
Indexing Published Works and the Use of Keywords

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The amount of published information which appear every day in the world literature concerning any particular scientific subject is enormous and its classification and indexing into topics and subspecialities is important to ensure wider dissemination of knowledge. It is also helpful for the specialists to refer to the recent advances in their areas of interest, and to the students of research to learn from the experience of the others.

There are many indexers and many indexes depending on the field the specialty of science under which the searcher is searching. The Index Medicus, Excerpta Medica, Current Contents, and Biological Abstracts are the main indexers for biomedical sciences. Other main indexers include the Chemical Abstracts, Psychological Abstracts, Physics Abstracts, Mathematical Review, and Engineering Index. There are also several specialized indexes such as the Artificial Kidney Bibliography, Biological Membrane Abstracts, and Carcinogenesis Abstracts.

A published work is indexed by placing its various parts under different lists e.g. author's name, title of the paper, scientific subject, name and type of periodical, date of publication, name of publisher, and keywords. The lists on scientific subjects and on keywords are synonyms and for the purpose of cross reference and retrieval they are probably the most important fields in the indexing concern. A keyword is therefore a standard scientific term identified in the text of published papers to mean a specific subject. The Bahrain Medical Bulletin is to introduce "Keywords" as from next issue and the number required should not exceed ten.

It is the responsibility of the authors to choose the appropriate and relevant keywords of their paper because they are the most knowledgeable persons about the work submitted for publication. Ideally these must be selected from all sections of the paper which the indexers can use to classify the paper under headings that helps in transmitting the message and contents of the paper to the general reader, the specialist, and the researcher. The authors in this way are assuming the duties of the indexers. A helpful method is to refer to a standard, elaborate, and authoritative list of terms such as that of the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) of the Index Medicus. This is an expanding list of term and tens of keywords are added every month to the MeSh. Authors must therefore refer to the latest issue of the Index Medicus in their local libraries to select the appropriate terms. Another useful suggestion in the process of selection is not to use terms which appear in the title of the work. Titles are considered by the indexers as sufficiently informative pieces of information and thus fully indexed. This would mean that the title must be short and explicitly descriptive of the work submitted for publication.

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