

Cataloging and Indexing

The **goal** of cataloging and indexing is to identify the most important characteristics of an information source and to describe those characteristics using a standard cataloging or indexing system.

The characteristics that the catalog or index record describe include:

- Writer, editor, compiler, producer or creator of the information source
- Place and name of publisher
- Physical characteristics, such as length (number of pages or number of minutes), size (height), format (book, video, etc.)
- Additional features, such as illustrations, bibliography/list of references, or index.
- Subjects, topics, and/or contents and (occasionally) the perspective of the information source.
- When the information source was created/published or revised.
- How the information source is available:
 - Where it is located/shelved, or in what database or web page it is
 - Can it be borrowed from the library; is the text available for printing?

The **purpose** of cataloging and indexing is to enable the person who needs the information in an information source to identify it, locate it, evaluate it, and use it as efficiently and effectively as possible.

- **Classification** reflects the primary subject of an information source and, if it is a physical source like a book or a video, where it is located in the library.
- Some online indexes use classification numbers to help organize the information in them by subject area. Example: Bubl Link.
- Catalogers and indexers attempt to group information sources that are about the same subject together.

- **Subject headings/subheadings or index terms** provide the researcher with multiple ways to locate an information source and further define content.
- In many catalogs and indexes, the primary or most important content is reflected in the first subject headings/subheadings listed in the record.
- Library catalogs are databases that use classification numbers and subject headings/subheadings.
- Periodical indexes usually use subject headings/subheadings and rarely use a classification system

Notes:

- **The more general the source, the more general the classification number and the subject terms** assigned to it will be.
- **General sources** often include introductory information about topics and are useful for identifying the terms used to describe each topic. They may also be important sources for thesis topic information that cannot be found in more specific sources.
- Many main subject headings have **subheadings** that focus the main headings. Some **standard subheadings** (also called subdivisions) are:

--Economic aspects	--Physiological aspects	--Social aspects
--Environmental aspects	--Political aspects	--Sociological aspects
--Health aspects	--Psychological aspects	--Law and legislation
--Moral and ethical aspects	--Religious aspects	--Government policy
- Once you've determined your topic and identified primary subject headings and subheadings, or index headings or other keywords that describe your topic, start looking for information using your specific terms, and search from **specific to general** as necessary.