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## Links in a Chain

Yesterday I gave a workshop on editing indexes to the Rocky Mountain Chapter of ASI. During the discussion I rattled off one of my “in-my-head” thesaurus lists:

privacy  
disclosure  
confidentiality  
access to information

After so many years of working on legal and governmental materials as well as public policy, I have developed internal lists to create cross-references as I index. All experienced indexers who specialize in an area make up such subject lists from their work. When you create a main heading for any one of the items in the list, you consider right away whether to add these other terms as cross-references.

Sometimes the additional headings are exact synonyms like

agriculture  
farms and farming

so you create a straight *See* cross-reference. Other times the concepts relate to each other but are not equal, and require *See also* cross-references linking them in both directions. For example,

pharmaceuticals. *See also* prescriptions  
prescriptions. *See also* pharmaceuticals

The workshop attendees asked me if I could provide in this *Key Words* column some of what I call “automatic chains of terms” that I have stored in my memory. And I will proceed to record many of them at the end of this column, but I need to stress some caveats prior to your reading the list. First, I am not going to label each set to indicate whether they constitute synonyms or related terms – you can determine that on your own. This is not meant to be a formal thesaurus so I am not indicating general to more specific relationships, or antonyms (opposites) or synonyms.

Likewise I am not asserting that you should use **every** term **every** time. There are times when I make cross-references and times when I don't; however, I have to consider the possibilities and then make a decision. Maybe the index is so small that I don't want to clutter it. Maybe within the context of a book the related term does not make sense. The art of adding cross-references frequently falls into the category of “it depends” – it requires fine handling.

Because my clients primarily come from the fields of government, law, and public policy, these chains heavily favor terminology from these areas. These lists grew as a method to avoid splits of information both at the main heading and subheading level. On the

main heading level, I will use a term like “Cities” as the postable, and cross-refer from “Municipalities” and “Urban areas.” This gets the information in one centralized place. On the other hand in a sublevel array, I make sure to pick one of these three synonomous terms and stick with it so I don’t separate information and create confusion and extra work for users. It is preferable to have all the sublevels start with only one of them.

- Health care
  - city agencies
  - city employee plans
  - city tax deductions

Just because you have multiple choices does not mean you need to use them. The idea of considering the terms in each string is to think about aiding users in finding information by providing more pointers. So don’t use them in a way that negates this principle.

In my business I frequently review the work of other indexers and am always running through these lists as my verbal rolodex. As soon as I see a main heading like “African Americans,” I look for topics like “Discrimination,” “Diversity,” “Minorities,” and “Race.” Sometimes this search results in streamlining the structure of the index as the indexer may have split postings, duplicated entries, or missed a needed cross-reference.

So with all those caveats in your mind, here are the links in the chains.

### **Enid’s Chains of Terms**

abuse – child abuse – domestic violence

adolescents – youth – teens – juveniles

aged persons – elderly – seniors

agriculture – farms and farming -- crops

air pollution – emissions – pollution

alcoholic beverages – liquor – wine – beer

attorneys – lawyers – counsel – right to counsel

automobiles – cars – vehicles – motor vehicles

civil rights – discrimination – equal opportunity – bias

climate change – global warming – greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide concentration

computers – technology – high tech

disasters – natural disasters – emergencies – crisis management

diseases – communicable diseases – infectious diseases

drinking water – water quality – water pollution

drugs – pharmaceuticals – controlled substances – prescriptions

education – schools and schooling – universities and colleges – higher education

elections – voting – voter registration – absentee voting – ballots

employment/employees – work/workers – jobs – applicants

garbage – waste disposal – sanitation – littering – landfills – dumps

gender issues – women – men – female – male – sex discrimination

guns – firearms – revolvers – shotguns – automatic weapons – handguns – rifles – Saturday night specials – concealed weapons

hazardous waste – nuclear waste – toxic waste

homosexuality – gay – lesbian – sexual orientation – LGBT and its spelled-out form

immigration – aliens – migrants – refugees – illegal aliens

infants – children – minors

privacy – confidentiality – disclosure – access to information

minorities – ethnic groups – diversity – race and racial issues – discrimination

municipal – city – urban

national security – security – terrorism

rent – landlord-tenant relations – leases

streams – rivers – watercourses

substance abuse – drug abuse – addiction – alcohol abuse

termination of employment – discharge – firing – wrongful discharge

violence – domestic violence – abuse – rape

WMDs & its spelled-out form – nuclear weapons – biological weapons – chemical weapons