*Ten characteristics of quality indexes: confessions of an award-winning indexer.* Margie Towery. Wheat Ridge, CO: American Society for Indexing, 2016. xi, 140 pp. ISBN 1573875260.

This book contains the wisdom and experience of someone who has been a professional indexer for over twenty years. The Introduction contains a short summary of the author’s history as an indexer, as well as a description of why the book was written. Once the basics of indexing are developed, this book assists indexers with mastering the ten characteristics of developing quality indexes. Each chapter defines and discusses one characteristic (Chapter 4 has two in the same format), gives examples, and provides one or more tools for becoming a better indexer.

Chapter 1 is on audiences and accessibility, with guidelines for understanding each in relation to the construction of usable, appropriate indexes. Chapter 2 discusses metatopics and index structure (in the Foreword, this chapter is mentioned as the most important), and provides examples of mindmapping and supermain headings. Chapter 3 examines accuracy through spelling, punctuation, main headings, proper names and events, subheadings, locators, cross-references and double-postings, and tools to assist. Chapter 4 focuses on comprehensiveness and conciseness, and how to balance the two. Authorial digressions, passing mentions, and multiple incarnations of the same indexable bit are some of the topics in this section. Chapter 5 talks about consistency, mentioning some of the topics in Chapter 3 and adding equal treatment, special types of information, and parallel construction. Chapter 6 is on clarity, discussing sub-to-main-heading relationship, parenthetical qualifiers, and unruly locators. Chapter 7 examines reflexivity and the index as translation, the index as refanglement, examples of reflexivity, bias, and elegant additions. Chapter 8 discusses readability, with topics such as memory and chunking, clumping and gathering, more locator issues, index format issues, and tools. A sidebar on readability tips is included. Chapter 9 focuses on common sense, dealing with daily indexing practice, digestion and everyday language, index components, breaking the rules, and gnarly problems. Chapter 10 details index evaluation, and includes a template to accomplish this characteristic. An appendix provides advice on software tips for em-dash-modified format, including CINDEX for Windows and Mac, MACREX, and SKY Index.

For anyone who currently works as an indexer or wants to become one, this book is essential for becoming a better indexer once one has mastered the basics. It discusses many of the details and complexities that separate the amateur from the professional indexer, and how to move upwards to the next level.

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