Do Notes Have You in Knots?

At the 2009 ASI Annual Conference, Kate Mertes created a segment called "Knotty Bits" to deal with many smaller, but interesting issues in indexing. As part of that group, I received the assignment to talk on the indexing of notes. Some of this material falls under the rubric "Picky, picky," but if you love the nitpicking detail, then read on! (By the way, if you attended my presentation, then you have this information in the handout from the session.)

Style of notes in the index locators

1. the matter of "n" and "nn" – here I am following *Chicago Manual of Style*

> 123n2

> only use "nn" for contiguous notes, not for scattered notes:

> 123nn2–3

> 123n2, 123n5

> > (not: 123nn2, 5)

2. placement of notes in the book

> note starts on one page and continues to another and the indexable material is on both pages:

> 123-124n3

> note starts on one page (123) and continues to another (124) but the indexable material is only on the first page:

> 123n3

> note starts on one page (123) and continues to another (124) but the indexable material is only on the second page:

> 124n3

When the notes are endnotes at the end of the book and more than one chapter's worth of notes appear on the same page, then add the chapter numbers to the entries for the notes that overlap:

123*n*19, 123*n*2 (ch. 5) ← you may need to force this sort in your software
    for example, in CINDEX I would type 123*n*{20}2 (ch. 5)

When the notes are footnotes at the bottom of a page and only one note is on the page, then just use the convention "n" after the page number:

123*n*

But if multiple notes appear at the bottom of the page and if they are numbered notes, then include a note number:

123*n*2

If the note amplifies material on the page, and there is already a page number, it is clearest to include both the page number and the page-note number:

123, 123*n*2

3. italicizing "n"

Chicago Manual does not require this style. I prefer this style as it makes the entry more readable and calls more attention to the note entry. The client may apply style rules that call for italicizing "f" and "t" after page numbers in which case "n" should likewise be in italics.

The process of italicizing can be done at the end by software substitution using patterns rather than done at the time of inputting. For example, find all page numbers in the page field (you do not want to pick up cross-references so use a pattern for the page field). Then for the character n substitute an italic *n*. This approach makes sure that you get them all.

Content Issues

1. Nonsubstantive notes:

Do not index notes like the following examples that contain merely bibliographic sources:

33. Tom Opdyke, "Cobb Toughens Law on Occupants in One Home," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution,* July 2007, p. 5B.
   – – –
12. For a more comprehensive coverage of the migration experiences of these refugee groups in the Pacific Northwest, see Susan W. Hardwick, "The Geography of Whiteness: Russian and Ukrainian 'Coalitions of Color' in the Pacific Northwest," in *Race,*

Ethnicity, and Place in a Changing America, edited by John W. Frazier and Eugene I. Tettey-Fio (Binghamton, N.Y.: Global Academic Publishing, 2006).

2. Substantive notes that amplify the text:

Do not index passing mentions from the notes. In the following example, note 4 contains a list of countries. If this list had appeared in regular text, the indexer most likely would not have indexed it as it offers merely a sample. Apply that same logic to deciding if the information in a note is indexable.

text: Mingat (2004) models possible scenarios with different transition rates for secondary expansion using 2001 data for a sample of 10 countries.[4]

note: 4. Benin, Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo.

3. Substantive notes that provide more information than in the text or new information not in the text:

text: Poor people know that they live in an unequal world. They have deep knowledge of the structural and social factors that lead to "durable inequalities" (Tilly 1999).[4]

note: 4. In *Durable Inequality,* Charles Tilly argues that much of the inequality previously attributed to differences in individual ability and characteristics is instead a consequence of factors that generate *categorical* inequalities. These systematic inequalities between categories of people give certain types of people advantages from the start, allowing the persistence of categorical divisions in the future. Categorical inequalities are usually established through exploitation and opportunity hoarding. Over time, however, emulation and adaptation to social inequalities exacerbate social divisions, contributing to their persistence in the long run.

In the example just above, the note contains much that falls into the indexable category. The name of the book, the author, and then "categorical inequalities" must all be picked up.

Another example comes from a chapter on retirement policies in Hungary:

text: In middle- and high-income countries, one can reasonably expect individuals to save for their own retirement—and the empirical evidence suggests that, in practice, they do so.[9]

note: 9. In Chile, for instance, 70 percent of retirees from the mandatory public pension system own their home, which is a form of savings (see Valdés-Prieto 2008).

Because Chile is discussed here in a substantive way giving interesting information about that country's retirement practices, it needs to have an entry in the index.

Indexing Strategy

1. When indexing books with endnotes, do not wait until the end to deal with the notes – don't make the job harder for yourself! Index the notes as you go – take the note pages out for each chapter as you index it and find the notes as they come up within the context of the chapter. This process allows for you to match up the notes to entries and see how they add new content or overlap with content.

2. Highlight the note numbers as you index the chapter. Then you can come back and find the notes when you reach the end of the chapter. Remember how miserable it is to find those little numbers later – this will inspire you to take a bit more time to do the highlighting on your print pages.

Names and Other Information in Notes

Even in a book that does not require the notes to be included in the index, the indexer may have reasons to consult the notes. For instance, the client wants the names of scholars mentioned in the text to be picked up in the subject index or in a separate authors index. The text may refer to these authors by surnames only and the indexer has to consult the notes to get fuller information like first names or initials. When I am required to do this research in notes or references, I include those pages in my indexable page count for the project. Even though I have not actually indexed them, I had to consult them to do the job.

If I have to index every name in the notes to include in a Names Index for the book, then I charge a higher rate for the note pages than for the regular text. A typical page of notes may have as many as 20-30 indexable names, way more entries per page than the text, so I want to be compensated for this additional work. If the notes involve a lot of difficult names in terms of odd spellings or accents, I may decide to copy and paste them from the PDF files into my CINDEX file. This reduces the likelihood of spelling errors since the names cannot be spellchecked and I have to rely on the typist. It is very easy to introduce errors when inputting names so the cutting and pasting technique has a lot to recommend it.

Another reason I may peruse the notes occurs when I want to find years for legislation or court cases and the author has not provided that information in the text. For example, the text may mention Americans with Disabilities Act but not include 1990 as its year of enactment. In the notes the author may give more background for the Act as well as the year of enactment.