

**Bibliography Committee**  
**Society for American Baseball Research**

## **Guidelines for Indexing a Baseball Book**

prepared by Skip McAfee (Oct. 2001)

### **Why Index?**

Many baseball books, especially those published during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, do not contain indexes. To maximize the usefulness of such books, the Bibliography Committee has undertaken the project to provide name and/or subject indexes. The indexes become more valuable when the books are scheduled to be reprinted or revised. These guidelines have been prepared to ensure a certain amount of uniformity and standardization of indexing.

### **Philosophy of indexing**

An index must *anticipate* the needs of the reader, and not mislead the reader. It is not necessary to index “everything”; rather, try to index the items a) of most interest to the reader and b) that express the author’s objective in writing the book. An index is judged on how well it reflects the subjects and persons covered in the book, and the amount of time it saves the reader in searching for information.

### **Indexing plan**

- 1) Select a hard-copy first edition to index. It is possible that a paperback has identical pagination, but that needs to be verified by comparing with a hard-bound copy.
- 2) Read the book entirely for enlightenment and enjoyment, and for an overall understanding of the author’s intent or objective, while keeping an eye open for possible indexing decisions.
- 3) Decide on the extent of completeness and consistency of indexing entries and on the depth of indexing (exhaustivity) based on the needs of the reader/user, while keeping the index within a reasonable limit. The index should not overwhelm the reader with hundreds of page citations to a single subject or person.
- 4) Re-read the book, indexing as you go. Determine subjects, proper nouns, names of persons, events, teams, leagues, ballparks, places (cities). Try to provide a subject index as well as a name index.
- 5) Make a record of indexing decisions (don’t rely on your memory); e.g., how often to index “New York Yankees” in a book on DiMaggio’s hitting streak or “St. Louis Cardinals” in a biography of Musial. You may have to add to or revise decisions as indexing proceeds.
- 6) Use uncontrolled vocabulary (natural language) rather than a specific list of indexing terms (such as The Baseball Index’ thesaurus or *The New Dickson Baseball Dictionary*, although such sources can serve as guides). It is better to use the terms used by the author, with the addition of appropriate cross-references.

### **Don’t index:**

- 1) Concepts, subjects, or persons (esp. non-baseball personalities) that are only mentioned in passing, or are not germane to the purpose of the book (but non-baseball topics, such as the political and military scene in 1941 during DiMaggio’s streak, should be indexed if the author relates such scenes to the streak).
- 2) Names of players in a list or box score (but do index the names of players in a photo caption).

### **Subheadings**

Subheadings (indented two or three spaces on their own lines) are appropriate when an index entry otherwise would contain a great many page citations. For example, for a book on DiMaggio’s hitting streak, don’t list “DiMaggio, Joe” only (he’d likely appear on practically every page), but identify particular aspects (as subheadings), such as “errors by (during streak)”, “Feller, Bob, comments by or on”, “batting stance”, “injury to”, “name, spelling of”, “official scorer decisions”, “smoking”, “strikeouts”, and “wardrobe”. For our purposes, one level of subheadings should suffice, arranged alphabetically or chronologically.

## **Cross-references**

Use cross-references as often as necessary. Double entries reflect an inconsistent index. Examples of cross-references include:

walk. *See* base on balls  
fall classic. *See* World Series (give year in parentheses)  
nickel curve. *See* slider  
baseball park. *See* ballpark

## **Mechanics of indexing**

Three methods of indexing are: 1) using large sheets; 2) using index cards; and 3) using a software program.

I have never used computer programs, but they have certain advantages. They automate routine tasks, such as sorting and producing camera-ready copy. An apparent disadvantage (to me) is having to index at your computer and typing in the same entry over and over again (although all same or similar entries are brought together at the touch of a finger). One of the best is Macrex, used extensively by members of the Society of Indexers; it is available from Wise Bytes, P.O. Box 3051, Daly City, CA 94015-0051; phone 650-756-0821.

I favor using large sheets of paper rather than index cards. The latter consume time in searching for and filing and refiling cards. Large sheets of paper may be primitive, but they save time in looking up entries and recording page citations. Depending on the book, the number of sheets can range from two to five (e.g., A-G, H-Q, and R-Z). "Problems" occur when you run out of space, in which case I use arrows, asterisks, or additional sheets.

An alphabetical index should be letter-by-letter (not word-by-word), ignoring spaces. However, "St. Louis" is indexed as if it were spelled "Saint Louis" and "Ft. Myers" as if it were spelled "Fort Myers".

Use a comma after each entry and before giving page citations. Use complete numbers for pages; e.g., 151-156, not 151-6.

If a player is mentioned more than once independently on a given page, provide the page citation only once. If a player is mentioned independently on succeeding pages, provide citations for both pages, separated by a comma; but if a player is mentioned continuously on two consecutive pages, provide a citation for both pages with a hyphen.

## **Problems**

Use the latest edition of *Total Baseball* for the preferred usage of a player's name. Distinguish between two people with the same name by giving birth-death dates [e.g., Walsh, Ed (1881-1959) and Walsh, Ed (1905-1937)], using middle initials (e.g., Hunter, Brian L. and Hunter, Brian R.), using nicknames (e.g., James, Big Bill and James, Seattle Bill), using first names when the players are known by their nicknames [e.g., Leonard, Emil (Dutch) and Leonard, Hubert (Dutch)], or using other identifying characteristics, such as occupation [e.g., Kramer, Jack (baseball player) and Kramer, Jack (tennis player)].

Record misspellings of names and use the correct spellings in the index. List the misspellings and the corrections at the beginning of the index. Use the latest edition of *Total Baseball* as the source for correct spellings.

Provide a "scope note" to further identify an entry to avoid confusion with other entries. For example, add the name of the league in parentheses when entering "St. Louis Browns" if the reader is unable to distinguish between the American Association and the American League.

## **After completing your index**

Give the title, author, publisher, copyright date, and name of the indexer at the top of the first page of the index. Send two paper copies and one electronic copy (on floppy, either MS Word or text) to Andy McCue, 4025 Beechwood Place, Riverside, CA 92506 (951-787-4954; agmccue44@earthlink.net)