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
Kindle X-Ray
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

ABC, xii
ABN, see Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations
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ACEN, see Assembly of Captive European Nations
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Alexander, Project, 117, 118
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Allen, Charles, 118
Allied Control Council Law No. 10, 12–13
Alsop, Joseph, 242
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.
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
47.3 #h452##Etiology and Diagnosis

##p01566##Etiology studies focused on Crohn’s disease have determined that diet plays a significant role in
Element IDs in the indexing software
Index entries in spreadsheet format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>overview ##h452##</td>
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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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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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- 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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