

- I was working as a research assistant to an academic while doing my own PhD and had been closely involved with one of his books. He said, “Can you do the index?” and I said yes with no idea of what was involved – but I loved the process. I did four other books for academics via word-of-mouth, then I realised this was becoming a large part of my freelance portfolio and I should do some proper training.
- I took early retirement from teaching, but I missed the mental stimulation of work. I wanted to be self-employed and have always loved reading and reflecting on the underlying themes. I’m also a bit picky so I’m always noticing mistakes. I started off training for proofreading but have now been diverted into indexing, partly because I read a biography of a famous composer which didn’t have an index. I found its absence to be a bit of a nuisance, making me realise how important indexes are!
- I was required to prepare an index to my own book. I was surprised to discover how much I enjoyed the process and I realised this was something I would enjoy doing to earn an income.
- I’m training to be an indexer while finishing my PhD in Art History. I completed a four-week introductory indexing course in the summer of 2020 to help me write an index for my thesis, and I discovered that I had both an aptitude for, and an interest in, indexing. My aim is to work a portfolio career after my PhD, including independent scholarship and indexing.
- Following redundancy after 25 years as a school librarian, and a brief foray into primary school teaching (it really wasn’t for me), I was working part-time in our local bookshop, and realised that this was the ideal time to pursue an idea that has always been at the back of my mind. I’d enjoyed the cataloguing element of my librarianship diploma, and, working with young adults and teaching information skills over many years, I’ve become really interested in how users access information.
- I first produced indexes while working in-house for a publisher that produced guides to careers and travel. Indexing travel guides showed me how an index served as a vital navigation tool for the reader, allowing them to access quickly and efficiently information compiled by a team of authors, not all of whom had necessarily achieved a high standard of consistency and accuracy. These guides were regularly updated, and each new edition needed a completely new index, which had to be produced in just a few days using the indexing function in QuarkXPress.
- I’ve been working in libraries since 2009 and have experience of both frontline and technical services work. Whilst working in public libraries, I began to understand the importance of good indexes when it came to helping people with their reference enquiries. More recently, I have specialised in cataloguing in an academic library. Our collections are classified using a combination of the Library of Congress Classification scheme and a locally devised system and there are some large reclassification projects that I have been working on. I also classify the research outputs from our institution, such as PhD theses. This involves reading abstracts and trying to pick out subject terms which people may search for. When cataloguing new print and eBooks for our collection, I will often have to assign subject headings and work with the metadata so that the user can find what they’re searching for. I had been cataloguing part-time since the birth of my daughter and looking to do freelance work once she started school, and the penny suddenly dropped. I come from a family of librarians, and I feel like indexing is in my blood. It took me a while to get here but it feels like home.