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Back-of-the-book indexes are usually only printed in non-fiction books. This research investigated the opinions of literature faculty and students on including indexes in fiction books. Publishers may claim that an index for a fiction book is not worth the cost. However, no empirical studies have been conducted which try to assess demand. In order to begin to fill this gap in the literature, a survey was distributed to literature faculty and students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in order to assess their opinions towards the usefulness and value of fiction book indexes. The results suggest that there is a demand for indexes in fiction but some concerns may need to be addressed first. The results of this study may serve as a starting point for gauging market interest in buying fictional works printed with indexes that could potentially lead to a new field in indexing.

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The Opinions of Literature Faculty and Students on Back-of-the-Book Indexes in Fiction

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INTRODUCTION

Back-of-the-book indexes are familiar information tools that are found in most non-fiction books. Indexes are included in non-fiction books for many reasons. Bell (1992) writes, "The chief function of an index is to help people find particular passages they want to." Indexes increase access to the information in the book. Readers often use non-fiction books as reference sources instead of reading them from cover to cover. This use of a non-fiction book would not be possible without an index. Readers would not know where to go to find the information they seek beyond what is communicated in the table of contents. Those who read non-fiction books from cover to cover may want to, and often do, return to the text to look up some particular point, but this reader may be lost without an index. Another benefit of indexes that goes hand-in-hand with access is speed. An index greatly reduces the time a reader spends finding the information they seek. Looking up a few terms in the index is much faster than flipping through pages in a chapter, hoping that you will read over what you are looking for. These are the benefits most users would attribute to using an index.

There are many secondary benefits to indexes that are not commonly discussed. One particularly useful feature is that indexes bring together information that is scattered throughout the text. If a text has 20 discussions of housecats scattered throughout a book of 200 pages, then a glance at the index under "cats" will show the reader that they may find something useful because the topic is discussed often, something the reader may not understand from chapter titles alone. This example illustrates another benefit of indexes

and that is the use of synonyms. If a reader is looking for information about housecats and looks under "cats," they may find a *see* reference to "housecats." This term control maintains the language of the author while also serving the needs of the user. It is these and many other benefits of indexes that may make readers choose non-fiction books with indexes over non-fiction books that do not have indexes. This statement may be especially true for teachers and librarians who facilitate learning with the books they choose to offer to others.

However useful an index may be to a non-fiction book, indexes are very rarely included with fiction books. Though the same theoretical benefits to a non-fiction book may apply to a fiction book, many publishers simply do not see a cost benefit for commissioning indexes for fiction. They maintain that there is little demand and high cost, cost that could raise the price of one book as much as £2.50 (\$4.30) (Bradley, 1989). In addition, many fiction authors agree that indexes for novels are a bad idea. These and other literary professionals worry that the part of literature that is personal and what we love about fiction may be compromised by indexers trying to assign their own interpretations of the meaning of the literature (Bradley, 1989). These are all valid concerns, but they are the opinions of the creators of indexes, not necessarily the users.

Users of indexes are readers. They are the buyers that create demand. Though there has not been a large movement demanding fiction indexes, that does not mean that such a product would not be useful and generate profits. Literature teachers, literature students, literary critics, and historians are all buyers that could likely benefit from the use of a back-of-the-book index in a fiction book because they engage in critical study of literature that requires frequent return trips to the text. Access to information in fiction

books without indexes is limited to memory and personal notes. As in a non-fiction book, an index in a fiction book may increase access to the information contained in the book, increase speed in finding that information, bring together scattered parts of the text, and give users multiple access points to the information by including synonyms. Those that are studying, instead of simply reading, fiction literature would save lots of time with the ability to look up characters, places, events, and symbols in an index instead of searching through pages in a chapter. After all, the point of non-fiction indexes is to provide quick and easy access to information. Why does a fiction work not deserve the same treatment? Publishers might claim a lack of demand, but this opinion is usually based on an assumed perception of the public demand, instead of real statistics.

In order to provide real numbers for publishers to review in considering the issue of fiction indexes, this research question will be considered: what are the opinions of literature teachers and students on the usefulness and value of a back-of-the-book index for studying fiction literature? The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines the concept of usefulness as "the quality of having utility and especially practical worth or applicability." For the purposes of this study, a participant would consider an index useful if it would assist them with studying the book. This same dictionary defines the concept of value in many ways. The most relevant of these definitions to this research question is "the monetary worth of something : marketable price." In this study, the index would be considered valuable if the participant would pay for an index beyond the regular cost of the book. The purpose of this research is to gauge the interest of potential consumers in buying a fiction book with an index, even if at an increased cost, in order to

persuade publishers to commission indexes if there is a demand or to add to the literature of fiction indexing if there is not a demand.

The debate over providing back-of-the-book indexes for fiction books is an old one that has grown stagnant. Most of the literature published on the subject is speculative and based on personal opinions or informal data. There appears to be no empirical studies on the opinions of index users about fiction indexes. This study may fill this gap in the literature with these survey results as a potential beginning to a series of opinion polls about fiction indexes across different types of readers. In addition, this study may rekindle the debate over fiction indexes with a little more statistical truth than mere speculation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1650, Thomas Fuller, writing on the value of indexes, states, "An Index is the bag and baggage of a book, of more use then [sic] honour; even such who seemingly slight it, secretly using, if not for need, for speed of what they desire to finde [sic]" (Beare, 2004). Fuller is arguing that an index, by its very nature, saves time even for those who do not assign it much value. Fuller's comment is most appropriate to the debate over the usefulness of indexes for fiction literature. Though some publishers, authors, and indexers may scoff at the idea of fiction indexes, scholars and students of literature may find the idea quite appealing. Anyone who has ever wanted to find something memorable in a novel of 500 pages (including publishers, authors, and indexers) may also appreciate the idea of a fiction index when it serves their need for speed. Hans Wellisch, a prominent writer in the field of indexing, gives *Don Quixote*,

War and Peace, and *Gone with the Wind* as prime examples of "voluminous and complex novels" that would benefit from indexes. Wellisch goes on to point out that, "many readers, particularly students who have assignments for literature courses, may wish to return to a passage in which a certain character appears, but find it difficult to do so for want of an index" (Bell, 1992). Fuller, Wellisch, and others are pointing out that readers may want an index to their fiction books but do not consider this a possibility because very few are available. Publishers often claim there is no demand for fiction indexes, but there is little evidence to support this claim. Though fiction indexing is a topic of conversational interest among professional indexers, there have been no empirical studies of its feasibility.

Research has been undertaken that demonstrates the value of fiction literature, the needs of humanist scholars, and the use of indexes. This literature demonstrates the viability of this study because it shows that readers value fiction and the information it contains, almost as much if not the same as, the information contained in non-fiction books. Fiction can even go beyond the information provided in non-fiction by adding a personal element in which readers can see themselves and their experiences reflected. Knowing that readers value fiction leads to the assumption that they will return to fiction books to find pieces of information but will struggle with this task without the benefits of an index as stated in the introduction to this paper. If general readers value the information in fiction books, then those who study literature might be more likely to value fiction books, return to the text more frequently, and therefore, have a greater need for an index. Humanist scholars include those that study fiction literature professionally. Research has been done on the needs of humanities scholars and it reveals that these

scholars rely more on traditional research methods, meaning they may be likely to favor a paper index over an electronic full-text search. Studies have also been done comparing the usefulness of indexes versus full-text search with results showing that there is still a need for indexes because they provide greater precision and reduce search time. Indexes are also useful for bringing out important themes, concepts, and symbols that may otherwise go unnoticed. A main entry in an index with a string of page numbers or subentries lets the reader know that this is an important topic in the book. This benefit would be lost in a full-text search. All of this research demonstrates the potential value of fiction indexes and is discussed in greater detail below.

A point of debate in the discussion of fiction indexing is what value a fiction index would provide to information seekers. In order to speculate on an answer to this point, one should consider the uses and values of fiction itself. Usherwood and Toyne (2002) conducted individual interviews and 30 focus groups with readers on why they read fiction and what it adds to their life. Though many pointed out the sheer enjoyment of it, these and many others also stated that they read fiction for instruction and also to learn "lessons about the world." Readers learned instructions for practical knowledge and for "self-development" (Usherwood and Toyne, 2002). One participant recalled how reading about car repair in a fictional novel helped him to fix his car on the side of the road one day while another participant stated that novels help her "make sense of [her] inner world" (Usherwood and Toyne, 2002). Readers also make sense of the outer world by reading fiction novels and learning about lifestyles different from their own. For example, many cited Charles Dickens as an author that had taught them about another

time and place. With this line of thinking, one could see how works of fiction could inform readers of social history.

Another example given is how *The Grapes of Wrath* informs the understanding of many high school history students about the Great Depression in a way a history textbook cannot. In addition to social history, readers learn about social values, and they often compare these values to their own to develop a better understanding of themselves and their place in society. Books can take readers to places they could never see and these "journeys" help readers to understand other cultures and customs. Most of the participants in Usherwood and Toyne's study agreed that facts in fiction are to be trusted, pointing out that many authors do quite a bit of research. Readers in this study seem to be saying that fiction books can be just as factually informative as non-fiction books. These readers learn about car repair, the inner self, and a multitude of social values and customs in interesting and entertaining contexts by reading fiction literature. In addition, this information can take on additional relevance because a fictional story may allow the reader to relate to characters that are confronting a similar issue. It is partly the search for these facts and other information in non-fiction books that leads to the need for indexes. If this same information is sought in fiction books, then readers should be provided with the same tools.

The type of information in a book is not the only indication of a need for an index. Hazel K. Bell has written most prominently on the subject of fiction indexing and has attempted the task herself. She points out that non-fiction works must have indexes because they may be consulted or reread in the future. Bell (1991) argues that fictional works possess these same criteria and so are equally deserving of an index. She quotes a

letter to the editor that appeared in *The Indexer*, the professional publication of indexing in the United States, by Anthony Raven, "Within the context of a book, i.e. within the purview of its index, all facts are equally factual, regardless of whether they also enjoy a different kind of factuality beyond the book's covers." As the Usherwood and Toyne study suggests, readers are likely to hold equal value for facts in fiction and facts in non-fiction. However, certain types of fiction may be more deserving of an index than others just as some types of fiction are read only for pleasure and others have a greater intellectual content. Bell coined the term "serious fiction" to distinguish which types of fiction would most benefit from an index. Though not explicitly stated, "serious fiction" is meant to represent complex novels that contain deep meaning and intellectual value in contrast to fiction such as romance novels which are chiefly for entertainment. Classic books of fiction literature may be considered "serious fiction" because they are often deep and complex and are heralded as respected literary works in our society. They are often used in scholarly study and so are often referred to after the initial reading of the book. Some classic literature can contain 500 pages or more with complex character maps and plots. Bell has indexed books of "serious fiction" to show how it can be done. However, Bell does not investigate what other readers think of her index nor if they would find it useful or valuable.

The only available study on users' opinions of fiction indexes was conducted by Bradley in 1989. Bradley surveyed the opinions of authors, publishers, reviewers, literary societies, and indexers. He found that "the demand for fiction indexes is small." Authors, reviewers, readers, and publishers do not like the idea, indexers are mildly interested and literary societies are more interested than any of the others.

There are two chief problems with Bradley's research. First, the analyzed group "readers" actually includes authors and reviewers. This concept is very misleading. Authors and reviewers are very different readers from the general public, having a sort of inside information on the structure and art of writing a novel. In addition, Bradley surveyed the creators of indexes, not necessarily the users. The users create the public demand that publishers require before even considering opening the door to the world of fiction indexing. A survey of readers without professional writing experience may produce very different and more relevant results. Usherwood and Toyne demonstrated that readers hold value for the facts in fiction, as well as for the fiction itself. Many readers often return to loved and informative works of fiction with only their personal notes and memories as the tools available to find the information they seek. Even more than casual readers, scholars and students of literature may have a much greater need for an organized information tool as Bell implies by singling out "serious fiction" as a genre in need of indexing. Bradley agrees with this distinction and adds another, "When a novel becomes part of an academic course of study the requirements of a reader may become the same as those of a reader of non-fiction." It appears that both Bell and Bradley agree that fiction works used for scholarly study are prime candidates for indexes.

The other key problem with Bradley's study is that the participants are left to consider what a fiction index might look like without an example. This missing piece led authors to criticize indexes that may trample on personal interpretation of the text when actually a fiction index could be created without any critical interpretation. Many authors objected to the idea of a fiction index because they were afraid that indexers would

misinterpret their work or give away its meaning entirely, voiding the personal experience of the reader. These are valid concerns that Bell (1992) addresses in her article on this topic. She claims that fiction indexes could be restricted to names and places to avoid misinterpreting the author. However, she goes on to show the benefit of including symbols in the index but qualifies this decision by stating that, "An entry should be as value-free as a signpost, which tells you only 'It's to be found there.'" In more practical terms, indexers should not add concepts that are not explicitly stated in the book. Following this rule could lead to a useful index that reads like a road map to the book telling you the names of everything and where they are located but not necessarily what you will discover there.

Though a fiction index may have its own set of guidelines, it should also meet the general guidelines of a good non-fiction index. In her study on the usability of indexes, Olason (2000) constructed a rule-set to creating usable indexes. She used snowball sampling to create a sample of 126 people, diverse across age, education, occupation, and race. After studying the participants' patterns in searching for information for a given problem, Olason pulled out the main findings to create a rule-set. The first part of this rule-set states what an "index should include: chapter titles, concepts, proper names, terms, titles, relationships, and subheads."

All of these requirements can be met in a fiction index. Though chapter titles may only be applied when chapters are actually given titles, fiction literature abounds with concepts, proper names, terms, titles, relationships, and subheads. Some authors, as mentioned above, may fight against the idea of including concepts, but the term "concepts" should not be confused with "interpretation." A concept in an index could be

something as simple as explicit references to a character's beliefs, such as "Joe, and democracy." Interpretation would involve forming an opinion about the meaning of a literary work. According to Olason's rule-set, indexes can be appropriate for fiction. There is nothing in the rule-set that would exclude fiction as a potential work for an index.

The professionals that study fiction literature and would most likely appreciate an index are often humanities scholars. The information needs of humanities scholars have been researched to some extent. While studying the "research practices" of English faculty, Wisneski (2005) drew some conclusions from current and past research about how humanists conduct their research. Wisneski sent out an online survey to the English faculty at Kent State University which asked about their "research practices, skills, and needs." He found from this survey that most humanist scholars work alone and "rely on their own research skills" instead of asking the librarian. This reliance on previous experience probably informs another conclusion that humanists prefer "traditional" research methods instead of new electronic tools. For example, humanists often use printed indexes and bibliographies instead of online catalogs. Wisneski also concludes that humanists "tend to use single term and subject searching." This preference for solitary scholarship, traditional information tools and single-term searching seems to suggest that English faculty would prefer, or at least find useful, an index to a work of fiction they may be studying.

A high school English teacher, Tom Murphy (2003) can attest to the benefits of a fiction index. He explored indexing as a learning activity for his students and received mixed results based on the level and interest of the students. However, what piqued his

interest in this activity was observing the usefulness of online indexes to serious works of fiction, namely *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The English Patient*. Murphy was so impressed with these tools that he created his own fiction indexes to *Grendel* and *The Great Gatsby*. After these successes, he gave the task to his advanced placement students for Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried." Most significantly, the students benefited from the synthesis of symbols and themes that becomes obvious when grouped in an index. Bell (1991) discovered the same benefit when indexing the novels of A. S. Byatt. References dispersed through one or multiple texts in a series come together cohesively in an index and provide insight into the author's themes, treatments, and even abilities as a good writer. Bell goes on to suggest that students of scholarly novels may find an index helpful for these and other reasons, but she cautions, the index should only be supplemental and used after reading the text.

Shenton and Dixon (2003) point out many benefits to using indexes in their study. The authors interviewed and conducted focus groups with 188 students, a mixture from elementary, middle, and high schools, about their use of tables of contents and indexes after giving them exercises to perform using these items. Overall, the indexes were favored more than the table of contents. These results were consistent across age groups. Students appreciated how the index greatly reduced the time spent finding a specific item in the text, brought together multiple references into one spot, and how it helped them find "highly precise information." These are useful features of indexes that we all appreciate and may take for granted.

Liddy and Jörgensen (1993) compared the differences between print indexes and electronic search in their report on modeling index use. They found that most of their

participants preferred the print index because they were able to view the index in its entirety which facilitated "comparisons, synonym generation, and a number of other Index Actions." The index structure itself increased engagement with the text. These results suggest that indexes in and of themselves may contribute to the understanding of the text which may increase the value of the index to those who study fiction.

Though many may understand why we need indexes, some may say that our new technology should offer more advanced tools than the traditional print index. For example, full-text searching of electronic documents has become a hot topic in the realm of information retrieval. To compare the success rates of full-text searching versus a print index, Barnum, et al. (2004) conducted a usability study by providing users with two versions of an electronic text, one with a hyperlinked print index and one without. Both versions included full-text search capabilities. The results suggest that users should use a hyperlinked index instead of the full-text search when capable because it produced more accurate and faster, on average 10 minutes faster, results than the full-text search, which often turned up irrelevant results and wasted users' time by having to scroll through them. In his study on "performance testing of a book and its index," Bennion (1980) assumes that a book index "should be able to assist the user in finding relevant information while simultaneously suppressing the nonrelevant." This feature is often what leads researchers to use a book's index. Indexes are a more precise tool that may be of better assistance to scholars because of this and other useful features, such as the synthesis of scattered references.

It has been established that fiction is valuable literature and the information it contains may be used by the reader as fact. Some readers may return to a novel in search

of one of these facts or another particular piece of information but only find an often uninformative table of contents. Indexes are useful because they provide access to specific information needs quickly. They are also useful because they bring together pieces of information repeatedly scattered throughout the text and aid in the understanding of central literary themes. Humanists may have a tendency to prefer indexes already and would most likely appreciate a supplemental tool that would speed up return trips to the text and facilitate knowledge discovery. My research intends to provide a basis for gauging the opinions of literary scholars and students on the usefulness of indexes to fictional literature.

METHOD

In order to investigate the opinions of literature faculty and students towards back-of-the-book indexes for fiction books, a survey was distributed. Babbie (2004) states that, "Surveys are . . . excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population." This survey measured the opinions of a sample of literature faculty and students as representative of the total population which includes all people that study fiction literature. This study population was literature faculty and students because they are formal scholars and students of literature and therefore, frequent buyers and users of fiction books. Non-probability sampling was used to form the sampling frame which consisted of all literature faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). These faculty members brought in the rest of the sample by allowing the researcher to survey students in their classes. Literature faculty was defined as any person officially teaching a course at UNC-CH in which the main subject of study is

literature. Literature students were defined as any person who is officially enrolled as a student at UNC-CH and is currently enrolled in at least one course in which the main subject is literature.

The sample was obtained by emailing all of the faculty members at the university listed as teaching literature and informing them about the study. The faculty were asked if they would allow the researcher to visit their literature class for ten minutes to administer the survey to their students. During the class visit, professor would also be provided with a separate survey to complete with similar questions re-worded for literature faculty. The email stated that there was no compensation for participating. There was also no cost for participating except the class time spent taking the survey. The students and faculty in the classes the researcher was able to visit served as the final sample.

When the participants were given the survey, they also received a sample index for a fiction book in order to avoid confusion over what exactly a fiction index would contain. This sample index was for *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner and can be viewed in its entirety in Appendix A. This book was selected because it meets Bell's (1991) definition of "serious fiction" which she considers as literature in need of an index. *The Sound and the Fury* is a complex work of fiction involving many characters that are interrelated and multiple story lines. Another characteristic that makes this work most suitable for an index is that the same story is told by multiple characters at different points in the book. An index would bring together the parts of these stories while still attributing the appropriate storyteller, an issue that is often difficult for students to resolve. *The Sound and the Fury* is considered a classic work of fiction and is taught in

many school systems and studied by many literary scholars around the world, also making it an excellent candidate for a fiction index. The index for this book was prepared by the researcher using the guidelines given in Mulvany's *Indexing Books*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and Bell's "Indexing fiction: A story of complexity." The first two of these works are industry standards for professional indexers. Bell's article gives a description of what a fiction index should include. The index follows Bell's specifications because they are the only ones available for fiction indexing, and also because the researcher agrees with Bell's argument that fiction indexes should only include names, places, events, and symbols without personal interpretation as described above. To save time spent looking over the index, only the first section of the book was indexed. This section is the narrative of the character Benjy and often one of the most difficult sections to understand.

Along with the sample index, the survey given to the participants was on paper. These surveys can be viewed in their entirety in appendices B and C. The questions began with some demographic information to classify participants according to sex, age, educational or professional status and interests, and previous experience with the book. After the introductory questions, the participants were asked if the index provided with the survey would be useful in studying *The Sound and the Fury*. The answer choices were on a Likert scale. Then, the participants were asked to explain their choice with one to three reasons. These numbers were specified so that the participant would not spend too much time on this question. The following question asked if there is anything the participant did not like about the index or if the participant had any concerns about its use as a study tool. This question was open-ended and was intended to stimulate thought

towards issues raised in Bradley's article by those opposing fiction indexes including misinterpretation and cost. The final set of questions pertained to how much money the participant would pay for a fiction book with an index as opposed to the same book without one. The question was asked whether the participant would pay five dollars more than the regular price for the book with the index. This same question was asked with the indexed book costing three dollars and then one dollar more than the book without an index. The answers to these questions indicated whether or not literature teachers and students would pay extra money for a fiction book with an index. These results, along with subsequent studies, could be used to persuade publishers to commission indexes for fiction books because they may be profitable. Conversely, these answers might add to the publisher's argument that fiction indexes are not profitable if participants indicate they would not be willing to pay extra money for them.

When conducting this study, the first step was to email the faculty members. Upon receiving responses, the researcher emailed the professors to arrange a time to visit their class. Only ten minutes of class time was requested so that the students would have to make a quick decision about how much they would pay for the book with the index. When considering buying a book, the buyer usually does not spend much time with this decision. The survey assumes that when in a bookstore the participant would have two choices of the book, one with an index and one without an index. Presumably, the purchase decision would be made by quickly flipping through the book, glancing over the index, and considering the price. The survey is intended to simulate this real-life experience thereby making the results more plausible to publishers.

After the professor was clear on the study and the survey process, the next step was to visit their class. Before the survey was given to the class, the researcher explained the nature of the study and the survey including the sample index. The participants were instructed to look over the index for a minute or two before answering the survey. An opportunity was provided for participants to ask questions before the survey was distributed. Each student and professor received a fact sheet about the study, a survey and the sample index. The researcher waited in the classroom to collect all of the surveys. All of the participants finished the survey in less than ten minutes.

One advantage of this sample was its location. UNC-CH is a southern school and the students are likely to be aware of the work of William Faulkner, a southern author who wrote primarily about life in the American South. In addition, many of the students at UNC-CH are from North Carolina and *The Sound and the Fury* is taught in many public school systems throughout the state so the students are likely to have read the book. A particularly useful advantage of this study process is that the researcher could be present during the administering of the survey to verbally explain the survey and answer any questions. In addition, the researcher was able to personally collect all of the surveys so that there was less of a chance of loss of data.

RESULTS

The results of this study are based upon the paper survey distributed to UNC-CH students and professors. The recruitment email was sent to 45 professors at UNC-Chapel Hill. These were the professors listed as teaching literature. Four of these professors allowed me to survey their classes resulting in 100 surveys from students and three

surveys from faculty members. Because of the small number of faculty responses, the results and discussion are focused on student opinions with a special section on the faculty responses.

Out of the 100 students who completed the survey, their demographics were split fairly evenly. All of the students were between the ages of 18 and 25. Because of the small difference between these ages, age was not included as a variable. Instead, the data analysis focused on the student's year in college which gave some estimation of how much advanced scholarship and research the student had undertaken. The years of the students were split almost evenly with 31% freshman, 26% sophomores, 21% juniors, and 22% seniors. There were more females than males with 65% being female and 35% being male. The major and minor fields of study for the students varied greatly. These curriculums were coded into the sciences, humanities, both, or undecided. The decision was based on the amount of reading and writing involved in the curriculum, and any field of study involving more reading and writing than math or science was coded as a humanities curriculum. For a list of how the majors were coded, please see table I.

SCIENCES	HUMANITIES
Biology	History
Chemistry	Political Science
Geography	Sociology
Nursing	Psychology
Economics	Advertising
Sports Administration	Journalism
Mathematics	Philosophy
Biomedical Engineering	Music
Exercise & Sports Science	East European Studies
	Creative Writing
	Comparative Literature
	International Studies
	Drama
	Screenwriting

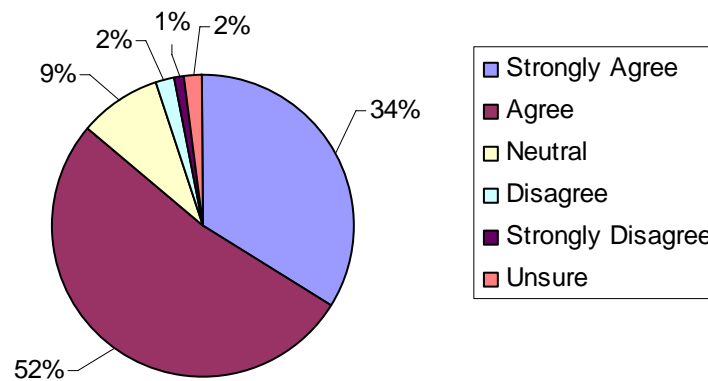
	Art History Spanish Public Relations African American Studies Linguistics German Information Science Health Policy Medieval Studies
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Table I: Fields of Study Coded by Curriculum

Of the curriculum types, 73% of the students only studied humanities while 12% of the students only studied sciences. 10% of the students studied both the humanities and the sciences while the remaining 5% were undecided.

Along with the survey, the participants received a sample index to the first part of *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner. To see if previous experience with the novel influenced their opinions about the index, the students were asked whether or not they had read and/or studied the novel. The majority of the students (70%) had not read the novel while 20% had read the entire novel and 10% had read part of it. 22% of all of the students had studied the novel in an educational setting with 13% studying it in high school, 8% studying it in college, and 1 student that had studied it in graduate or professional school.

Using the index provided with the survey as a frame of reference, the students were asked if this index "would be useful when studying *The Sound and the Fury*." The answers provided were on a 6 point Likert scale with the choices being unsure, strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The breakdown of the responses is shown in table II.



The index provided with the survey be a useful tool when studying *The Sound and the Fury*.

Table II

The responses were overwhelmingly positive with 86% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the index would be useful in studying the novel. Of the remaining respondents, 9% were neutral, 3% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 2% were unsure. These responses were analyzed based on the student's sex, year in college, curriculum, and previous experience with the book. All of the students who disagreed or were unsure that the index was useful were male except for one. In addition, all of those who disagreed were humanities majors except for one who studied both humanities and the sciences. The students' years were varied except that no seniors disagreed or were unsure of the usefulness of the index. Previous experience with the book was split between those who disagreed or were unsure with three of the students not having read it and two that had read the novel.

The final questions on the survey asked the students how much they would pay for the novel with the index versus the novel without the index if they would be studying it in a class. They were given the choice between the book without the index for the

regular price or the book with the index for five dollars more. This question was repeated twice more substituting the five dollars for three dollars and then, one dollar more than the regular price. Of all of the students, 39% responded that they would pay five dollars more than the regular price for the book with the index, 57.6% of the students would pay three dollars more for the index and 87.8% of the students would pay one dollar more for the book with the index. Of the students who would pay five dollars extra, the freshmen were the majority with 17 out of 31 freshmen responding positively. Of the students who would not pay even one extra dollar, most studied the humanities. Half of those who had read part of the novel would pay the extra five dollars, and one-fourth of those who had read the entire novel would pay the extra five dollars. The numbers were about even for all variables when choosing to pay three dollars extra and most students chose to pay one dollar extra with none of the other factors being significant.

DISCUSSION

Student Survey Responses

This survey measured the opinions of literature students about the usefulness and value of back-of-the-book indexes in fiction books. With 100 students studying different subjects at different years in school, there were a variety of responses but overall, the students were in favor of fiction indexes. When asked if the index to *The Sound and the Fury* would be a "useful tool when studying" the novel, the overwhelming majority of the students agreed. Following this question, the students were asked to give one to three reasons for their answer. The most commonly cited answer was that the index would

help the reader locate topics quickly. In other words, it saves a lot of time for anyone studying the book. Many students pointed out how helpful the index would be in writing papers, especially if they need to include quotes or cite particular passages. One student wrote, "When studying and looking for key passages for writing papers, this would be a *spectacular* tool and time saver (their emphasis)." 13% of the students stated that the index would be helpful in finding particular passages for class discussion. Both of these points add weight to the argument that an index to a fiction book would enhance and accelerate scholastic study of the novel. Saving time by being able to find relevant passages quickly may help students feel as though they have a better grasp on where and how events happened in the novel. Consider the difference between a student who can find the exact page quickly versus a student who must flip through pages in search of a vague memory. The first student may likely spend more time studying and understanding the passage while the second student may become so frustrated that they gain less from the passage or may give up entirely.

Several students noted that they thought the index would actually increase their understanding of the novel itself. One student wrote that the index "helps [the] reader to attain a more clear and structured understanding of a text that can be overwhelming." *The Sound and the Fury* is, indeed, a complex work that is anything but chronological. This format makes the text very hard to understand especially on a first reading. The index may help the reader to flesh out the plot of the novel earlier than without the index so that the reader can read with elevated understanding instead of confusion. Another student wrote, "If you're unclear about a certain theme in the book, [the index] would be really easy to help analyze that one section." This statement is another reason why the

index would aid in studying the novel. Several students pointed out how beneficial it would be to know every instance of a certain theme or motif in the novel so that it could be studied holistically. Some students wrote specifically about how helpful the index would be in understanding character development, and one student noted how the index would show progression in the text. Another student pointed to the benefit of cross-references in the index. Cross-references might connect disparate topics or aid in understanding the names of characters and places. All of these comments may show that an index would positively aid in and may even enhance the scholarly studying of a fiction book.

Two other interesting comments were made. One student pointed out that an index might be most helpful to teachers, even if the students did not use one. The teacher would be able to find passages quickly when preparing for class discussion. Another student noted that a leisure reader might use the index to look for a topic of interest. Suppose a reader wants to read fiction about a hobby of theirs or more seriously, about dealing with a disease. An index would help a leisure reader quickly note whether or not the book addresses the topic in which they are interested.

Though this survey shows that there may be a demand out there for indexes in fiction books, the publisher will probably ask how much they are willing to pay for it. In this survey, the vast majority would pay one extra dollar for the book with the index versus the book without the index. A small majority would pay three extra dollars. Only 39% of the respondents would pay five extra dollars. Interestingly, about half of these students were freshman and about half of the freshman would pay the five dollars. One reason for this could be that the freshmen are not as comfortable studying literature and

would appreciate a tool to help them. Another interesting group willing to pay five dollars is those that had read part or some of the book before. These students may consider the index more important because they understand the complex nature of the book. These numbers suggest that if a publisher could add an index to the book for three dollars or less more than the regular price per book that is printed, then they may stand to profit a little more than publishers whom do not provide indexes.

Students' Concerns

Though only fourteen students chose disagree, strongly disagree, unsure, or neutral concerning the usefulness of the index, many of them raised issues that are valid, important and should be addressed. All of the students in this category studied in the humanities, except for one who chose neutral, which may suggest that humanities students are more aware of potential negative consequences for an index to a fiction book. For example, one important issue that five students mentioned was the potential to undermine the author's art. One student wrote, "I am *very* concerned about how this approach may distract from or undermine the subtleties of how an author recreates an image or idea (their emphasis)." Another student pointed out how Faulkner especially is known for his art of "elusive[ness]" which may be ignored or forgotten with the use of an index. These comments are similar to what Bradley found in his survey. Many authors were concerned that the indexer would misinterpret their work or give away some of the book's secrets. One student that completed my survey proclaimed himself as an author and wrote that he would not want an index for this very reason – a fear that it would detract from the art of the literature. Interestingly, he said he would be willing to include

the index if it made him "lots of money." Another student pointed out the difference between fact and fiction stating, "The index is too mathematical/systematic for a creative work." This statement may be at the heart of the matter. Indexes are included in non-fiction to help the reader access facts. Some might say that indexes should not be included in fiction because they do not point to facts. Others, such as Bell, may say that fiction does include facts. However, is the fiction indexer only to index the facts in fiction? What constitutes a fact in fiction?

This issue of what the indexer would include in the index was another common concern. Several respondents asked how the indexer would decide what to include in the index. One student was concerned that whatever method the indexer chose, "It seems to have a potential for taking license from the reader." This point goes back to the authors' concern that the index would suggest too much to the reader and give away those subtleties that make fiction such an art. Other students mentioned a different side of this issue. How will the indexer be sure that they capture all of the appropriate passages? A reader may not be able to depend on the indexer catching everything. On the other hand, what if the indexer includes too much and indexes things that are not at all significant and then inadvertently make them seem as if they are significant? If the reader cannot rely on the indexer to provide complete and accurate indexing, then the index is of little use; and truly, only the author knows what is significant and what is not. In practice, this problem could be solved by getting final approval on the index from the author, but would the author be willing to authorize an index at all?

The issue of what to include in the index can be expanded to concerns about reader use of the index. A few students argued that if the index gives away what is

significant, then the student will be less likely to explore their own ideas which may lead to a blanket interpretation of the book without as many new ideas. One student described the index as a "force-fed motif guide" suggesting that students would not be as able to offer new interpretations of the book. Another student wrote that the index might make "the work of the student become less vital." It is important to note that students may feel that their contributions to studying the novel may feel less appreciated if an index is available to point them in the "right" direction. On the other side of this argument is the student who would use the index in place of reading the book. A few students pointed out that the index may appeal to those who do not want to work as hard at understanding the book and may not read it at all. This is a valid concern but not very different from a student reading Sparks or Cliffs Notes instead of reading the book. There will always be those students, but they should not preclude other students from enjoying the benefits of the index.

A few other minor concerns were brought up that should be mentioned. Three students stated that the index would be unnecessary because the reader should already know where things are if they have read the book. This statement may be partly true but anyone who has found themselves rifling through pages searching for a specific quote may sympathize with the need for an index. Several other students were put off by the index because they were not familiar with indexes in general and did not see the need for them. This point is important because not understanding the role of an index in a fiction book may be very confusing even to those who do use indexes regularly.

To address some of these concerns, the fiction indexer and the author would need to have an explicit contract about what is and what is not to be included in the index and

this would have to be explained to the reader as well. Many of these fears seem to stem from not knowing what the index would be like. If all parties were sufficiently informed of the nature of the index then many minds may be put at ease.

Faculty Survey Responses

Though only three faculty members completed surveys, their answers were interesting. Contrary to what students or others may think, all of the professors agreed that the index would be a useful tool for studying. All of the professors had read the book, and they gave many of the same reasons the students did for wanting the index. The index would help in finding specific passages and performing research. One professor pointed out that the index would only be useful for these things if you did not have online searchable text. This comment brings up an interesting point about digitized literature and its benefits. Most indexers would point to how an index brings together scattered parts of a novel and points to themes unlike a simple online search can. Yet, some may claim that finding words is all you would need an index for in a fiction book.

Two of the professors raised two of the same issues that the students did. One professor expressed confusion over what would be included in the index stating that it might be too comprehensive or not comprehensive enough and that there would be a "fine balance." Another professor stated a different concern, "Obviously, any index tells you what the researcher thought was important, not what you yourself might want to know." This comment echoes the students' concerns about their own ideas not being as important as the indexer's ideas. As for the value of the index, two of the professors would pay only one dollar extra for the book with the index whether for their own

research or for their students. One of the professors would pay five, three, and one dollar more for the book with the index to research but would only have her students pay one extra dollar for the book. These results suggest that though the professors like the idea of an index, they would not make their students pay too much extra for it. However, it is interesting that the professors chose to allow their students to have the index when they could have chosen the book without the index. None of the professors mentioned concerns about the students misusing the index by not reading the book closely enough. That the professors agreed with the usefulness of the index but raised some concerns, suggests that indexes for fiction may be a great idea if the concerns could be resolved. One way to address these concerns would be to increase communication between the author, indexer, and reader, as well as place strict limitations on what is to be included in the index.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the opinions of literature faculty and students on back-of-the-book indexes in fiction books through a survey distributed to 100 students and three professors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The results of this survey suggest that there may be a high demand for back-of-the-book indexes in fiction, yet there are several concerns that need to be addressed. Survey participants raised such issues as how comprehensive the index would be, that students may be less likely to contribute new ideas, and that the author's art may be undermined by such a systematic analysis of the text. Most of these concerns may be addressed by setting explicit guidelines about what is to be included in the index. As Bell (1991) suggests, an index to

a fiction book should only include people, places, and symbols to avoid personal interpretation. If this rule could be followed and correctly communicated to the author, indexer, and reader, then the reader may find himself with a useful tool for studying the fiction book.

Another concern raised in Bradley's (1989) article was the publishers stating that the cost of indexing the book could not be justified because there was not a high enough demand. The results of this survey suggest that there may be a high demand but the majority would only be willing to pay one dollar more than the book without the index. It is possible that hiring an indexer might increase the cost of the book by more than one dollar and that the publisher may not profit off of including the index. However, about half of the survey participants would pay three dollars more than the regular price for the index suggesting that including the index may give the publisher an advantage over other publishers which do not include indexes. These conclusions would be better served by further opinion studies and closer analysis of the cost of including an index.

If these concerns could be properly addressed, then these study participants point to a number of benefits to having indexes in fiction books. Like indexes in non-fiction books, indexes in fiction books would save a lot of time for those that return to the text in order to study it more deeply. Many respondents to this survey pointed out how helpful the index would be when trying to locate specific passages for writing papers or class discussion. Some of the participants also thought that the index itself would help the student or researcher more clearly understand a complicated novel without multiple readings. An index to a fiction book would clearly save time in increasing access to and understanding of the text. Bell (1991) writes,

If indexes are to be held suitable adjuncts to any texts, to enable location of specific passages and collate dispersed references to the same theme, then surely fiction that is serious, lengthy and complex is at least as deserving of these aids to study and research as any other form of writing.

This study has added a new dimension of discourse to the ongoing debate of fiction book indexes. It appears to be the first empirical study on this topic. Even an informal survey of opinions had not been conducted in over 15 years, and literature teachers and students had never been surveyed even though they may be the primary users of fiction indexes. This study provides members of the debate with real numbers and statistics that can be generalized to a larger population and used to support or oppose a point of debate. This sample has some limitations, such as being restricted to a local area and its small size. However, the intent is that the results can be generalized to literature teachers and students throughout the United States. Another disadvantage was my choice to focus only on literature teachers and students when fiction indexes could be useful to all who study literature, including literary critics and historians. This study is to serve as the groundwork for studying these other populations. Larger studies could expand the sample size spawning a succession of literature that may increasingly show consumer support or opposition to fiction indexes.

In addition to informing the professional debate, the cumulative results of these studies could provide the basis of conversations with publishers, authors, and indexers if a demand is found. The potential could extend to a series of critical editions of classic literature and other studied fiction that include indexes that increase access to information. In theory, fiction indexes could also expedite literary criticism by pulling together scattered parts of the book, a famous index purpose. Whether tools for literary criticism or help for literature teachers and students, the value of fiction indexes is a

longstanding and worthy conversation in the disciplines of indexing, library science, education, history and literature. The results of this study may be of interest to professionals in these disciplines but also to publishers, editors, authors and other book creators.

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Survey for Professors

This survey will ask your opinions about using back-of-the-book indexes in teaching and studying literature. Please complete this survey after looking over the index provided. If you need additional space or have additional comments, please use the back of the survey. The results of this survey will be reported in my master's paper which will be available through the school library. No personally identifiable information is being collected for this survey. Your completion of the survey serves as your consent to participate in the study though no further communication with you will be necessary.

1. Are you . . .

Male Female

2. What is your age? (Optional)

3. What is your faculty status?

Assistant Professor Associate Professor Professor Instructor
 Other _____

4. In what department do you teach?

5. What are your research interests?

6. Have you read *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner?

Yes Part of it No

7. Have you studied *The Sound and the Fury* . . .

In a class you have taken (Please answer question 7a)

For professional research – published or unpublished (Please go to question 8)

7a. Where did you study this book? Please check all that apply.

- Middle School High School College
 Graduate or Professional School Adult Continuing Education Book Club
 Independent Study Other_____

8. Have you taught *The Sound and the Fury* in any of your classes?

- Yes (Please answer question 8a) No (Please go to question 9)

8a. Please list the courses in which you have taught this book.

9. Please circle how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

The index provided with this survey would be a useful tool when studying *The Sound and the Fury*.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree Unsure

10. Please give 1-3 reasons for your choice in question 9.

11. Is there anything you do not like about the index or are there concerns you may have about its use as a study tool? Please explain.

12. If you were buying this book to study, which of the following would you buy?
Please choose one.

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$5 more

13. Which one of these would you buy?

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$3 more

14. And which one of these would you buy?

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$1 more

15. If you were choosing this book for your students to buy for your class, which one of the following would you choose?

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$5 more

16. Which one of these would you choose?

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$3 more

17. And which one of these would you choose?

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$1 more

This concludes the survey. Please turn it in to the researcher. Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Survey for Students

This survey will ask your opinions about using back-of-the-book indexes. Please complete this survey after looking over the index provided. If you need additional space or have additional comments, please use the back of the survey. The results of this survey will be reported in my master's paper which will be available through the school library. No personally identifiable information is being collected for this survey. Your completion of the survey serves as your consent to participate in the study though no further communication with you will be necessary.

1. Are you . . .

Male Female

2. What is your age? (Optional)

3. What kind of student are you?

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate Doctoral
 Other _____

4. What is your major program of study?

5. What is your minor program of study? If you do not have a minor, please write "none."

6. Have you read *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner?

Yes Part of it No

7. Have you studied *The Sound and the Fury* in a scholarly or educational setting? For example, did you study it in a class in high school or college?

Yes (Please answer question 7a) No (Please go to question 8)

7a. Where did you study this book? Please check all that apply.

Middle School High School College

- Graduate or Professional School
 Adult Continuing Education
 Book Club
 Independent Study
 Other_____

8. Please circle how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

The index provided with this survey would be a useful tool when studying *The Sound and the Fury*.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree Unsure

9. Please give 1-3 reasons for your choice in question 8.

10. Is there anything you do not like about the index or are there concerns you may have about its use as a study tool? Please explain.

11. If you were buying this book to study, which of the following would you buy?
Please choose one.

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$5 more

12. Which one of these would you buy?

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$3 more

13. And which one of these would you buy?

The Sound and the Fury with NO index for regular price

The Sound and the Fury with an index for \$1 more

This concludes the survey. Please turn it in to the researcher. Thank you for your time.