Electronic indexing

Dear Sir,

The members of the Society may be interested in some ideas on electronic indexing presented on March 31st at a meeting of the New York Metropolitan Chapter of the American Documentation Institute. The speaker was Pat F. Santorelli of IBM; his topic, 'Book Production by Computer'.

Mr. Santorelli is in charge of the design of an experimental system to produce technical manuals by computers. A large number of writers at special typewriters (technically called 'terminals') write copy, which is fed into a computer. The computer performs all sorts of chores automatically: places and styles heads, footnotes, and bibliography; hyphenates according to rules; corrects spellings; justifies lines; makes tables of contents; paginates; etc. Printed copy is returned immediately to the writer to be corrected then or at his leisure.

The writer can at any time switch from the automatic styling to an 'as-is-mode', in which printed copy is returned to him exactly as he has typed it. For example, if he were dissatisfied with the automatic hyphenation, he could recall a line and hyphenate to his own preference. At any time the writer can change or correct what he has previously written.

A drawback of the system is that it becomes economical only when used by about eighty writers at the same time.

This extremely brief description will serve as background for a discussion on how they plan to index books.

A writer indexes his book by marking a bracket around any topic he feels should be indexed. The computer brings the printed index back to him with page numbers. The writer can recall the index even when it is only partially completed.

At the meeting there was a copy of a sample index made up in this fashion from one of the experimental projects. It seemed to be a usable index, although rather simplified.

I discussed this with Mr. Santorelli. He said that within the framework of the present experimental system a writer could create a more complex index if he wished. Entries could be added in a special column on the right-hand side of the copy. Heads that did not appear in the copy could be added, as well as modifiers in the form of subs and sub-subs. Also, simple categories of entries could be automatically indexed, for example, proper names or trademarks. But Mr. Santorelli said that at this time they did not contemplate such complex indexing, although it would be technically feasible within the system.

They also plan an optical scanner, which would bring part of a manuscript on to a screen and allow proof reading either by means of a system of buttons keyed to quadrants on the screen or by means of a 'light pencil'.

There formed in my mind a picture of the indexer of the future. Sans his traditional 3 x 5 cards, he will be sitting before a screen, typing out his entries or indicating them with a 'light pencil' as page after page of the manuscript flashes before him. If he forgets how he handled some past entry, he presses a button and lo! there appears before him a printed copy of the partially completed index.

There would be no waiting for page proofs or hurried scrambles to meet printers' deadlines; a book could be indexed
as it is written by the author, and the computer would take care of the pagination. Nor would there be mistakes in page numbers either by indexer or printer.

The system would have its greatest advantage in the indexing of multi-volume works. Consistency could easily be maintained between the work of many indexers on a many-volume encyclopedia by means of instant recall of the partially completed work.

So perhaps some day most indexes will be automated, but it is difficult to foresee the complete elimination of the solitary 3 x 5 indexer, who after toiling through the night for some demented publisher

Will turn his back to the east
From whence comforts have increased;
For light doth seize his brain
With frantic pain.

Sincerely,
Robert J. Palmer.
15 West 11th Street,
New York, N.Y. 10011.

National Library Week

Dear Sir,

My Committee is organising Great Britain's first National Library Week which will take place from March 14th to March 19th, 1966. As you can see, our sponsors cover all aspects of the book and library world and we are honoured in having H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., as our patron.

Our objects are to encourage the reading of books and other material both for education and leisure and to draw attention to the contents and services of libraries of all types. We plan, with our members' help, to establish local committees throughout the country, which will recruit the aid of as many interests as they can, involve them in the Week's activities and, thus, demonstrate how books and reading are essential links in community understanding.

The success of our plan depends upon the co-operation of all sides of national life and, clearly, your organisation represents a most important element in this.

May I ask you, therefore, if you will be kind enough to bring this letter to the notice of your Council with the request that your members be informed about National Library Week through your usual channels and thus encouraged to support the activities at local level.

Yours faithfully,
K. C. Harrison,
Chairman, National Library Week
Joint Organising Committee.

[Will readers who have any suggestions as to ways in which the Society might co-operate please write to the Hon. Secretary immediately.]

Honouring the indexer

Under the above title the following letter from the Society's Chairman was published in the Spring number of The Author.

Dear Sir,

I have read with interest Mr. Fielden Hughes's well-informed article 'Introducing the Indexer' in your Autumn 1964 number.

Mr. Fielden Hughes does well to draw attention to the hitherto enforced anonymity of the indexer but he may rest assured that this is becoming more and more a thing of the past. Thanks to the publication last year of the authoritative British Standard on The Preparation of Indexes (B.S.I. 3700: 1964) which strongly recommends that 'for any substantial index, the qualified indexer, no less than the illustrator, translator or any other collaborator, should be given proper credit by name in the publication indexed'; publishers seem now far more willing to name the indexer, either at the head of his index (where I think it should
rightly be), or else in the preface or list of acknowledgments.

I may be a slow worker but I cannot see myself able to 'provide an index for an historical work of 420 pages' in anything like as short a time as 'thirty hours'.

As regards the vexed question whether an author is the best person to provide his own index (as so often demanded in publishers' contracts), it must be remembered that the first two annual awards of the Library Association's useful Wheatley Medal 'for an outstanding index' have both gone to author-indexers. I have heard it suggested that here the author has a distinct pull over his professional rival in that he is able to claim from his publisher almost unlimited space for his index. At any rate, some of the finest indexes have been compiled by author-indexers—and some of the worst. The truth seems to be that, provided he is willing to master the technique of indexing, there is no reason why an author should not be the ideal indexer of his own works.

G. Norman Knight.

Reference was made to this article and to the Times Literary Supplement's commenting on it on page 95 of the last Indexer.

[Since this letter appeared in The Author, the Wheatley Medal has again been awarded to an author-indexer. See page 117.]

Sir,

Hyphenated proper names

I was somewhat astonished to notice in the interesting article 'Libraries' Heritage' on p. 83 of the Spring Indexer the following cited with apparent approval:

Smith, Sheila Kaye-, q. on reading, 35. The name of this well-known Sussex authoress must occur in countless indexes and cyclopedias, but the foregoing is the first occasion I have found it given under the second of the two hyphenated elements.

The British Standard on the Preparation of Indexes (B.S. 3700: 1964) is fairly explicit on this point: 'Compound proper names, whether hyphenated or not, should be indexed under the first surname or element—with any necessary cross-reference from the other'.

So unlikely, I submit, would an index-user be to look for the name anywhere other than under 'K' that a cross-reference from 'Smith' should be quite unnecessary.

B.S. 3700 does make one exception: 'when the usage of the owner or country concerned favours inversion'. But I much doubt if this can be claimed in the case of 'Kaye-Smith, Sheila'.

I am, Sir,

Yours obediently,

G. Norman Knight.

3 Western Mansions, Western Parade, Barnet, Herts.

Sir,

Indexing married women

The reference in your Spring issue (p. 92), at the end of Mr. G. Norman Knight's letter on indexing peers, to maiden and married names sparks off a wider question—indexing names of married women generally. There is the additional complication that a woman may figure in a work (or, as an author, may write) both before and after marriage.

The American Library Association's Cataloguing rules (preliminary 2nd ed., 1941), Rule 59, prescribes a heading consisting of:

married surname, Christian name(s), maiden surname in ( )

of course with reference from the last.

In the R.I.B.A. Catalogue, i, 1937, the undersigned substituted [ ], and added—commonly-used style (where this was so) with husband's Christian name

Thus, for a certain lady who was Eugénie Sellers and married one Arthur Strong—STRONG, Eugénie [SELLERS], Mrs. Arthur Strong
Obviously, in a catalogue, all one person’s works must go together, but her style in each work can be indicated (by initials where possible) after the title, e.g. by ‘E. Sellers’, or ‘E. Strong’, or ‘Mrs. A. Strong’.

In indexing, the same principles apply: all forms should be given in the main heading; if the married surname is chosen, there should be a reference from the unmarried one, or conversely; and even if the book does not refer to her life both before and after marriage, it may be better, for thoroughness of information, to include both.

This, incidentally, raises a still wider question: indexing would probably improve if all indexers were familiar with cataloguing rules; although nearly half the officers and council of our Society, and probably a higher proportion of members, are librarians, the others would perhaps be well advised to have the code handy as a guide.

Finally: married women are difficult to deal with—one writes, of course, only ‘indexically’!—and one may be tempted to wish authors would not marry! (The writer is, of course, a—reluctant—bachelor.)

Yours sincerely,
H. V. MOLESWORTH ROBERTS.

Wellington, Surrey.

HOW NOT TO INDEX HYMNS

‘O Lord, what boots’ is quoted by Mr. F. N. Scaife in the Sunday Times, March 15, 1964, as a somewhat astonishing entry in the index to an old hymn book. The actual first lines of the hymn referred to are:

O Lord, what boots it to recall
The hours of anguish spent.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. J. Edwin Holmstrom, M.I.C.E., F.I.L., F.I.Inf.S., has had a varied career first as a civil engineer, then on development work in industry, and finally in the Natural Sciences department of Unesco in Paris. He is now a freelance translator, writer, editor and indexer of technical texts. He is the author of *How to take, keep and use notes, Facts, files, and action in business and public affairs*, etc.

Mr. L. C. Johnson was Archivist to the British Transport Commission from 1951 to 1961, and was previously Registrar of the L.M.S.R. Capital Register. He is Chairman of the Herts. C.C. Record Committee, a member of the Council of the British Records Association, and Vice-President of the Society of Archivists.

Mr. James C. Thornton, M.A., is Secretary of the U.K. and Commonwealth Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Was previously Deputy Secretary of the B.B.C. He has been intimately concerned with publishing, and has indexed the centenary edition of Hazlitt’s works *inter alia*. A Vice-President of the Society of Indexers.

Mr. John L. Thornton, F.L.A., is librarian of St. Bartholomew’s Hospital Medical College Library and the author of a number of books on librarianship which will be well known to many of our members. He has also written a biography—*John Abernethy*.

‘A fascinating book; but it should have had an index’—Maurice Burton, reviewing *Ibamba* (a book about lions and other wild animals) by Wynant Davis Hubbard (Victor Gollancz Ltd.) in the Daily Telegraph, January 24, 1964.