EDITORIAL

Indexing is not the straightforward, simple task that some people think it to be—as some publishers, even, think it to be, judging from the observations of the winner of the Wheatley Medal for 1963 which were quoted in our last issue.

Two contributors to the following pages relate their experiences, their approach to their individual tasks, and give their reasons for compiling their indexes to books the way they do.

The approaches to book indexing are almost as varied as the books themselves, for most books present problems—different problems—to the indexer; problems which cannot be realized, let alone resolved very often, until after the books have been read through and then, perhaps, the problems ‘slept on’. Variations in the construction and appearance of indexes are numerous, and are recognised as likely to have merit, for one of the ‘conditions’ of the award of the Wheatley Medal refers to the fact that ‘attention will be paid to features novel to standard indexing which serve a useful purpose’.

Another contributor to the present issue deals with a different form of material—archives. In recent issues we have had articles dealing with the indexing of periodicals of different kinds, of collections of documents, and of stocks of industrial parts.

In recent years indexing has passed far beyond the practice of a person sitting down with a page proof and a pile of slips, for punched paper tapes can now be drawn hungrily through one end of a big and expensive machine, and a large roll of paper with a printed index on it comes out at the other end in consequence.

But the individual with his page proof and his pile of slips is still required—and always will be for certain kinds of indexing. For not every organization can afford expensive machinery, and not every indexing job requires it.

That there are varieties of indexing requiring different techniques is recognised by the Society which is planning, based on the success of the fourth training course, yet another; this is to be held early in 1966. The Society is more than ever conscious of the need for training in indexing, and also for the need for examining and certification of competency.

Any readers who are interested in these aspects of indexing are invited to write to the Hon. Secretary.

This is the last issue of Volume 4 of the Society’s journal. The Editor would welcome comments on The Indexer, and solicits contributions.