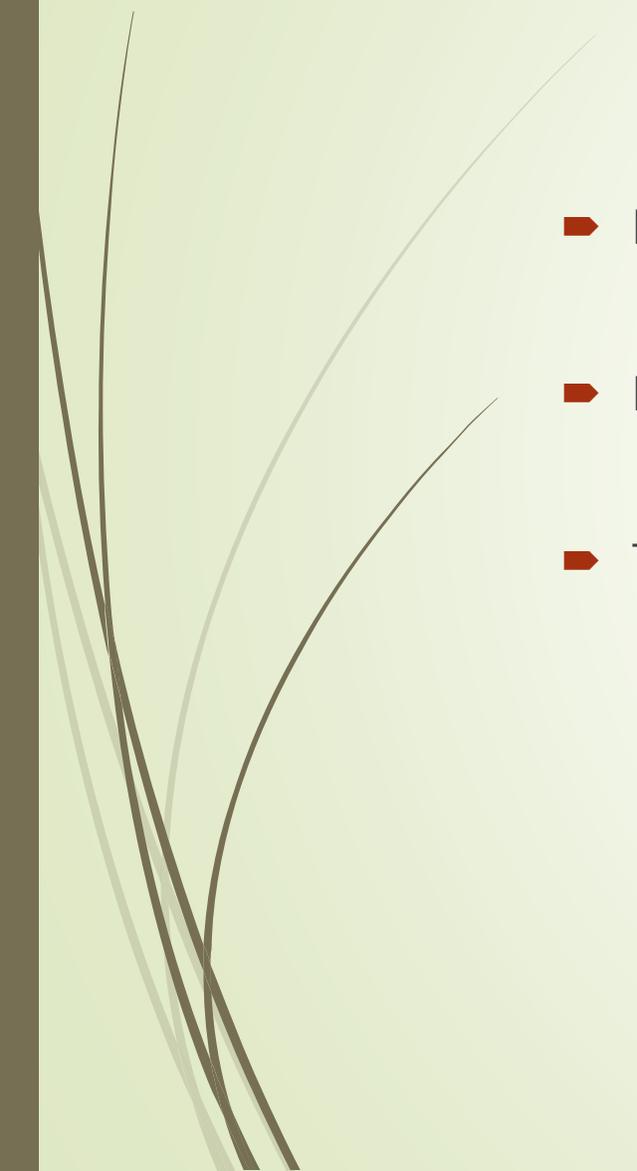


The screenshot shows the Kindle X-Ray interface. At the top, there is a title bar with "X-Ray" and a close button. Below that is a dark bar with "Current Page - loc.238" and a right arrow. Underneath is a white bar with "All Items 4 | Terms 2 | People 2". The main content area lists four items, each with a progress bar:

Item	Progress
Palo Alto	Progress bar with many small segments, mostly filled.
Mona Simpson	Progress bar with a few segments, mostly empty.
HP	Progress bar with several segments, mostly empty.
Bill Hewlett	Progress bar with a few segments, mostly empty.



# Battle 2: Page-linked vs. Precision-linked indexes

- ▶ Page linking is not inherently bad
  - ▶ Precision linking is obviously more useful
  - ▶ Trying to create precision linking can become a morass
- 



# Page-linked index



## Index

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# Precision-linked indexes

- ▶ We need to understand the difference between embedded and hyperlinked indexes
  - ▶ We don't need an embedded index to create a hyperlinked index
  - ▶ Adobe InDesign's indexing feature creates an embedded index, as well as a hyperlinked index
- 

# Embedded index tags in HTML

```
<p><a data-type="indexterm" data-primary="Adjustment disorder" data-  
secondary="epidemiology"></a><a data-type="indexterm" data-  
primary="Acute stress disorder (ASD)" data-  
secondary="epidemiology"></a>In contrast to most psychiatric disorders,  
there is an absence of epidemiological studies of ASD.
```



# Embedded index tags

- ▶ Required in digital-first workflows
  - ▶ Can be made into hyperlinked indexes (and vice versa)
  - ▶ Can create problems
  - ▶ Can be labor intensive
- 

# We need to think about how indexers work





# Indexing to Element ID

- ▶ Much more efficient for the indexer
- ▶ Much less prone to error
- ▶ Granularity can be at any level
- ▶ Can be for hyperlinking or tag-embedding, or both

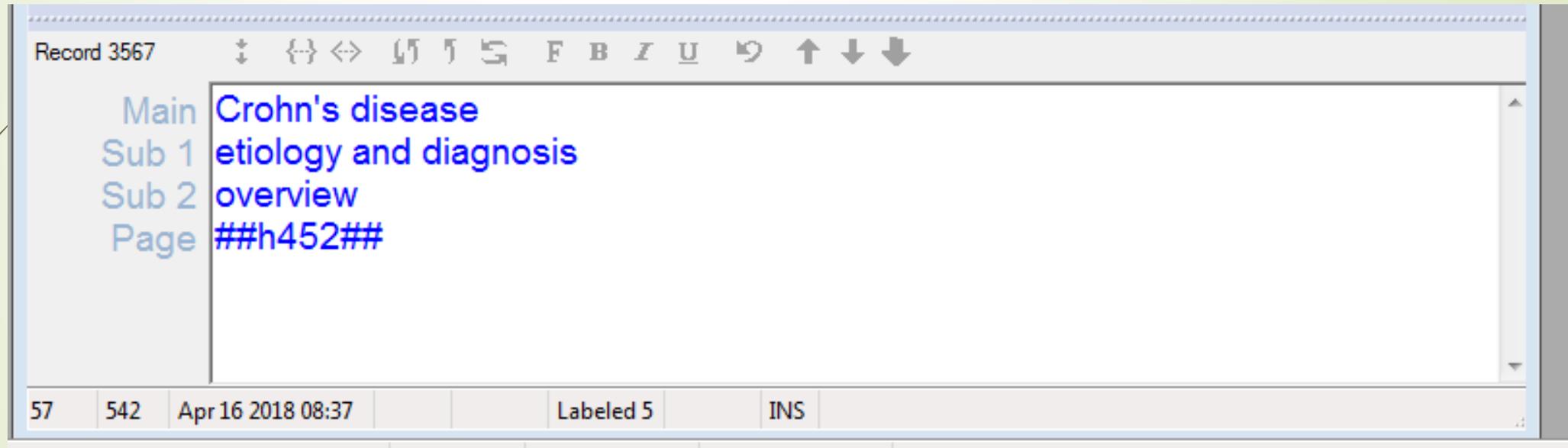


# Indexing to Element ID

## 47.3 **Etiology and Diagnosis**

Etiology studies focused on Crohn's disease have determined that diet plays a significant role in

# Element IDs in the indexing software



The screenshot displays a software interface for managing records. At the top, it shows 'Record 3567' and a toolbar with various editing icons. The main content area is divided into a left sidebar and a right text field. The sidebar lists hierarchical levels: 'Main', 'Sub 1', 'Sub 2', and 'Page'. The text field contains the following content:

- Main Crohn's disease
- Sub 1 etiology and diagnosis
- Sub 2 overview
- Page ##h452##

At the bottom, a status bar shows the following information: '57', '542', 'Apr 16 2018 08:37', 'Labeled 5', and 'INS'.

# Index entries in spreadsheet format

3567	Crohn's disease	etiology and diagnosis	overview	##h452##
3568	Crohn's disease	etiology and diagnosis	overview	##f114##
3569	Crohn's disease	etiology and diagnosis	clinical testing	##h453##
3570	Crohn's disease	etiology and diagnosis	treatment options	##h454##



## Battle 3: “We can’t” vs. “we must” have fully functional hyperlinked indexes

- ▶ Fully functional means allowing user input
- ▶ Fully functional means taking advantage of digital potential
- ▶ Fully functional means giving the user a qualitatively improved experience compared with print



# User-directed indexes

- ▶ We already have some user control
- ▶ Control over how index entries display
- ▶ Selecting which index terms will appear



# User-directed indexes: “it can’t be done, plus there’s no demand”

- ▶ Famous last words...
- ▶ Worst tech predictions of all time (PCWorld, Dec 31, 2008)
- ▶ “I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.”  
IBM CEO Thomas Watson, 1943
- ▶ “There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.”  
DEC founder Ken Olsen, 1977



# Complete index



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# Sub-index of key terms



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## **Awareness blockers, 125–135**

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# Sub-index of names



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# Roots of the problem

- ▶ We are still thinking of the digital book as a stepchild of the print book
  - ▶ We are confusing embedded indexes with hyperlinked indexes
  - ▶ We are not taking full advantage of the potential of digital indexes to add value for users of digital publications
- 



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- ▶ 2) Page-hyperlinked vs. Precision-hyperlinked indexes: which side are you on?
- ▶ 3) “We can’t” vs. “we must” have fully functional hyperlinked indexes: which side are you on?
- ▶ WE NEED TO STOP ARGUING AND START COLLABORATING!



# What we need to focus on right now (some modest proposals)

- ▶ Functional hyperlinked digital indexes: page-level hyperlinking is the minimum, precision hyperlinking is the goal
- ▶ For the most part, keeping page numbers in indexes
- ▶ Focus on high-quality indexes – hire an experienced indexer!



# What we need to focus on for the future (some more modest proposals)

- ▶ Moving beyond ePUB and mobi to more robust formats like HTML5
- ▶ Creating digital-first workflows
- ▶ Arguing for value of hard page numbers
- ▶ Putting the index at the front of the book
- ▶ Developing prototypes of user-directed indexes



For more information:

American Society for Indexing's SIG on  
indexes for digital publications

<https://digital-publications-indexing.org>



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