

INDEX

In publishing, an index is a **guide to the contents of a document**, a book, a publication, or a multimedia collection, prepared to help the reader more quickly and easily find information. More than simply a list of terms in a publication it should be an **organized guide to its topical contents**, making its “see” and “see also” references and cross-references to the topics clearly visible and comprehensible to the reader. There are indexes in the back of books that describe and point to the treatments of a particular term within the contents of that book. There are also very **large indexes that describe the contents of multiple magazines and journals**, providing enough information to locate a particular article in a journal. Such indexes are usually arranged systematically by author, title, and topic or keyword. They can come in both printed and electronic forms.

INDEXING

The activity of indexing is the **intellectual analysis of the subject matter** of a document to identify the concepts represented in the document, and the **assignment of a controlled vocabulary of descriptors** (subject headings, keywords, tags) to allow these concepts to be retrieved. Although freetext-searching a large number of text documents can be done semi-automatically using software applications, and web search engines can robotically select and compile words found in web sites into the hit-lists used to retrieve pages, the resulting “indexes” or results-lists are more properly called “concordances.” Because these artificially-intelligent algorithmic procedures involve little or no human intervention or intellectual effort beyond the initial programming, flesh-and-blood bibliographers and academic indexers sometimes distinguish their own work by calling it intellectual indexing, manual indexing, **human indexing**, or back-of-book-style indexing.

PERIODICAL INDEX

A periodical index is a **guide to the contents of a large number of periodicals**. Some periodical indexes are general and cross-disciplinary in coverage, while others focus on a particular subject area or discipline such as agriculture, economics, history, or music. Print indexes can be arranged typically by author, title, and subject, while electronic database indexes can usually be searched and filtered by many additional criteria. A periodical index lists, at least, the **author, title, periodical name, volume/number, pages and date of publication** for each item (i.e., the exact citation). Some indexes also supply **abstracts** that summarize the content of articles, or **citation histories** that place a document in the ‘web of research’ (i.e., show which earlier articles it cites, and which later articles cite it). Some indexes also contain links to some **full-text content** in a range of selected electronic journals.

ELECTRONIC ARCHIVE

A digital library of scanned or re-keyed materials that appeared originally in print, such as journal articles; often contains the content of full runs of hundreds of journals, centrally stored on a vendor’s computer server and available for downloading by subscribers; such an archive generally allows free-text searching for characters strings, but **might not be indexed** using a controlled vocabulary.