How do I find a professional indexer?
The Society of Indexers' online directory, *Indexers Available*, contains full details of qualified and experienced professional indexers, whose specialist subjects range from accountancy and agriculture to yoga and zoology. You can search for an indexer not only by subject but also by type of material, geographical location, etc.

Visit [www.indexers.org.uk](http://www.indexers.org.uk) to find the right indexer for your book.

You will also find plenty of guidance on our website about the whole process of commissioning an indexer.

What does it cost?
Fees are open to negotiation, and will vary depending on such factors as the length and complexity of the book. The Society recommends hourly and page rates that can be used as a starting point for negotiation.

Awards for indexes
The Wheatley Medal, organized in conjunction with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, is awarded annually for an outstanding index. Not only does this give the indexer prestige, it also confers on the author and publisher a degree of distinction that will obviously enhance your reputation.

I'd like to join the Society of Indexers
If you decide, after all that has been said, you would prefer to index your own book, why not think about joining the Society of Indexers?

Founded in 1957, the Society is an autonomous professional body for indexers, dedicated to promoting greater awareness of indexing and raising standards in all forms of indexing.

Our well-established distance-learning training course, now including online tutorials, gives a thorough grounding in the principles (and pitfalls) of indexing. The Society's online discussion group, SIdeline, allows discussion on the most detailed indexing problems, and our annual conferences are a must for anyone involved in indexing and indexes.

We also publish a respected international journal, *The Indexer* (quarterly from 2008), and a series of publications on specialized aspects of indexing.

For more information, visit our website at:

[www.indexers.org.uk](http://www.indexers.org.uk)

or contact our Administrator at:

admin@indexers.org.uk

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An index is much more than an alphabetical list of topics with page numbers attached . . .

At least, it should be. It’s like a road map, leading both experts and novices in your field to every pertinent sentence you’ve written, regardless of their point of departure and without dead ends or annoying detours.

An index is a tool that helps readers locate information

Users of indexes include:
- **Potential readers and bookshop browsers**, who may well look at the index before deciding whether or not to buy your book.
- **Librarians and teachers/lecturers**, who are known to value a good index and may well decide not to acquire a badly indexed book.
- **Book reviewers**, who frequently comment on the existence and quality of indexes, and may use the index as the deciding point on whether or not to recommend your book.
- **Your peers**, who will judge your professionalism and how complete your book is by whether it includes a good index.

A good indexer understands the readers’ needs as well as the subject

Indexing is rarely a popular task for authors. It takes objectivity, perspective, a sense of proportion and priority, patience, speed, technical training and experience. If you have all these qualities, if you can apply them under the pressure of tight deadlines, and if you would rather index your current book than start writing your next one, you are the best person for the job. If not, you should hire a professional indexer.

But I’m the expert on this subject

But the index is meant for the reader, who will often not be an expert and may not be as familiar as you are with the concepts, argument or vocabulary of the subject.

A professional indexer will look at your book from the readers’ perspective, anticipating how they will approach the subject. The indexer will analyse the text and, using synonyms, main headings and subheadings, double entry and cross-references (‘see’ and ‘see also’), provide a carefully structured index to guide the reader efficiently back into the main text of the book.

...a brilliant index means that the reader need never be lost for words.

Reviewer’s comment on the award-winning index to *Words on Words* (Penguin) (2000)

Why can’t I use the indexing feature in my word-processing program?

If you just want an alphabetical list of words, OK – but that’s not an index. And there really isn’t yet a satisfactory automatic system that can replicate the intelligence and judgement of the human brain in creating an index.

A professional indexer

- knows and understands the many established (and often contradictory) principles of information retrieval
- knows and follows the publisher’s index style guidelines
- applies the principles outlined in the relevant British Standards
- uses fast, efficient, specialized indexing software to provide the index in whatever print or electronic format is required
- meets strict deadlines to fit in with the publisher’s schedule

Think of an index as a collaboration

Some of the most useful and accessible indexes may be produced by a professional indexer working closely with the author. The author brings to the relationship in-depth subject knowledge, while the qualified indexer not only has a broad level of subject knowledge but also professional indexing skills, objectivity and a fresh approach to the topic – the potential reader/learner’s point of view.

... the indexer is the benign epiphyte of the author, supporting the work and making it more useful to the reader.

Iain Stevenson, in Logos, 12 (3), 2001