

A-Z Indexes for Content Searching

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Overview

- Definition of an index
- Comparison of indexes and taxonomies
- Structure and examples of HTML indexes
- Benefits of A-Z indexes
- Content best suited for indexes
- Indexing techniques and tools

What is an Index?

- “A systematic arrangement of entries designed to enable users to locate information in a document.”--*British indexing standard (BS3700:1988)*
- Alphabetical (A-Z)
- Second-level terms (subentries)
- Variant terms (multiple entry points)
- Cross-references

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Taxonomies vs. Indexes

- Hierarchical taxonomy
- Alphabetical index
- Combination
 - Hybrid
 - At different levels
- Each is suitable for different kinds of content.

Content Suitable for an Index

- Content that is varied or broad
- Content not easily categorized (e.g. policies, instructions)
- A combination of topics and names
- Content for varied users

HTML Indexes

- Content types
 - Web sites, intranets, or sub-sites
 - Online articles, periodicals
 - HTML document management
- Index types
 - Meta tag indexing
 - Databases
 - Simple hypertext index entries

Structure of HTML Indexes

- Hyperlinked main entries and subentries
- Hyperlinked cross-references
- Hyperlinked navigational letters
- Single page, or a page per letter
- Icons or notes for non-HTML or restricted documents

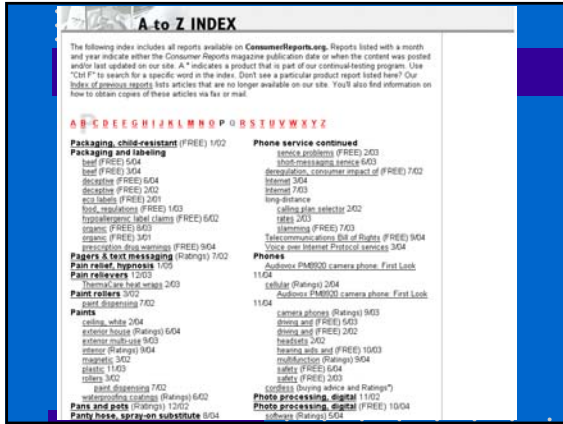
Web Site Index Examples

- CM Pros
- Gleason Public Library
- Consumer Reports

The screenshot shows the 'CM Pros' website with a navigation menu on the left and an 'A-Z Index (and Search)' section on the right. The index lists various categories like 'Marketing lists', 'Newsletter', 'Glossary', etc., with a search bar and a list of links for each letter of the alphabet.

The screenshot shows a simple alphabetical index with letters A through Z. Under the letter 'A', there is a list of links including 'address of the library', 'art exhibits', 'current exhibit', 'past exhibits', and 'author events'. Other letters B and C are also visible with their respective link lists.

The screenshot shows the 'ConsumerReports.org' website with an 'A to Z INDEX' section. It features a search bar and a list of links for each letter of the alphabet, such as 'Automobile reviews', 'Automobiles continued', 'Automobiles for and against risk', etc.



Structuring HTML Subentries

- Nonbreaking spaces: ` `
- Definition lists: `<dl>`, `<dt>`, `<dd>`
- Unordered bulleted lists: ``, ``
- Style sheets: `<div class="dd">`

Benefits of A-Z Indexes

- Compared to search engines
 - Index, Search Engine Combined
- Compared to site maps, taxonomies

Advantages over Search Engines

- Indexed to substantive information
- Browsable pick-list precludes typos, singular/plural issues
- Points to specific information at anchors within pages

Index, search engine combined

- On large, changing sites, where index is not so specific
- With meta tag keywords from controlled list/thesaurus

Advantages over Site Maps, Taxonomies

- Index has multiple variant entries.
- Site maps and taxonomies are structured only one way.
- Index length, scrolling is not a problem.
- Ideally have both: like a book's table of contents and index

Content Best Suited for Indexes

- Not a high level of change
- Repeat users
- Small-medium number of pages, documents
- Varied documents

Indexing Technique

- Look at each page, each heading
- Decide what is worth indexing
- Add named anchors as desired
- Decide what to call it/how to label it
- Add all variations of what to call it
- Group main entries and subentries

Web Indexing Tools

- Add-on tools for automated site map creation and indexing
- HTML help authoring tools
- Book indexing tools
- Dedicated web site indexing tools
- (Database index with thesaurus)

Help Authoring Tools

- RoboHelp, HTML Help, etc.
- Margin/frame index
- Type-ahead scrolling
- Content needs to be imported
- Skills of online help technical writer

Book Indexing Tools

- CINDEXT, Sky Index, or Macrex
- HTML/Prep utility
- Convert a tagged ASCII index to create an HTML document
- Skills of book indexer

Dedicated Web Indexing Tools

- HTML Indexer, XRefHT32
- Automates
 - Inserting URL links
 - Creating indented subentries
 - Alphabetizing entries and subentries
 - Creating navigational letters
 - Includes non-HTML documents

Web Indexing Tool Interfaces

- HTML Indexer
www.html-indexer.com
- XRefHT32
publish.uwo.ca/~craven/freeware.htm

Who Creates the Index

- Professional indexers
- Information specialists trained in indexing
- Content specialists, writers, editors trained in indexing

Information on Indexing

- American Society of Indexers (ASI)
www.asindexing.org
- Web Indexing SIG, ASI
www.web-indexing.org
- “Creating Website Indexes” workshop
Simmons Graduate School of Library
and Information Science
www.simmons.edu/gslis/continuinged