

Indexing A to Z

How to Index Conventions and Treaties

More and more in our globalized work, you will encounter references to conventions and treaties. It used to be that unless you were working on international law, you were unlikely to face references to these agreements, but now books that deal with feminism, human rights, employment issues, trade, children, war, business, etc. can all encompass conventions and treaties. They present the perfect examples of topics that demand multiple postings. First, they may have an issuing body like the United Nations or the World Trade Organization; second, they have a topic or maybe multiple topics to which they apply; third, they have formal names by which they are known; and fourth, they often have acronyms or nicknames by which they are commonly called. For me, they represent that category of entries called a “groaner” as they make you groan under all the labor of adding them to the index.

Treaties

When I was in grade school, I watched a lot of westerns on TV and thought of treaties as something the U.S. government made with Native American (Indian) tribes and then they smoked a “peace pipe.” In fact, most of the Indian wars did conclude in treaties (although I am not so sure about the smoking part) – I know that as I once indexed an entire volume devoted to these wars, and in the appendixes it reprinted all the treaties. Each conflict and disagreement had the potential of generating a treaty. I did not index the actual terms of each treaty, but considered each appendix (treaty) as one entity and made entries to it by its page range. Nevertheless, one treaty may necessitate an entry for its title as well as others for the tribes, locations, and wars involved. The example here is for the Treaties of Hopewell which were negotiated and signed with three Indian tribes by Benjamin Hawkins. You will see that for the main entry for the treaty I included the year(s) and for the sublevels I did not continue to have that level of detail.

Hopewell, Treaties of (1785–86), 379–80

Cherokee Indians

Hopewell Treaties and, 379–80

Chickasaw Indians

Hopewell Treaties and, 379–80

Choctaw Indians

Hopewell Treaties and, 379–80

Hawkins, Benjamin

Hopewell Treaties and, 379–80

Treaties as a concept extend back into ancient times, and according to the Istanbul Archaeology Museum, an accord reached between Pharaoh Ramses II and Hittite King Hattusili III is arguably the oldest peace treaty (1258 BC) in existence. Most major wars conclude with a treaty of some kind. Think of the treaties that you can name off the top of your head: the Versailles Treaty, the Paris Treaty, etc. Sometimes the treaty is named for the place where it is signed and that is why there are multiple treaties that have the name the “Paris Treaty.” You then have to add a year to the entry for it to be accurate and helpful to the user. (In fact, if the text gives a year for a treaty, I always include it in the index; I tend to create detailed indexes with years for wars, treaties, etc.)

Paris, Treaty of (1763)
Paris, Treaty of (1783)
Paris, Treaty of (1898)
Paris, Treaty of (1951)

You will note that I do not start these entries with Treaty of xxx, but instead invert them. I then take one of two possible approaches for the main heading Treaty. Either I insert a generic cross-reference like this:

Treaty of _____. *See name of specific treaty*

And yes, I mean I literally put three underbars after Treaty of to make it clear to the user that the next word is “you fill in the blank.” I think otherwise it looks a bit confusing and I like the clarity of the “blank.”

If I need to use the treaty as a sublevel, for example under the war that it concluded, I will most likely simplify the name as I did in the earlier examples for the Hopewell Treaties. So under American Revolution or Revolutionary War, U.S., I will use “Paris Treaty” as the sublevel wording, not “Treaty of Paris” or “Paris, Treaty of.”

Or, I will have a main heading “Treaties” and under it a list of the treaties as double postings. Which approach I take depends on the nature of the book and how much room I may have for the index. If the publisher has restricted the length of the index and I find I need to cut entries to make the index fit, I will definitely use the method of the generic cross-reference. If the book’s audience is high school students and if I have the space available, I will double post at the main heading “Treaties” as these users are less likely to already know the names of the various treaties. In my earlier example of the Indian Wars encyclopedia, I used the generic cross-reference due to the immense number of treaties involved. If I have a book that only has one treaty in the index, then I will definitely do a double post for it.

Treaties are not limited to concluding wars, as they also govern trade between countries, particularly bilateral trade agreements. At the website of the U.S. Department of State you can find a list of all treaties in force to which the United States is a party:

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/169274.pdf>.

This list which is divided by bilateral and multilateral agreements has some very helpful information as it tells the subject matter of the treaty (for example, aviation, taxes, agriculture, and visas) and the year of entry into force which is the year you would include in the index.

When indexing trade agreements, you may want to put them as sublevels under the two countries involved. I customize each entry like so:

Albania U.S.–Albania bilateral agreement
United States Albania–U.S. bilateral agreement

I do not want the name of the country in the main heading to start the sublevel, and the other country provides the more distinctive keyword.

Again, it depends on the nature of the book whether I will include a main heading for “Bilateral agreements.” Usually I find that would not serve any purpose in books on international relations, and I do not gather them (likewise in such a book I do not collect treaties or conventions at one main heading and use generic cross-references).

Regional agreements also apply in the area of trade relations. In the U.S., the best known is NAFTA which I normally post at its spelled out form “North American Fair Trade Agreement.” The signatory countries of Canada and Mexico may have a subheading for NAFTA or a cross-reference. Because the NAFTA acronym has become part of our vernacular, I feel free to use it as the subheading term.

Canada NAFTA and. See North American Free Trade Agreement
Mexico NAFTA and. See North American Free Trade Agreement
NAFTA. See North American Free Trade Agreement
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, 1994)
United States NAFTA and. See North American Free Trade Agreement

Many documents fall under the rubric of “treaty” in addition to bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. Accords can function as treaties. In the Bosnian war of the mid-1990s, the Dayton Accords set out the framework for peace. They have a formal name as well as the popular name by which we know them which came about from their signing at Wright-Patterson Airforce

Base outside of Dayton, Ohio. If the book gave the complete information, you could end up with entries like this:

General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Accords, 1995)

Dayton Accords (1995)

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Dayton Accords (1995)

The final type of treaty I want to discuss go by the name Friendship Treaties or Peace and Friendship Treaties. They usually refer to agreements between two countries wishing to establish ties and perhaps accompanies financial aid. Their use dates back to early American history and continues to the present:

Peace and Friendship Treaty between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary (1796)

Italo–Ethiopian Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration (1928)

Friendship, Commerce and Navigation Treaty between the United States of America and the Italian Republic (1949)

These will be indexed by their names as I have given them here but then will also need entries under the parties like Barbary, Ethiopia, and Italy. If the book is about U.S. relations, then the United States will not need to have sublevels for its agreements since the United States stands for the metatopic and would end up with everything under it.

Conventions

As used here, conventions does not mean a gathering of people with a common interest, but rather it refers to another type of treaty. The United Nations, in particular, has sponsored a large number of conventions and maintains a list of them on its website:

<http://treaties.un.org/pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx>. After the UN adopts and ratifies a convention, it becomes available for countries to sign onto, and the UN website will tell which countries are signatories for which conventions.

Certain conventions show up frequently in books I index: Convention against Torture, Law of the Sea, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. As you can see from these examples, the subject matter varies from environmental protection to women's rights, and in material dealing with these broad subject matters, you are likely to encounter mentions of these conventions.

First, you need to know if you have length restrictions for the index, but let's say that is not an issue and you can make as many postings as you want for one of these. For an example, I pick

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Here are the all the places I may index it:

CEDAW. See Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Discrimination Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Gender discrimination Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Sex discrimination Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Women Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

You can see how such treatment will quickly affect the size of the index. Note that I did create a main heading for Convention on If this ends up being the only convention in the index, then I plan to keep that entry just as I have it here. If the book has lots of conventions, then I will change to the generic cross-reference treatment that I discussed above under *Treaties*.

Also this particular convention has an acronym associated with it. First, if I change the treatment of the main heading, I need to revise that cross-reference's target. For the sake of clarity, here is how I would handle that:

CEDAW. See United Nations
Conventions. See United Nations
Discrimination Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Gender discrimination Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Sex discrimination Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Women Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Second, I do not repeat the acronym at the end of all the sublevels. I need to have it where I am sending the user from the cross-reference so that he sees a match-up and understands what he is looking for. Sometimes in a very large index, I will make the cross-reference more explanatory:

CEDAW. See United Nations, *subhead*: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Some indexers prefer the word “at” instead of “subhead” while the *Chicago Manual* would advise you to use just a comma and no particular directive wording. In any case, the purposes are the same to point the user to the specific sublevel and hopefully increase access speed and eliminate confusion.

As you noticed in some of the examples I provided above, the word “Convention” may or may not be present. Often you will see Rights of the Child, and not Convention on Rights of the Child. Maybe the first time the author used the full formal appellation and later the colloquial form. You need to watch for these to make sure that you don’t split the information in two places since they are the same item.

The United Nations agreements are not always “conventions;” they may use terms like protocol, agreement, and treaty as well. For example, Additional Protocol on the protection of the Antarctic environment between the Argentine Republic and the Republic of Chile. Just think how many entries that title will engender!

It would be remiss of me not to discuss here the most famous conventions of our time: The Geneva Conventions which comprise four treaties and three additional protocols. If you see the term as singular, Geneva Convention, then the author may mean just the fourth one which followed World War II and was signed in 1949 and included the ratification of the earlier ones as well.

Here is a list of what these cover and you can see that you may be forced to separate them into separate main headings with years or topics depending on the nature of the work you are indexing:

First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (1864)

Second Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (1906)

Third Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (1929)

Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949)

For the protocols the most important one is Protocol II (1977) relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts. You will find this referred to in terms of civil wars

which are, since World War II, the most common conflicts globally. In terms of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, discussion focuses primarily on prisoners of war, especially at Guantanamo, so that is the Third Geneva Convention.

Here are the entries I made for a project done for the Secretary of State whose officer overseeing the index gave me the phrasing. Note that they used 1949 as the year for all four conventions since that is the most recent date for the ratification of all of them:

Geneva Convention I: on Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (1949) Geneva Convention II: on Wounded and Sick Armed Forces at Sea (1949) Geneva Convention III: on Prisoners of War (1949) Geneva Convention IV: on Civilians (1949)
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The major topics all had cross-references pointing to the Conventions, like this:

Prisoners of war. <i>See also</i> Geneva Convention III: on Prisoners of War (1949)

Again the client dictated the way these were written, as my style would be not to make an exact match but rather stop at Geneva Convention III since that would be sufficiently distinctive and would work fine for a back-of-the-book index user. Plus the shorter form would most likely not wrap to a second line and save space in a print index.

As you can see from this lengthy discussion, indexing treaties and conventions involves a lot of busy work. Luckily thanks to the Internet, you have access to many good official sources to use in research. And by following the examples I have supplied here, you can feel confident that you have your bases covered.

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