

Scholarly publications in Latin America: where, oh index, art thou?

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The author describes the results of her investigations into the current state of back-of-the-book indexing in the publishing universe of Latin America, and provides a brief history of the practice. The investigation includes an effort to determine whether indexing is taught in Latin America. It also examines identifiable indexing standards in these countries, and the presence of indexing societies in Latin America. The article presents the results of a survey of 812 books from the Latin American collection of the University of California, Los Angeles in this context.

Introduction

During a session at the 2011 annual conference of the American Society for Indexing (ASI) on the indexing of Spanish names, questions were raised regarding the practice of book indexing in Latin America. The general assumption among the conference participants was that back-of-the-book (BOB) indexing in Latin America was not prevalent in scholarly publications or in general non-fiction works. This paper will examine whether this is the case, or whether the BOB index, known in Spanish as *índice analítico*, is indeed practiced in Latin America. For the purpose of this paper Latin America includes Mexico and countries in Central and South America. The article looks at:

- the function of indexing in scholarly communication
- the teaching of indexing in Latin America
- indexing standards, if any, followed in these countries
- indexing associations and societies, if any, in Latin America
- a review of results from a survey of books covering Latin America held at the Charles E. Young Research Library at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Function and value of indexing in scholarly communication

The value of indexes

An index, according to Wellisch, 'must fulfill certain functions if the resulting index is to be a tool that will enable a user to retrieve or find a particular name, term, or passage in a text that the user has either read before or that is presumed to contain the desired information' (1994: 620). Stevenson reinforces this argument, stating that the 'purpose of an index is to enable the reader to access the content of a book and identify and locate information of interest without having to read the entire text. In essence it is a formidable labour-saving device' (2001: 120-1). For Mulvany 'The role of the index remains the same regardless of the book's format. It is for the use and convenience of readers. A properly designed index will allow readers to locate specific information without the need to read the entire text in a linear fashion' (2004: 77). Mulvany further states that:

The readers of many non-fiction reference books have no intention of reading an entire tome from beginning to end. They need specific information, and their queries are framed in their own vocabulary. When the vocabulary of the author differs from that of the reader, the indexer steps in to bridge the gap.

(Mulvany, 2004)

Indexing as an intellectual endeavor

While an index can be seen as a labor-saving tool, it is also an intellectual endeavor. According to Stevenson, it:

is a creative art requiring high skill (A) well-structured index can be a powerful key to the content and structure of a book, but more significantly can provide insights into the meaning of the text and linkages within it that the author may not even have realized.

(Stevenson, 2001: 121)

This principle is shared by Booth, who states:

Indexing is not a mechanical word-spotting process. It involves intellectual activity – understanding and analysis of texts and their messages, selection of significant references to relevant topics, assembly of references, choice of suitable vocabulary for the representation of topics, and presentation in an accessible format.

(Booth, 2001: 3)

An index, therefore, can be seen as an intellectual communication device or tool, one that translates the content of the text into a form that bridges the gap for readers so they can find the particular information being sought. It also facilitates connections from one topic to another in the text. A table of contents (TOC) is a poor substitute for a well-written, comprehensive index.

Is indexing taught in Latin America?

Evidence from a literature review coupled with a web search indicates that indexing is indeed taught and written about in Latin America. In Mexico, for example, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México offers a course in indexing in

its Colegio de Bibliotecología as part of the core course for the *licenciado* degree (generally, a baccalaureate degree) in information science. The suggested reading for this course includes articles and books from the United States, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Spain, Mexico, Chile, and Argentina.

Courses are also being taught in Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. In 2005, the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Biblioteca Central Pedro Zulen in Peru offered an introductory course on indexing entitled 'Introducción a la Indización' within the workshop 'Taller de Capacitación: Organización de la Información y Servicios Bibliotecarios.' The course covered the principles and practice of indexing as an important part of the process of document treatment, in particular document analysis and analysis of the content.

In Argentina, the Universidad de Buenos Aires, Departamento de Bibliotecología y Ciencia de la Información offers a course on indexing and abstracting entitled 'Indización y Condensación.' The section on book indexing covers topics such as the author and the index, starting the process of indexing, structure of entries, order of entries, how to deal with names, format and layout of the index, editing the index, and tools for indexing. What is interesting, however, is that the required readings are all published in the United States. Indexing is also taught as part of a course on organization of knowledge at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Bibliotecología. The Asociación de Bibliotecarios Graduados de la República Argentina offers a course on the policies of classification and indexing in the digital environment, entitled 'Políticas de Clasificación e Indización en un Entorno Digital.'

In Uruguay, the Asociación de Bibliotecólogos del Uruguay offered a course in July 2012 on indexing and classification entitled 'Calidad de la Indización y la Clasificación,' and in Brazil, the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Curso de Graduação em Biblioteconomía has been offering a course on the theory of classification and indexing since the mid-1970s (Cesarino and Vianna, 1990: 42-3).

These courses are but a small sample of what is being offered in the area of indexing, but they indicate that the theory and principles of indexing are indeed being taught in various parts of Latin America.

Indexing standards

In the international realm, the standard for indexing is the somewhat outdated ISO 999:1996. This standard establishes guidelines for the content, arrangement, and presentation of indexes to books, periodicals, reports, patent documents, and other written documents, as well as non-print materials, such as electronic documents, films, and sound and video recordings. In addition to ISO 999, there is ISO 5963:1985. This standard 'describes recommended procedures for examining documents, determining their subjects, and selecting appropriate indexing terms' (ISO 5963:1985, reviewed and confirmed in 2008). While this standard is not necessarily to be used for book indexing, it is nevertheless an additional indexing standard.

Colombia (ICONTEC) is the only Latin American country that is a member of the ISO TC46 SC9 sub-

committee responsible for the identification and description of information resources, and as such, a signatory country for both ISO 999:1996 and ISO 5963:1985. National standards organizations across Latin America, however, do include ISO 999:1996 in their catalogs, but I was unable to find the standard ISO 5963:1985 (WorldWideStandards.com) listed in Latin American standards catalogs under its code name. It is possible that this particular standard is known in these countries under a different code, as in the case of Brazil where the equivalent standard to ISO 5963 is NBR 12676.

Indexing societies

Based upon readings about indexing topics from Latin America, course work offered on indexing, and indexing standards being followed in Latin American countries, the question arises: are there any indexing societies in these countries? Looking across the world, there are six indexing societies and two indexing networks,¹ affiliated under the International Agreement (of Indexing Societies). This agreement, drawn up originally in 1999, is reviewed triennially by the International Committee of Representatives of Indexing Societies (ICRIS). A review of the development of the Agreement and relations between the societies is to be found in the September 2012 issue of *The Indexer* (Halliday, 2012: 149). The current version (2012) can be found at www.theindexer.org/files/International-Brighton-2012.pdf. An earlier account describes the societies involved as:

provid[ing] services to indexers, publishers and authors in Britain and Ireland, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Southern Africa, and China. Some of them have long-standing connections to the publishing and communications industries. Some maintain a strong link with professional organizations in the field of library and information management, while others relate more to the academic environment.

(Booth, 2001: 411)

In the 12 years or so since the Agreement was first adopted, no indexing society or group of indexers from Latin America has come forward to subscribe to it. Furthermore this investigation was not able to find any associations or societies in these countries that focus on the profession of indexing from searching the web or from related readings. It is possible that further investigation would identify specialized indexing groups in library and information science organizations. However, the lack of such societies or groups is more likely an indication that there is no viable market for freelance indexers in Latin America and thus no need for such organizations.

The Charles E. Young Research Library collection of books on countries in Latin America

Methodology

Since indexing is clearly not unknown in Latin America another question arises: is it practiced in those countries,

and if so, to what degree? To answer this question I carried out a survey of books from and about Latin America held at the Charles E. Young Research Library of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The Latin American collection at UCLA comprises more than 585,000 volumes and 1,100 serial titles, and is one of the largest and most comprehensive in the United States.² The survey evaluated books falling under the Library of Congress Classification scheme covering the history of the Americas. By using the classifications F1201 to F3799, approximately 65,681 volumes at UCLA, I was able to focus on specific countries in Latin America.³ The books examined were not necessarily published in these countries, and the comparison between Latin American and non-Latin American practice provided a helpful insight.

It is also important to keep in mind that Latin American countries could be publishing books covering Latin American countries other than themselves. For each part of the classification, this investigation examined two to three rows of shelves, discounting working papers, conference proceedings, or any other type of publication that would not lend itself to an index. I asked: did the book include an index, and was the book published by an academic institution, center, or governmental press as opposed to a private or commercial press? I also noted the year of publication to see whether there was a time-based trend apparent in indexing practice.

Results

Provision of indexes

Of the 812 books examined, those published in Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, France, Poland, and Portugal had no BOB indexes. The 21 countries in which some books with indexes were published were Belize, Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia,

Costa Rica, Germany, Guatemala, Guyana, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, the United States, and Venezuela. There were very few, if any, books published in French Guiana, Guyana or Suriname; most of the books about these countries were published by foreign presses. Of the 70 books examined for these three countries only nine were published in Guyana (see Figure 1).

Of all the 812 Charles E. Young Research Library books on Latin American history examined, 508 were published in Latin America. Just 57 of these had BOB indexes, usually between one and five books per country. Mexico was the exception, with 17 of the 82 books published there having an index, but this is still only 21 per cent. Of the 142 books published in the United States, 72 per cent had an index.

The sample was not large enough to give a clear picture by country of the kinds of press that provide indexes, but on the whole the books with indexes, whether published in Latin America or elsewhere, came from academic, government, and private presses. For example, in Bolivia four books with indexes were published by an academic press while the other five indexed books were from a commercial press. In Brazil, one indexed book was published by a university press while the other three were from a private press. In Chile, Colombia, Belize, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela, the indexed books came exclusively from the same kind of press, but it was not the same kind in each country: in Chile, the five books with indexes were all published by a commercial press, while in Colombia the three books with indexes were published by a university press. In the two countries with the highest percentages of indexed books, there was little perceptible difference between academic or governmental presses and private presses: in Mexico, indexed books ran 53 per cent by an academic or governmental press and 47 per cent by a private press, and in the United States, the proportions were 52 per cent academic or government press and 48 per cent private press (see Figure 2).

The last part of the survey looked at the years in which the indexed books were published. (Again, the limited size and specific location of the survey mean the results are not necessarily fully representative of publishing trends.) The countries with the most recent indexed publications (from 2000 to the present) were Brazil, Colombia, Nicaragua, and Spain. Indexed publications in most of the other countries dated from the 1980s through the 1990s, with a few books from earlier years. In Mexico the earliest indexed book was from 1936, and there was one book from 1953, three books from the 1960s, then a jump to the 1990s. The earliest UK indexed book in the survey dated from 1912, and that from the United States from 1902. For Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States it is apparent that indexing books with Latin America as a subject was a well-established practice from the early days of the twentieth century.

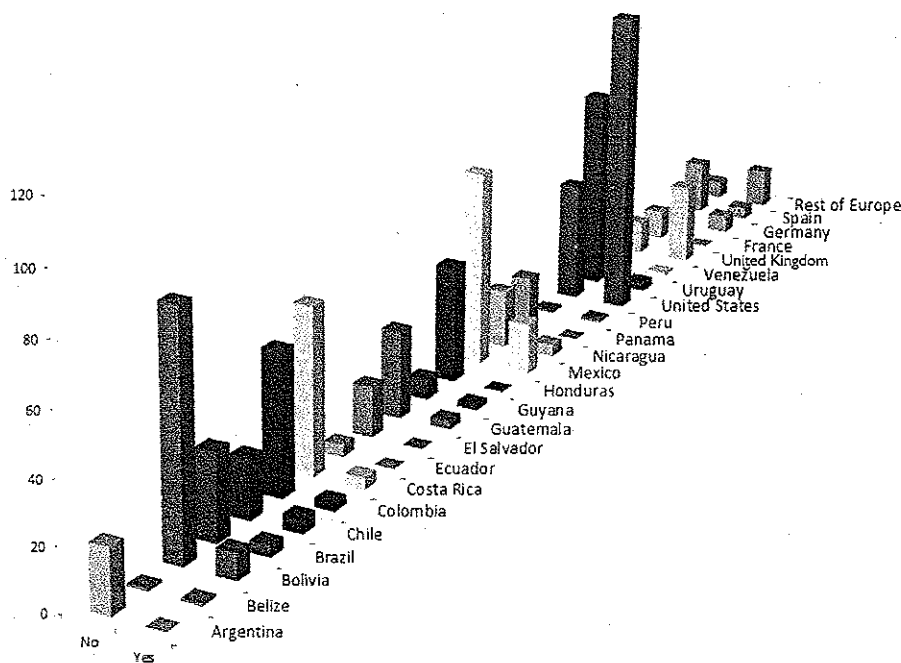


Figure 1 Country of publication and provision of an index

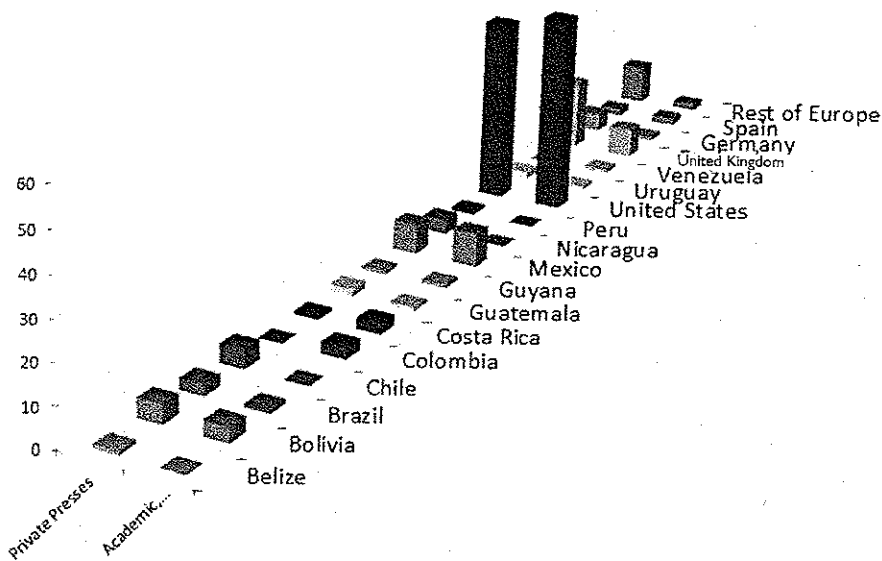


Figure 2 Type of publisher and provision of indexes, by country

The table of contents alternative

One feature that many of the non-indexed books had in common was an expanded TOC. This was usually found at the back of the book, and it was often called an 'index'. For example in the book *Cultura y democracia en América Latina* (Culture and democracy in Latin America), published in Colombia, covering identity, culture, philosophy, and other subjects, the expanded TOC is called an *índice temática* (thematic index) (Figure 3). In other books this section was called simply an *índice* or an *índice general* (index or general index).

This brings up the interesting question of differences in language and what is actually meant by a book index. There is no unanimity in definition. The practice of expanded TOCs is not exclusive to Latin American publications. It is particularly well established in France, where detailed TOCs at the back of the book conventionally provide the main reference point for the content (Weinberg, 2000:10; MacGlashan, 2010: 145).

While the expanded TOC serves the general purpose of telling readers what they will find in particular chapters and subsections, it is not a full substitute for a conventional index, both because many topics not mentioned in titles and subtitles are not featured, and because the indication of location is more general. For *Cultura y democracia en América Latina*, for example, the *índice temática* does not point to discussion of any individual philosopher. It makes it clear that Marxism is discussed in Part I, but not precisely where the occurrences are, or to what extent it is also considered in other sections of the book. Other key differences are that the TOC follows the structure of the book and so does not alphabetize references, and that it uses precisely the terminology given in the headings, without attempting to cross-relate synonyms or provide *see also* references to other terms. For all these reasons even an expanded TOC is a poor substitute for a well-written index.

Index coverage

Where an alphabetized index was provided for a book published in Latin America, in most cases it was merely a list of proper names with locators. An example is *La suerte de la consorte* (The luck of the spouse), published in Mexico, which includes an *índice de nombres* or *índice onomástico* (index of names). This is a vast improvement on an expanded TOC, but it too is much more limited than a full index which covers topics as well as geographical and personal names (Figure 4).

I did find what could be considered a complete book index in a few books. For example, *Historia de las ideas en América español* (History of the ideas of Spanish America), published in Colombia, contains an *índice analítico* (analytical index). It includes topics such as lawyers, acculturation, and indigenous agriculture, as well as proper names such as José de Acosta and Pope Alejandro VI (Figure 5). This index functions largely as a genuine index should. It provides locations for names and topics. It saves the reader time, and it bridges the gap between the author and reader in finding the needed

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PARTE II		
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La triádica interpretación cultural		91
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Figure 3 Example of a thematic index (or expanded table of contents)

Anaya, Pedro María [gobernante, 1847, 1847-48], 99, 107, 151	
Andreu Almazán, Juan, 211	
Angélica María, 338	
Anka, Paul, 327	455
Anthony, Sierraza Carl, 425	
Antuñano, Alejandro de, 424	I
Apaseo el Grande, 79	N
Aranda (condes de), 52	D
Arango, Doroteo (véase Vilia, Francisco)	I
Arau, Alfonso, 355	C
Arcaraz, Luis, 287	E
Archivo Diplomático de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 354	D
Archivo General de la Nación, 422	E
Ares, Philippe, 21	N
Argelia, 368, 408	O
Argentina, 367, 395	M
Arista, Mariano [gobernante, 1851-53], 100	B
Arizona, 222	R
Armendáriz, Juana [esposa de Juan Francisco Fernández de la Cueva Enríquez], 45	E
Armendáriz, Pedro, 292, 289	S
Arreola, Juan José, 306	
Arrom, Silvia Marina, 163	
Arroyo Zarco, 188	
Asbaje, Juana de (véase Cruz, sor Juana Inés de la)	

Figure 4 Example of an index of names

information when efficiently conducting research on a particular topic.

Conclusion

This research began with the question whether book indexing was prevalent in Latin America. The answer, based on this investigation, is that while it is the practice in some countries, the incidence is fairly low. Just 11 per cent of the total books examined published in Latin America included a conventional index, and in many of these cases it was limited to personal or geographical names. The next question, then, is why indexing is not more prevalent than it is. At this point we can only speculate on the reasons. However, the literature on academic publishing in Latin America indicates that cost might be a factor, as well as lack of professionally trained staff. I found few specific mentions of indexing, but the problems discussed of financing the publication of books and obtaining staffing would certainly make indexing a book properly difficult. Sometimes the author is expected to contribute to financing the publication, and most authors would clearly be reluctant also to pay a professional indexer.

Latin America is not alone in this regard. Writings by Weinberg and Diepeveen on continental European indexing indicate that subject indexes are not as prevalent there as in Anglo-Saxon publishing (Weinberg, 2000; Diepeveen, 2006). Reasons given include pressures of time and money, lack of training courses in indexing, and (particularly for France) that authors are expected to provide their own index but prove ill-suited to the task.

Stevenson makes one interesting suggestion, that the

failure to employ an indexer might reflect concern for the rights of the author. A (non-author) indexer adds intellectual content, and arguably it is not acceptable for another person to presume to interpret the author's intellectual intent in this way (Stevenson, 2001: 121).

Finally, should Latin American publishers care that their books do not, on the whole, include book indexes? Perhaps the answer to this is related to the expectations of their readers.

The journal inclusion standards found in databases from Latin America such as Redalyc and SCIELO, as well as the journal directory LATININDEX, include whether the journal is being indexed at a national or international level. Why then not books? In the United States, academics and students expect to find indexes in reference books and other non-fiction works. They want to know whether the specific information they seek is provided in the book, and how extensively is it covered. An expanded, detailed TOC is somewhat helpful, but it does not give the depth of insight to the content of a book that can be provided by an accurate, intellectually rigorous, comprehensive, and well-written index.

It can indisputably be concluded that, in order to be competitive in a global marketplace, Latin American publishers should care whether their books contain a BOB index. Additionally, it is clear that more research into this

Índice analítico

A

- Abogados, 76, 117, 162, 167
- Absolutismo, 4, 17, 24, 75, 159, 182
- Acosta, José de, 37, 38, 40-42, 49, 54, 83, 113, 114, 274
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Figure 5 Example of an analytical index

realm would be beneficial to the bibliographic and academic world.

Notes

- 1 See the inside back cover for details of societies and networks.
- 2 See the California Cooperative Latin American Collection Development Group (Calafia) website (www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/hasrg/latinam/calafia/) for volume numbers and standing of the UCLA Latin American collection.
- 3 The number of volumes cited as covering Latin American history was taken from the WorldCat Collection Analysis report provided by Jennifer Osorio, associate librarian, and others of the Research Library Collections, Research, and Instructional Services section of the Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

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