"Reading Historically"

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The ability to read is a professional historian's most important skill. Reading is fundamental to everything a scholar does from locating and gathering information; to assessing the quality of sources and arguments; to crafting an original interpretation of the past based upon verified evidentiary materials.

As is true of every skill (such as public speaking, cooking, or playing a musical instrument) mastering reading requires time, patience, and practice. Your ability to read improves the more you do it. However, as with any skill, your skill in reading will only improve if you practice correctly. This chapter explains how to do this (among other things).

Texts are not equal. Some are more difficult to understand than others. Likewise, not all readers are equal. Some individuals read better than others. The faculty members whom you encounter in your history classes have had years of practice reading. They are better readers than you. How much better? *A lot better*. The gap between your respective reading levels is roughly the same as the gap in skill between a fourteen-year old Little League player (you) and a professional baseball player (your instructor). The good news is that, unlike learning to hit a curveball or throw a 90+ mph fastball, you still have time to dramatically improve your reading skill to a level at or near that of your instructor.

Historical reading is not a passive activity; it requires concentration and focus. Historical reading is engaged reading; it involves continuous interaction with the text. This is the only kind of reading that will improve your skill level. To return to the baseball analogy mentioned above – imagine that the author of your book is a pitcher. He is attempting to impart his knowledge of a subject (i.e. "the ball") to you, the "catcher." The catcher in a baseball game does not passively receive the pitcher's delivery. He constantly reacts, shifts, and adjusts in accordance with the speed and location of pitches to receive accurately what is being thrown his way.

This chapter introduces you to different types and levels of reading with the ultimate aim of helping you learn how to read proficiently for clarity and content (i.e. to receive the information "thrown" your way by an author). Although the following approaches reflect those employed by professional historians (thus, the title "reading historically") you are certain to find that the following information will help you excel in virtually every humanities or social science course you will take. If you employ these suggestions on a regular basis – through continuous, disciplined practice – you will attain a level of reading proficiency that will contribute to your professional success regardless of your vocation.

Types and Levels of Reading

In their 1940 masterpiece, *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* authors Mortimer J. Adler and Charles van Doren identify the following four (4) types or "levels" of reading:

1. Elementary Reading

The first type of reading is elementary reading, or what is generally known as basic literacy. Elementary readers are able to recognize words, comprehend sentences, and through them understand general, non-specialized texts. Elementary reading is the type (or level) of reading that most people undertake on a regular basis. When you open an email message, follow a cooking recipe, or read a story in a popular magazine or journal you are engaging in elementary reading.

If you understand this sentence, you have mastered elementary reading.

2. Inspectional Reading

The second type or "level" of reading is inspectional reading. The chief difference between this type of reading and elementary reading is that inspectional reading involves the element of time: the less time, the better. You may use inspectional reading to browse the contents of a catalog, glance through new emails in your "in-box," or search your class notes for that key term your professor introduced, etc.

In some instances, inspectional reading takes the form of "systematic skimming" in which a reader aims to gather information quickly to arrive at a general understating of a text. Inspectional reading of this sort can be very valuable in helping you to comprehend the scope and "breadth" of a text (i.e. to understand "the big picture") before you settle in for a closer, more focused reading that plumbs the depths of the material.

Inspectional reading (aka "systematic skimming" or "pre-reading") is something you must do when you are reading for the purpose of mastering content. Inspectional reading is a critical tool in helping you to reach the two highest levels or "types" of reading. We describe how to practice inspectional reading later in this chapter.

3. Analytical Reading

The third level of reading is analytical reading. Unlike inspectional reading, analytical reading is undertaken without regard to time. It amounts to a thorough, complete reading of an article, book, or other material(s) with the goal of attaining understanding of the subject matter at hand (as well as the person who wrote the text).

Mastering analytical reading is an important step in learning how to read historically. For a professional scholar, analytical reading is a foundational skill; it is comparable to a professional

musician's ability to recognize notes; form chords; and play a wide variety of scales. A professional musician does these things automatically because she has internalized them. You goal is to *internalize* an ability to read analytically.

Odds are good that you are not good at reading analytically. No worries! In the next section of this chapter we provide a step-by-step guide that explains *how* to read a scholarly monograph analytically. Follow our advice (and practice, practice, practice) and you'll be reading analytically in no time.

But reading analytically is not the same as reading historically. Reading historically requires one additional level of reading mastery.

4. Syntopical reading

Syntopical reading is the most advanced form of reading. According to Adler and van Doren, the syntopical reader applies analytical reading to multiple books, articles, documents, etc. devoted to a common subject to arrive at a new, higher understanding of the subject not contained in any one of those sources. Syntopical reading is the level of reading mastery to which you should aspire as a budding historian.

When professional historians undertake scholarly research they exercise advanced skills in syntopical reading. They examine a large body of sources, develop a full understanding of the sources' content, analyze the sources' claims in relation to one another, and then apply their acquired knowledge to produce a unique interpretation of what it all means.

The capstone seminar (HIST 4395) that you must complete to earn your History degree at UTA will provide you with an opportunity to engage in syntopical reading and historical writing under the guidance of a professional scholar. However, before you are ready to do this successfully, you must fully master the "basics:" inspectional reading and analytical reading.

The remainder of this chapter will help you learn how to do this by describing the methods and practices that you should employ when reading a scholarly monograph. Although our discussion is genre specific, you will discover that the methods and practices used to read scholarly monographs can be easily applied to shorter texts (such as journal articles) as well.

The Scholarly Monograph

A monograph is a specialized book-length written work, typically produced by a single author, devoted to a discrete subject or aspect of a subject. The monograph is a particular genre; it is distinct from other book-length publications such as novels, collections of poems, memoirs, etc. insofar as it aims to impart useful knowledge and a particular viewpoint (or, "thesis") related to the subject at hand. When reading a scholarly monograph, you goal is to gain a full and accurate understanding of the author's viewpoints regarding the subject of study.

Scholarly monographs are distinguished from non-scholarly monographs by three main features:

1) they are written by individuals with advanced training in a given discipline

in most cases, this means the author possesses a terminal (highest) degree in her field (i.e. a Ph.D. or doctoral degree). If the work in question is the author's first monograph it is most likely based on the author's doctoral dissertation.

2) they are typically published by a university press

these are non-profit enterprises devoted to the production and dissemination of scholarly books, journals, etc. for the purposes of fostering greater knowledge and understanding. They are frequently subsidized in whole or in part by institutions of higher education.

[For a comprehensive list of scholarly publishing houses, check out the website of the Association of University Presses: < http://www.aupresses.org/>]

3) they undergo "peer review" prior to publication

this is a type of quality control in which the editor(s) of a press assign two or more specialists to evaluate anonymously an author's manuscript prior to accepting it for publication. Each reviewer reads and critiques the author's work separately in advance of producing a "readers report" describing the manuscript and its relationship to relevant literature in the field. The anonymized reports are then forwarded to the author by the editor along with the press's decision to accept, accept with revisions, or reject the manuscript.

When the reviewers are made aware of the author's identity, the process is known as a "blind review." When the author's identity is unknown to the reviewers, the process is known a "double-blind review." (Under normal circumstances, the reviewers' identities are not revealed to the author.)

Scholars from every field can (and do) write monographs, but most professional researchers in the sciences, social sciences, and vocational fields (engineering, business, etc.) communicate their findings in the form of journal articles. Although professional historians also write journal articles, the scholarly monograph is the principal genre for the field of History. This oftentimes poses a challenge for students who might otherwise be interested in studying the past.

The prospect of having to read one or more monographs in an upper-level History course can be as intimidating as receiving an onslaught of 90-mph fastballs and off-speed pitches without protective gear. All those words! All those pages! This is going to hurt!

In actuality, it needn't be like that at all…

A well-conceived scholarly monograph serves two distinct, but related purposes. The first is to communicate information and ideas. The second is to serve as a combination toolbox and road map enabling interested readers to undertake additional, self-directed study into the topic(s) the monograph addresses.

The overarching structure and individual components of a monograph support these dual purposes. Knowing how and why scholarly monographs are constructed the way they are should give you the confidence you need to tackle the genre.

The Parts of a Monograph

1. Packaging/Cover

The old saying, "You can't judge a book by its cover" is not entirely true. While you cannot judge a book *as a whole* by its cover, you can (and should) judge aspects of the book by its cover. This is why books have covers. The cover is designed to provide the information necessary to judge whether or not the book is of use or interest to you.

a. Title and Cover Art

Title

The title of a monograph should provide an accurate indication of the book's subject matter and, perhaps, intimate its thesis. The title of most historical monographs is divided into two parts: the title proper and the "subtitle" a post-colonic phrase that, as often as not, specifically states what the book is actually about.

Here are five, chosen at random from the American Council of Learned Societies' Humanities E-Book Library < https://www.humanitiesebook.org/>:

"A Tender Age:" Cultural Anxieties over the Child in the Twelfth and Thirteen Centuries"

Berlin Psychoanalytic: Psychoanalysis and Culture in Weimar Republic Germany and Beyond

The Invisible Plague: The Rise of Mental Illness from 1750 to the Present

"The Infantry Cannot Do with a Gun Less:" The Place of the Artillery in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918

Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia

Note that in each of the above cases, it's the subtitle that provides specific information about the book's subject, content, and scope. This information alone should help you determine which (if any) of these monographs would be of interest to you and relevant to your needs.

Cover Art

In decades past, university presses typically published monographs with rudimentary covers that contained little more than the title of the work itself. Illustrated dust jackets (especially full-color

ones) added significantly to production costs thereby driving up the monograph's already high sales price.

Thanks to the advent of the digital print revolution the cost of producing book covers has dropped dramatically. While not all scholarly books possess fancy dust jackets, full-color covers are increasingly the norm.

If the dust jacket contains one or more images, odds are very good that they were chose or suggested by the author because she considered them illustrative of the monograph's central arguments. If you have obtained the book from a library, odds are very good that the dust jacket will have been removed. If you wish to peruse the original cover art, simply locate the book online via the publisher's website or Amazon.com.

b. Publisher's Mark

Another aspect of the monograph's cover you should consider is the press responsible for publishing the work. The name and logo are typically located toward the bottom of the book's spine.

As is true of academic institutions writ large, there is a recognized hierarchy among university presses. Unsurprisingly, the publishing houses operated by "elite" universities such as Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, etc. are typically regarded as the "best" or, at least, the "most prestigious" publishers of scholarly monographs.

In some cases, however, less esteemed universities have well-deserved reputations for publishing excellent lists in select historical fields. At present, for example, the University Press of Kansas, University of Nebraska Press, and Oklahoma University Press are considered to be among the top academic publishers of military history (esp. US Civil War and Soviet military history in the case of UPK). Similarly, the University of North Carolina Press is currently known for its strong list in German History while the University of Virginia Press is well regarded for titles covering the History of the early American Republic.

Note the qualifying phrases "at present" and "currently" in the preceding sentences. Things change. It is not uncommon for a university press to alter the direction or emphasis of its publishing list as a result of shifting markets or personnel changes (ex: the appointment of a new press Director). In the early 1990s, for example, Princeton University Press was considered one of the "top presses" for Russian history. This is no longer true. Currently, one of the top presses in Russian history is run by Northern Illinois University, a decidedly un-prestigious institution.

Two takeaways:

First, don't presume that a book is (or is not) worth reading based upon the reputation of the university that published it. Always remember: "The brand does not guarantee quality. Quality guarantees the brand."

Second, if you plan to undertake syntopical reading in a particular field of History, you should familiarize yourself with the presses that are currently (and historically) recognized as "leaders" in that field. Department of History faculty members can show you where to begin.

c. Summary and Author's Bio

The inside left- and right-hand portions of the dust jacket are where you are most likely to find a brief summary of the book and a short biographical statement (or, "blurb") identifying the author. If you are perusing books online via a university press website or Amazon.com, the language appearing under the labels "Publisher's Description" and "About the Author" are likely copied verbatim from the dust jacket. Both are all but certain to have been written by the author, not the press.

d. Endorsements (or Editorial Reviews)

The final element of a scholarly monograph's dust jacket consists of endorsements. These are typically located on the back of the book. Online, they may appear under the heading "Editorial Reviews."

A monograph's endorsements come from multiple sources. If the book is "hot off the presses," the endorsements have been excerpted from the readers' reports written by the individuals who reviewed the manuscript for the press. Endorsements may also come from post-publication reviews that have appeared in scholarly journals, magazines, or newspapers. Finally, endorsements may come in the form of a statement alerting potential readers to awards/prizes bestowed upon the book by scholarly associations, learned societies, or other entities.

If you are familiar with the historical field of specialization, a monograph's endorsements can give you a good idea of where the book "fits in" with the existing scholarly literature and how, generally speaking, its findings have been received by experts and specialists. Be aware, however, that regardless of their provenance, endorsements are designed to do one thing: convince you to buy the book. They have been selectively chosen by the press to serve as sales pitches and, as such, must be taken with a grain of salt.

2. Front Matter

Once you have completed your inspection of the dust jacket and crack open a scholarly monograph, the first things you will encounter are a series of pages collectively known as "front matter." The front matter is likely to consist of a "Dedication" (a brief, personal statement honoring or expressing affection for one or more family members, mentors, and/or friends) and, possibly, an Epigraph (a quotation, perhaps cryptic, chosen by the author as suggestive of the work's overarching themes).

3. Table of Contents

The monograph's Table of Contents (ToC) typically follows the front matter. The ToC is your first direct opportunity to determine for yourself what the author aims to do in the monograph.

While examining the Table of Contents for the first time, consider the following:

How is the monograph structured?

Is it organized into parts, subheadings, or sub-units?

Are the chapters of relatively even length?

Are they longish? Or, broken up into small "bite sized" units?

Do the chapters have titles?

If so, what do the titles state individually?

What do they suggest as a whole when read sequentially?

Do any of the titles contain unusual words or phrases in single quotation marks?

What might these indicate?

Does the monograph contain a Conclusion and/or Epilogue?

What "end matter" does the monograph possess?

Bibliography? Endnotes? Appendices?

The ToC is the functional equivalent of a "roadmap." Peruse it in advance of delving into the monograph to give yourself an idea of where the author is going to lead you, how you will get there, and what you can expect to encounter along the way.

Once you have thoroughly reviewed the dust jacket information and ToC, you should have a good idea of what the book is about.

4. Additional Information

If the monograph includes illustrations or uses abbreviations, acronyms, or foreign words likely to be unfamiliar to non-specialist readers, descriptions of these will appear after the Table of Contents.

The final item you will encounter before the monograph's first chapter is the "Acknowledgements," a narrative statement in which the author thanks (sometimes profusely) individuals who have offered advice, served as editors, or lent other forms of assistance while the book was being researched and written. If the author received grants, fellowships, or other funding support to complete the book, these will be mentioned in the acknowledgments. (Most

institutions and grant agencies require authors provide statements acknowledging their support as a condition of an award.)

The Acknowledgments are typically the most personal portion of a scholarly monograph. They may also be the most pretentious as some authors use them to curry favor with more established scholars, or to intimate they're far more "connected" than they really are. Then again, Acknowledgements may be highly entertaining. This is particularly true when the author has a sense of humor or is looking to settle scores with professional adversaries.[1]

Whatever the case, Acknowledgements are more useful to lending insight into the person behind the book than the contents of the book itself. Unless academic politics and professional gamesmanship are your thing, odds are you can skip this section and emerge no less the wiser.

5. Introduction (or, First Chapter)

While the Introduction of every book is necessarily unique, the introductions of scholarly monographs invariably consist of three basic elements which are almost always presented in the following order:

1) description of the specific subject and general field of research

The opening paragraphs of a monograph's Introduction "set the stage" for the reader by describing the subject the author has set out to investigate and interpret anew. Invariably, the author's goal in this section of the book is to identify for the reader the broader historical contexts and relationships he considers essential for understanding his subject and the value of his particular thesis to explicating the past.

Scholars tend to follow one of two rhetorical (or, organizational) patterns when composing the Introductions to their works. The "pyramid" pattern begins with a detailed passage describing a specific moment, individual, object, event, or series of events (Ex: the sudden onset of cat massacres at the hands of apprentice printers in late 1730s France) before "broadening" the discussion (like the expanding sides of a pyramid) to include a discussion of the specific moment's relevance to larger, historical contexts.

The counterpoint to the "pyramidal" rhetorical structure is the "inverted pyramid." Here, an author first begins with a "big picture" sketch of her general subject (Ex: the history of aviation) before "diving down" into the particular aspect of this subject (e.g. the "point" of the pyramid) that the monograph investigates (Ex: the origin of airline stewardesses in mid-1930s America).

Regardless of the rhetorical pattern the author employs, the purpose of the opening pages of an Introduction is to identify for the reader the author's field of research writ large and to situate the author's work within that field.

2) historiographical review

The second element of a monograph's introduction is the historiographical review – an extended discussion of those secondary works (scholarly monographs, journal articles, etc.) which the author considers most relevant to the subject at hand. Here, the author identifies earlier publications by scholars working in the field; broadly describes their methodologies, theses and evidentiary bases; evaluates them against one another; forms a judgment as to the state of the field in general; and justifies his own monograph as an important contribution.

The historiographical review portion of the Introduction serves three basic functions: 1) to establish the author's credentials as a learned scholar who is familiar with the existing literature (i.e. what educated peers have already said) 2) to identify those shortcomings, mistakes, or oversights in the existing literature the author believes exists and 3) to assert the value of present work (i.e. the monograph you're reading) in advancing knowledge or changing perceptions/ understanding of the subject in question.

3) **exposition of the author's specific treatment of the subject and statement of findings**

The final element of the Introduction is the one most important to the analytical reader. It is here that the author describes her thesis (or argument) and previews the means by which the thesis is developed and supported in the pages of the monograph proper. This portion of the Introduction is likely to include an extended passage describing how the author's discoveries negate, alter, or (in rare cases) support the conclusions of other scholars who have published monographs on related subjects.

NOTE: in most cases, the Introduction is the *last* chapter/narrative section of the monograph an author writes.

6. The Main Narrative (or, Chapters)

This is the principal text of the monograph. Enough said.

7. Conclusion (or, last Chapter)

The Conclusion is the "endpoint" of a scholarly monograph. Rather than introducing additional lines of analysis or new sources of information, a proper conclusion reviews, in broad terms, the major issues and approaches described in detail in the preceding pages of the text. Like a lawyer's closing statement at the end of a lengthy trial, the Conclusion is the author's last chance to "make the case" before the jury: the reader. An effective Conclusion will re-state the monograph's thesis; revisit the most important themes and evidentiary materials presented in the body of the work; and remind the reader how these all come together in support of the author's interpretation. The Conclusion should provide you with the most accurate summation of the author's argument or thesis. For this reason, the Conclusion is the *most valuable* portion of a monograph. **This is the part of the monograph that you should read first.**

8. Footnotes and Endnotes

Reference notes are perhaps the most distinguishing features of a scholarly monograph. They come in two forms: **footnotes**, which appear at the bottom of a page below the main text, and **endnotes** which appear, collectively, as a separate section between the monograph's conclusion and bibliography (or list of references). The publisher determines whether a title will employ footnotes or endnotes based upon its house style.

Reference notes serve three main purposes:

1) they enable the reader to locate the original sources of quotations, ideas, and concepts appearing in the text.

2) they enable the reader to determine whether or not an author has accurately interpreted (or quoted) source materials.

3) they enable the reader to weigh the author's arguments and interpretations against those of other scholars who have written on similar or related subjects.

In short, reference notes provide the reader the information needed to "fact check" the author should the reader wish to do so.

Reference notes support the monograph's toolbox and road map functions by providing readers essential information regarding the nature, location, and provenance of the evidentiary materials the author employs to support the monograph's thesis. In both cases, individual entries appear in a format that enables a reader to identify the source with ease.

The formats of entries are determined by the nature (or genre) of the particular source (i.e.: monograph, journal article, archival document, website, etc.) and the official "style guide" used by the publisher. In most instances, historical monographs employ the *Chicago Manual of Style*. (You may already be familiar the modified version of the *Chicago Manual of Style* known "Turabian" which is used for research papers, theses, and dissertations).

The first time a source appears in a footnote it will be identified by a complete bibliographic citation followed by the location where the material in question may be found in the in the original source. In the case of a monograph, for example, the citation would provide the following information:

Author's Full Name

Complete Title of the Book

Location of Publisher

Identity of Publisher

Year Published

Page(s) in which the material being cited may be found

Subsequent citations of the same source will contain just enough information for the reader to identify accurately the relevant work in question. In the case of a monograph this will typically include:

Author's Last Name

Book Title (but not the subtitle)

Page(s) in which the material being cited may be found

If the same source is cited two or more times in succession, the reader will see "Ibid." This is a Latin abbreviation of the phrase "*ibīdem*" meaning "in the same place." If "Ibid." appears by itself, the material in question is located on the same page(s) as the immediately preceding note; if "Ibid." is followed by a page or range of page(s) the material in question may be found there in the same work cited in the immediately preceding note.

You are also likely to come across the following additional Latin abbreviations and phrases:

"Op cit." – an abbreviation of the phrase "*opus citatum*" meaning "the work cited." This is used to alert the reader of a work already cited in full by the author elsewhere in the monograph:

Example: Snodgrass, *op cit*., 325.

This phrase is often used the first time a book is cited in a chapter *subsequent to* the initial chapter in which the full citation appeared in the notes.

"Et al." – an abbreviation of the phrase "*el alii*"' meaning "and others." This typically appears in citation involving documents or books written by multiple authors.

Ex: Smith, *et al*., *Malaysian Hermeunetics of the Belle Epoque*, 234-9.

"Etc." – an abbreviation of the phrase "*et cetera*" meaning "and the rest."

NOTE: "Et al." is used for people. "Etc." is used for things.

9. Bibliography (or, "List of References" aka "Works Cited")

The penultimate section of a scholarly monograph contains information relating to the sources compiled by the author while researching the work. Depending upon the publisher's house style, the information will take the form of a "Bibliography" or "List of References" (alt: "Works Cited"). The chief distinction between these two resources is that a **bibliography** provides a complete accounting of *all* of materials examined by the author during the course of researching the work. By contrast, a **list of references** contains only those materials cited in the work's notes.

As is true of reference notes, the individual entries appearing in a bibliography or list of references are formatted in accordance with the publisher's official "style guide."

[Note: In an effort to reduce costs, some scholarly publishers will substitute a short "bibliographic essay" in place of a proper bibliography. As the name suggests, a bibliographic essay is a narrative produced by the author that briefly discusses the most important resources relevant to the monograph or subject in question. In other cases, publishing houses may "off-load" a manuscript's bibliography to a website housed on servers belonging to the publisher or even the author.]

For the historical researcher, the bibliography is a very important portion of a monograph as it is akin to a "library" put together by the author during the years-long process of researching and writing the manuscript. Both bibliographies and lists of references provide a complete account of the documents and resources used to support the scholarly study. Thus, both give interested readers an excellent foundation for undertaking their own investigations into related subjects and/or for double-checking claims appearing in the monograph to ensure that sources have not been taken out of context, misquoted, or even been completely made up by the author. (Yes, this does happen.)

Bibliographies are frequently divided into sub-headings specific to the genre or category of resources employed by the author. Sub-headings you may encounter include, but are not limited to:

Archives and Manuscripts

Periodicals (Newspapers and Journals)

Oral Interviews

Secondary Sources (e.g. monographs, scholarly journal articles, literary works, etc.)

Films (or other multimedia sources)

Websites

The items appearing in a bibliography may prove to be as valuable to a researcher as the monograph itself. This is particularly true in instances when an author has made use of archives or archival materials previously unexamined by other scholars. (Such was the case for the field of Russian history from the early 1990s through mid 2000s when Western researchers were suddenly given access to a wide range of archival repositories and documents previously ruled "off limits" by Russian and Soviet state agencies.)

Whatever the case, an experienced scholar can extract a great deal of information from a bibliography. Among other things, the bibliography reveals where (and possibly when) the author conducted archival research; it identifies the interpretive schools and scholarly networks with whom the author is intellectually engaged; and it provides ample evidence of the author's proficiency as a researcher.

Conversely, a bibliography may also be revealing for what it does *not* contain. The absence of one or more major works or canonical articles may indicate an author has been less than conscientious in undertaking research. Likewise, the absence of relevant works from one or more different methodological schools may suggest the author is lazy or pre-disposed to ignoring perspectives and viewpoints with which she disagrees.

10. Index

The Index is the last component of a scholarly monograph. Similar to the notes and bibliography, the Index supports the monograph's "tool box" function by providing readers the means to locate information efficiently. Indexes are placed at the very end of a monograph to enable readers to access them easily while reading the text.

According to the American National Standards Institute, an index is "a systematic guide to items contained in or concepts derived from a collection…represented by entries arranged in a searchable order, such as alphabetical, chronological, or numerical…that is normally different from [the order of] the items in or concepts in the collection itself."

The content of an Index consists of four (4) elements. These are:

1) Main Headings

Main headings appear as the first (or, top) lines in the index. In the aggregate, main headings constitute a list of terms (usually nouns) denoting key subjects, individuals, events, etc. directly related to the concepts in the monograph. Main headings are the primary access points through which readers identify and locate the information they are seeking.

2) Reference Locators

Reference locators are the pages or range of pages indicating where the information related to the heading is found in the text. In a properly indexed monograph, the reference locators indicate the beginning and end of a discussion; continuous discussion of a term carrying over to two or more pages is indicated by a page range (ex: 25-28). Page numbers appearing in *italics* typically indicate the location of an illustration, photograph, or other visual item related to the search term.

As a general rule, main headings followed by five or more reference locators are further broken down into subheadings followed by reference locators.

3) Sub-headings

Subheadings appear as one or more lines of indented text immediately below main headings. Subheadings are intended to alert the reader to the location of specific aspects of the main heading located throughout the monograph.

Unlike main headings, which should be as direct and concise as possible, sub-headings often employ articles, prepositions, and conjunctions to assist readers in clarifying the nature of the relationship (hierarchical, conceptual, grammatical, or otherwise) between the sub-heading and main heading.

4) Cross-references

In contrast to main and sub-headings, which provide direct access to the location of information in the monograph, cross-references serve as internal navigation guides within the index itself. They help tie together information and concepts for the reader and, thus, may be suggestive of the monograph's overarching arguments or its thesis.

Cross-references come in four types. Each is denoted by a word or phrase appearing in *italics* followed by a term directing the reader to a main heading or sub-heading entry:

See is used when the indexer anticipates a reader will look up a topic using a term that does not appear in the index. *See* re-directs the reader to the appropriate term used by the author in the text of the monograph.

See under is used when a *See* cross-reference re-directs the reader to a term that appears as a sub-heading in the index.

See also directs readers to additional information related to the term that appears under another main heading entry.

See also under directs readers to related, additional information appearing under another sub-heading entry.

Example:

smychka, 125-126, 127, 130, 141, 144, 157, 158

socialist realism, 220, 246

positive heroes, 220-221, 230, 233, 236

Society of Friends of the Air Fleet. *See* ODVF

Sokol'nikov, Grigorii, 247

Soldiers

as administrators of Soviet regime, 83, 130

official images of, 128, 130-131

You should peruse the index of any monograph you read to identify key terms, concepts, and subjects that appear in the book.

Approaching a Monograph (or, the Mechanics of Reading)

Now that you understand how a monograph is structured we can turn attention to how one should be read. But understanding *how* to read a monograph presupposes an understanding as to *why* people read monographs.

So, why do people (including History students) read monographs? They read monographs to gather information and gain understanding. Your goal as a historical reader is to gain a complete and accurate understanding of an author's approach to a given subject. For this reason, while a historical monograph is a form of narrative (i.e. a literary work that tells a story) it should not be

read after the fashion of literary narratives such as novels, autobiographies, or plays all of which are designed to be read (or, performed) from start to finish.

1. The Mechanics of Reading

The "order of battle," so to speak, for approaching a scholarly monograph looks something like this:

1. Examine the book's dust jacket paying particular attention to the summary and author's biography
2. Peruse the Table of Contents to see what additional information you might be able to glean about the book's structure, scope, and major themes from Chapter titles and sub-titles (if any). Note the presence of any dates or ranges of dates; these are clear indicators of the periodization scheme employed by the author.
3. Scan the Index to identify the most "substantive" main headings (i.e. the ones followed by the largest number of reference locators and sub-headings). Pay attention as well to any odd or idiosyncratic entries/phrases; these may point the way to concepts the author deems original or of special significance. While undertaking the aforementioned, be certain to makes a mental (or, better physical!) note of where these various headings appear in the book by using the reference locators as "guideposts." Those scattered more or less evenly throughout represent major elements/themes in the narrative.
4. Turn to the Bibliography. What types of sources appear here? Which archival repositories anchor the author's evidentiary bases? Within these repositories what specific collections or group of items are listed? Are the archival collections/ document significant in number? Or limited? What other primary sources appear in the Bibliography? Contemporary magazines, journals, or other periodicals? What types of secondary sources appear here? Other monographs? Scholarly articles?

Remember: in addition to giving you a good sense of the range and depth of the author's research, the Bibliography is a resource for identifying additional items you will want to examine yourself as you undertake your own original research in the field.

Once you have completed the four steps listed above, you should have an accurate understanding of the subject matter, scope, and general thrust of the monograph. If you are convinced, based on the information you have thus far gathered, that the book is of interest and value to you, you should now be fully prepared to tackled the job of reading the monograph well.

Now, do the following:

5. **Read the monograph's conclusion**. This will give you a reliable and "full" picture of what the author considers to be the most important aspects of the study. As you read the Conclusion, make mental (and physical!) notes of the main point(s) addressed in each of the paragraphs.
6. After reading the Conclusion, read the Introduction. While doing so, recall the main points, themes, and issues the author addressed in the "closing statement"

you just read. Make mental (and physical) notes about the two ways in which the author presents her "last" and "first" case. Does each manner of exposition seem to "fit" with the other? Or, do you detect differences or discrepancies in language? Tone? Substance? If so, note these!

7. At this point, you are now fully prepared to tackle the main text beginning with Chapter 1. Do not dive straight in to the chapter. Instead, exercise your "inspectional reading" skills by systematically skimming (aka "pre-reading") the chapter in advance. A quick and effective way of doing this is to **skim the chapter from start to finish by reading only the first sentence of each paragraph**. You might consider writing each sentence as you read it onto a piece of paper. By the time you have finished this "pre-reading" (and writing!) exercise you should find that the collection of sentences you have put together are an accurate synopsis of the chapter as a whole.

Once you have pre-read the chapter, you are ready to begin the process of reading it thoroughly for content and meaning. This is, necessarily, the most time-consuming portion of learning a monograph. If you have followed the steps outlined above, however, you should find that the task of identifying the author's lines of argumentation and end point to be relatively straight forward.

Approaching Other Genres

1. Literary Works

As narrative texts with clear beginnings, middles, and ends, literary works require a different approach to reading than that described in the previous sections of this chapter. Literary works *should* be read from "front to back." They should not, however, be read passively.

When reading novels, short stories, or plays ask yourself the following series of questions. They will help you to understand how the author constructed the story, what she wanted to say, and how successful she was in the endeavor. As come up with an approximate answer for each question, you will develop a deeper and more complete understanding of the work.

Theme:

- What is this story about? What is its point (say it in no more than 10
- words)?
- What is the central idea of the work? Its message?
- How does this abstract, central idea become concrete through the characters and events?

Setting:

- Where does the action take place? Any particular reason that this is an appropriate choice?

- When does the action take place? Why did the author choose to set the work in this time?
- How does time and place of action, the environment of the story, interact with the characters?

Characterization:

- Who are the principal characters?
- What kind of people are they? What motivates them? What is their "psychology"?

Pay particular attention to the following:

- What does the narrator say about them?
- What do they say about each other?
- What do they say about themselves?
- What do their actions say about them?
- What do they look like (physical description)?
- Do they have a past?

Narrative Technique::

- Who is telling the story? (be careful not to confuse the narrator with the author)
- Is the narrator omniscient? Of limited knowledge? Third person? First person?
- How would you characterize the narrator? (educated/uneducated, cynical/satirical, naive/disingenuous, etc.)
- Does the narrator have a particular point of view? Are there other points of view in the work?
- What is the narrator's agenda? Why is s/he telling the reader this story?
- Does the narrator manipulate the reader? How? Why?
- How does the narrator "control" the story?

Structure:

Structure is the conscious patterning, or configuration, of events and situations; plot is the basic element of structure.

- Does the work follow the traditional five-part structure?:
  Exposition; rising action; climax; falling action; denouement
- What liberties does the work take with traditional structure? What might this achieve?

- Is structure concrete or abstract?
- Is there a "frame" or other structural device? Why do you think the author uses it?

Style:

- What is interesting about the way the story is written?

What are the primary technical aspects of the author's language?

- long or short sentences?
- dialogue or narrative?
- repetition?
- lexical levels?
- imagery? (natural, organic, animal, mechanical, visual, olfactory, tactile, abstract, etc.)
- figurative language? (metaphors? similes? synecdoches?, etc.)
- allegories? symbols?
- What is it about this author's work that makes it specifically his and not someone else's?
- Can you tell this writer apart from others by his/her personal style? What are the clues?

Extrinsic Factors:

- How does knowledge of social, political, or economic conditions help you understand the work?
- What role does the historical period play in creating or enhancing the meaning of the work?
- What of the author's life? Friends and colleagues? Interests, language, culture?
- What is their role in contributing to the meaning of the work?

2. Paintings and Art

Finally, here are a few general guidelines to follow when "reading" a painting:

Subject:

- What is the title of the work?
- What is the work about (on the surface?)

- Does the work purport to depict an specific individual, a scene, or an event from the past? If so, who was the person (or what transpired in the event/ story?)
- Why might the artist have selected that particular subject?

Background and Context:

- Who is the artist?
- When and where did he or she paint the work in question?
- With what style or school was the artist typically associated?
- With what other works is it in conversation?
- What cultural or historical matters may have influenced it?
- What cultural or historical matters does it seem to be addressing?

Composition (formal elements):

- *Medium*. [Oil based, watercolors, collage, etc.] Why is the artist using this particular medium? What are its advantages? Its limitations?
- *Lines*. Are the lines thick or thin? Largely vertical or horizontal? Straight or curved? What is achieved by this particular use of line?
- *Color*. Is the color realistic or expressive? Warm or cool? Bright or muted? And to what effect?
- *Light*. How is light used? How is shadow used? Is there any play between the two? What is communicated to the viewer?
- *Perspective*. Where is the "center" of the art work? To what point on the canvas is your eye drawn when you gaze at the painting? Are the elements surrounding that point depicted in "naturalistic" fashion?
- *Space*. What is the sense of space in the work you've chosen? Is there great depth, or is the visual plane shallow? How are the elements of the work configured in that space? How does the sense of space affect the subject matter? Affect your response to the work?
- *Composition*. How do the various formal elements of the work interact? How does the composition convey the work's theme or idea? How does the eye move across the piece? How does the composition control that movement?
- *Style*. What elements of the composition work to constitute the artist's style? The style of the period in which the artist was/is working?

Thematics:

- Who was the artist's principal audience?
- What message(s) do you believe the artist wanted to communicate to that audience?
- To what degree do you believe the artist was successful?

[1] Glen Wright, “The Best Academic Acknowledgements Ever,” *Times Higher Education Online*. 19 January 2016. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/best-academic-acknowledgements-ever> Last accessed 5 July 2019.