What?
An Index?

Do you want to increase sales of your products? Do you want to garner better reviews of your products? Want to increase customer satisfaction of your products? Include a usable index.

The reviews on RPG.net frequently say the same thing:

> *As always, an index would have been nice, but there isn't one. A book without an index is almost a crime against nature.*[1]

> *What? An index? Don't make me laugh.*[2]

Imagine the all-too-frequent occurrence: a player is sitting around the table, playing a favorite game. The GM presents the monster. The player's character knows of an action that can counter the monster and tries to find the pertinent information in the book. The player looks in the back of the publication, only to find the book isn't indexed. The game comes to a complete halt while the player finds the information. How long will this game remain the player's favorite?

"Can't a computer program create an index?" you ask. No, a computer program can create a concordance–a list of words that appear in the publication, and the computer can even list where these words appear in the publication. A concordance, however, is not an index. Only a trained professional can create a usable index; a computer cannot think like a trained professional. The computer cannot take the word 'rogue' and think to make a cross-reference: thief, see rogue. The word thief may not even show up in the book, but that's where a player character might look for it.

I know the arguments against a professional indexer: it's too expensive; we don't have time in the production schedule; it's the author's responsibility. Go back to the beginning of this article and read the quotes from real reviews of real products, then read this quote from Sue Cook, editor for Malhavoc Press:

I think my own recent experience might be typical of how the industry looks at indexing: people think they can do it -- they sure don't want to pay someone else do it -- until they try. Then either they discover (like I did) that it would have been well worth the money to have a pro do it, or they come up with a half-assed index they made using some dumb program, and they're perfectly happy with it (but the fans tear it apart).

The best solution to the indexing problem is to hire an editor who will also index the book. If you cannot find a trained or experienced indexer, then look to the excellent indexing guidelines offered by Steve Jackson Games at http://www.sjgames.com/general/guidelines/authors/indexing.html

The benefits of a good index are best described by another RPG.net review.

Structurally, it's also solid. It's well organized, with a complete index, and with explanatory sidebars and tables at the right places; and with a good main index in the back, and a great character traits index at the end of the character creation rules. All around, this is a clean, solid, useful book, which reads well for a first-timer trying to learn the rules, and also reads well as a reference for an experienced player. It's a very, very solid effort, and SJG deserves to be very proud of it.[3]

Which review would you prefer to receive? Which review will garner more sales? 🎲

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1) Mark L. Chance reviewing "*Mutants & Masterminds Annual #1*" by Green Ronin Publishing http://www.rpg.net/reviews/archive/10/10524.phtml. 2) Wood Ingham reviewing *The Bygone Bestiary* by White Wolf Games http://www.rpg.net/reviews/archive/10/10496.phtml. 3) Mark Chu-Carroll reviewing *GURPS* Fourth Edition by Steve Jackson Games http://www.rpg.net/reviews/archive/10/10646.phtml