

### Guidelines for Indexing

*A successful index provides its reader with an efficient and logical path to all substantive information found in the text. As such, there are two key points when considering an index—first, the index must be loyal to the books' content and scope, and second, it must present the reader with a systematic and easily navigable structure. Naturally, the design of such an index requires a great deal of discrimination and foresight on the part of its author. The following, then, attempts to provide the aspiring index-maker with a set of useful tips and guidelines. For further and more detailed information, please consult the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition (pp. 755–801), or the 14th edition (pp. 701–60).*

#### **Content**

1. In general, include only substantives as main index entries: nouns and names.
2. Choose entries with a depth appropriate to the work: entries too broad or too narrow will not be helpful to the reader's search.
3. Certain parts of a book, such as the preface, foreword, acknowledgments, and bibliography, are not usually indexed. The introduction, however, is often included, as well as any footnotes or endnotes that contain pertinent information not found in the body of the text,
4. As topics are interrelated in the text itself, so too should be the index. When compiling entries, it is important to keep an eye out for the possibility of cross-listings and subheadings.
5. The index should include not only names and titles but also important concepts, such as literary movements, schools, and historical events. In other words, the index should not be just a list of proper names.
6. Names of all authors mentioned should be indexed, but it is not necessary to list their works as entries. Works discussed in detail, however, should be included.
7. In general, if there are many page references for a single entry, consider splitting it into subentries.  
**Please note: sub-sub entries are strongly discouraged.**
8. Natural logic and instinct are probably as reliable as any in determining what topics are worthy of indexing.

#### **Structure and Format**

1. Capitalize only the entries that would be capitalized in the *text* of the book.
2. Put commas after an entry before listing page references.
3. Do not put a period or any other punctuation at the end of an entry.

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4. Page ranges should be truncated as follows: 1–5, 43–44, 100–102 [repeating the hundreds number only after a number ending in 00], 106–7 [don't repeat the 0 here], 131–38, 188–213.
5. When indexing a note, type the page number, the abbreviation “n” followed by the number (with no spaces): 175n5; for several notes on the same page, type each note separately: 178n3, 178n6. (This is new, as given in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed., p. 788.)
6. In listing primary works, multiple works by a single author are best listed alphabetically under the author's name, as opposed to individual entries.
7. Alphabetize your index word by word (not letter by letter). (For more information, see the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed., pp. 773–77) Each main entry should be alphabetized under the most important word. For example, “irrigation, ancient use of” is correct (not “ancient use of irrigation”). Subentries should be ordered under the main entry by their first main word. For instance, under the main entry “United States,” the following subentries should appear in this order: “foreign policy of,” “and Russia,” “unemployment in” (f, R, u).
8. When submitting your index to the Press, do not use any extra spaces, tabs, or other special formatting. That is, use a standard page format with standard margins. Underline or italicize any words that will be italicized in the book. Use only the spaces normally necessary to separate words and for normal punctuation. The Press will take care of the layout of the index.
9. The only exception to this “no special formatting” rule is that one extra blank line should be left after the last entry for each letter of the alphabet.
10. Submit your index as both hard copy (printout) and on a disk.

### **Method**

1. As a start, computerized keyword searches can be helpful, as can automatic tagging of the text for indexing. However, these methods lack the ability to discover important entries that are not explicitly mentioned in the text, such as related words or phrases or the concepts that lie behind the words.
2. Common techniques for gathering entries including writing headings on index cards, marking entries on the proof pages, and using a computer to organize the entries.
3. The phrases *See* and *See also* (italicized in the index) guide readers through your organizational decisions. Use them to avoid placing the same information under many different headings, and to allow the reader easy access to interrelated topics. Be sure that you have no “blind” references—references that do not lead to an entry.

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4. Make certain that page references are accurate! An index entry that does not match the text will probably be useless to the reader.
5. Above all, remember to consider the reader when you are organizing your index. Think: How does one look for a subject? A successful index can take many forms, but logic, coherence, and organization are fundamentally important.

**Check List**

- Check spelling of main entries
- Check alphabetizing of main entries
- Check alphabetizing of sub-entries
- Check page ranges to be sure they follow URP house style (listed above under Structure and Format)
- Check all cross references to make sure they lead to a main entry

Finally, the following is a sample of how a submitted index might look. (It is single spaced to save paper.)

## Index

Abulia clan, 32, 51, 57, 95  
“Accras,” 134  
Achoum clan, 36  
Adam, Monseigneur, 137  
Ademba clan, 41, 77, 79  
administration, 2, 4, 14, 135, 179, 180, 181, 225; colonial, 41, 121, 133–34, 138, 139, 141–61, 174–83, 185, 195–97, 199, 200–213, 217. *See also* *canton*; chiefs; *circonscription*; French; *regroupement*  
Adorno, Theodor, 21  
Afro-Portuguese, 99  
Agondjo-Okawe, Pierre-Louis, 14, 75  
Agouma, 145, 151  
agriculture, 15, 16, 50, 77, 86, 138, 149, 152. *See also* *famine*; food  
Agulamba clan, 54  
Ajumba clan, 33, 54, 100, 108, 118  
alcoholism, 76, 152, 162n9  
*Altogovéen*, 228  
Ambouroue-Avaro, Joseph, 14  
Ambrizette, 95  
American(s), 33, 85, 97, 135  
Angola, 95

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- anthropologists, 13, 17  
anthropology, 14, 19  
Anti-Slavery Society, 122, 137  
Antonetti, Raphael, 179, 212  
Apindji-speaking clans (Bapindji) 37–38, 39, 47, 51, 57, 58, 64n53, 102, 103, 105, 108, 111–12, 117, 118, 120, 152, 155, 159, 161n4, 172, 177, 199, 204, 205, 212, 215  
archaeology, 6  
Ashira, 42, 43, 48, 79  
Asiaga clan, 54  
Asono clan, 32  
Atlantic, 3, 4, 7, 11; slave-trade, 27, 36, 41, 49n11, 74, 84, 85, 99, 109  
Avandji, 32, 70–71  
Avelot, René, 85  
Avemba, 32  
Avogo clan, 32  
Aymes, Lieutenant A., 96  
Azyondo clan, 45
- Babongo, 1, 5n1  
Bacougnis, 158  
Badumbi clan, 73, 82  
Bagamba clan, 82  
Bakara mission, 136  
Bakele, 4, 49, 51, 151, 189, 208. *See also* Kele  
Balandier, Georges, 190  
Banda clan, 31, 42, 48, 151; district, 57, 156  
Bantu: languages, 6; peoples, 6, 80, 116; settlement, 6, 18; tradition, 11–13. *See also* equatorial traditions; chiefs  
Bayart, Jean-François, 5, 133, 134, 195–96; *The State in Africa*, 195  
Bayenji clan, 73  
*benyi*, 76  
Bernault, Florence, 195  
Berton, Jules, 112, 119  
Bichet, Père, 99, 109, 110, 122, 136  
*bisa*, 42, 43  
*bisi*, 47  
Bohannan, Paul, 83  
*bokudu* traditions, 107, 111  
Bongo, 135, 151, 153, 155, 177, 204, 205n9  
Bongo, Omar, 228  
Bowdich, T. Edward, 53, 118  
Brazilians, 31, 33  
Brazza, Savorgnan de, 46, 96, 98, 100, 103–6, 121, 141–42, 200  
Brazza Commission, 145  
Brazzaville, 158, 171, 212  
Bruel, Georges, 103, 113, 114, 117, 122

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- Buali, 43, 48, 87  
Bujala clan, 31, 33, 82, 199  
Buléon, Joachim, 40, 56, 101, 102, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 138–39  
Burton, Richard, 103  
Bumwedi clan, 74  
Bumwele clan, 12, 29, 30, 31, 33, 74–75, 82, 116, 199, 214  
Buyombu clan, 80  
*bwiti (bwété)*, 36, 58, 140, 179, 189, 203, 212, 215, 216, 217
- Cameroon, 153, 154, 196, 197  
*canton*, 5, 178, 204–13, 221 n, 60. *See also* chiefs  
Cape Lopez, 28, 31, 32, 33, 45, 145, 151, 152, 153, 209  
capitalism, 18–22, 27, 81–82, 88, 94–103, 134–35, 142n3, 176, 183, 190, 225  
Catholics, 85, 87, 99, 100, 120, 124, 136–41, 147, 209, 212, 226  
census, 3, 113–18, 149, 161, 176, 204, 225–26  
Chad, 141, 176  
Chamarande, 115–17, 161, 174  
Charbonnier, Hippolyte, 199, 201  
charms, 45, 51, 58, 83, 87, 198, 201, 203  
chiefs, colonial, 5, 175, 197–213, 225–28; precolonial, 11–13. *See also* *canton*; *circonscription*; clan  
chiggers, 126n28  
children, 11, 12, 14, 45, 52, 58, 77, 83–84, 87, 136, 158, 182, 209  
Chilongo, 28, 73  
Christianity, 4, 103, 135, 136, 145, 212, 214. *See also* Catholics; Protestants; missions  
*circonscription*, 116, 122, 150–55, 158, 161, 165n41, 172, 177, 188, 197, 200–201, 202, 204  
clan, 2, 3, 12–19, 28, 29–35, 37–60, 70–83, 116, 171, 177, 183, 203–6  
climate, 9–10  
cloth, European, 33, 71, 143; raphia, 33, 48  
coffee, 179, 180, 181  
cognitive maps, 2, 3, 18–22, 25n48, 197, 225; French colonial, 18–19, 73, 104, 141–50, 195–96; postcolonial, 19, 196, 225; precolonial, 2, 3, 18–19, 73–88, 195–96, 217. *See also* maps  
Coignard, Joseph, 87  
Compagnie Coloniale du Fernan Vaz, 143  
Compagnie Française du Congo Occidentale (CFCO), 143, 151, 156  
Compiègne, Marquis de, 98, 99  
concession companies, 4, 35, 113–14, 134, 141–51, 160–61, 171, 181, 197  
Congo, Republic of (Congo-Brazzaville), 158, 186, 196n1  
Congo Free State, 142  
Congo-Océan railroad, 191n22  
*Conseil des notables*, 211  
copper, 36  
Crowder, Michael, 154

Last updated 04/19/2006 — URPress/ss

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