INDEXING ARCHIVES*

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Two years ago I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. L. C. Johnson give his paper† on the indexing of archives in a previous course. I had no idea then that within so short a time the honour would fall to me of standing in for so distinguished a member of the archive profession. Apart from the intrinsic interest of his paper then, I am glad to have heard it, as it enables me to follow the precedent set by Mr. Johnson of illustrating the general from the particular. In his case, the particular was the transport archives of the British Railways Board, in mine it is the collection of lists of non-governmental archives maintained by the Historical Manuscripts Commission under the title of the National Register of Archives. I must of course stress, however, that the opinions and judgments which I shall pass this morning are entirely personal. Every archive presents its own particular problems to the would-be lister and indexer, but certain principles or ways of approaching the problems are common to all, and it is on this premise—that there is this commonly applicable expertise which can assist with your varying and unrelated indexing problems in the field of archives—that I am proceeding today.

This is not the occasion to recount the history of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, but a few words by way of introduction will provide the context in which I work. The Commission was established nearly a century ago, in 1869, with the object of investigating and publishing reports on a wide range of archives. This gave rise to the well-known series of printed Reports (listed in H.M.S.O. Sectional List 17, which incidentally contains the text of the revised Warrant of the Commission of 1959). Some archives are still being calendared in the original H.M.C. series, but a new scheme of Joint Publications (co-operating primarily with local record societies) was inaugurated in 1959. With the indexing of these printed publications I am not here concerned, although I may mention as a point of information that the three-volume Index of Persons in Reports published between 1911 and 1957 appeared last year.

The National Register of Archives was founded as part of the Commission at the end of the last war, originally to record the ownership and location of private archives. In response to demand, its scope has grown, as has its staff, and as a permanent part of the Commission’s structure its future can only be one of expansion, as expanding higher education and further education, and a growth of interest in recording and preserving the past, place growing demands on its resources and services. The material which I and three other Assistant Registrars index at the N.R.A. is mainly in the form of typescript lists of non-governmental records, unpublished in the normal sense, copies of the lists being produced by the Commission’s Reproduction Section by dye-line, photo-litho or Xerox processes. The majority of the MSS. listed have been deposited in local and special record offices and university and other libraries, but some

*A lecture delivered during the Sixth Training Course on Indexing.
† See The Indexer, Vol. 4, pp. 105-8.
MSS. remain in private hands, understanding by this not only individuals and families, but also business firms, societies, religious, political, charitable and other special-purpose institutions. The National Register now has over 11,500 lists or reports, varying from a single folio, giving the bare facts of the existence of an archive, to a list of several hundred folios, including detailed summaries of individual documents, as well as full descriptions of groups. Apart from a few lists which have been printed and are then normally bought by the N.R.A., the bulk of the material is supplied on a voluntary basis, the Commission's Reproduction Section providing in return copies of the lists for the listing organisation and other interested parties. This means that the N.R.A. has no control, apart from that of advice or persuasion, over the form of the lists received for indexing, so in that respect my experience will differ from that of most of you, who will be producing yourselves, or have direct control over the production of, the lists you subsequently index.

In this sense, I am placed in a position of a researcher approaching the archives from outside, and can therefore readily appreciate the vital need to include as much information as possible in the archive list, for it is only on this basis that satisfactory indexing can be carried out. Under such detail I include covering dates, names of at least the principal correspondents and recipients, and an indication of main subjects. This information can be provided with little extra time or trouble in a summary list, and makes all the difference to intelligent indexing and therefore ultimately to the use of the records themselves. I make no apologies for dealing with listing in a paper on indexing, since it is only on the basis of adequate listing that satisfactory indexing can be carried out. I take it that in most, if not all, cases, those concerned with making information in archives available to researchers will produce lists on which their indexes will be based, and will not attempt to index directly from the documents. In physical terms, one requires to have separate lists of each archive or collection or main group within a single archive, such lists perhaps incorporating indexes of persons and places, like a book, and fixed consolidated indexes, containing entries for all the lists, and including subject entries.

I should, before going further, here make the distinction between archives and collections. Although it may be well-known, it is worth repeating, as it has some effect on listing and indexing. Giving the definition in the most elementary way, an archive may be described as the non-current working papers of an individual or organisation, which are in, and as far as possible should be kept in, the order in which they were maintained by their creator. A collection, on the other hand, is an artificial accumulation, for autograph purposes, or on a thematic basis, or perhaps on no logical basis at all. In the case of an archive proper, indexing will be essential to bring out detail which a mere list of file headings, for example, will not give; thus, the file may be entitled "Suppliers, Ancillary", but the future researcher, or indeed the working administrator, will need to know that these included Messrs. Brown Ltd., the Jones Corporation and Smith Holdings Inc. Short of splitting the file up physically, one cannot meet this kind of need other than by indexing. This example is absolutely elementary; the actual problems and potentialities of indexing are much greater in depth. To take an imaginary example from a possible archive list at the National Register, the family concerned, from the Home Counties, might have had interests in coal mining in the Midlands; have produced over a century or two some minor ecclesiastical worthies, with antiquarian, philanthropic or historical interests; provided an administrator in India, who returned to the family home with some documentation. They may in addition have served in local government in their own area; sold part of their estate for development; sent one son to the Crimea, another to the Boer War, lost a third in the Great War; and developed a market-garden in peacetime. Any one of these activities is likely to be of some interest to some enquirer, and only an index will make their record available.
In the case of a collection of manuscripts, some re-arranging may be possible and permissible, if the documents are not permanently fixed in a particular order, for example by virtue of being mounted in the excessively large albums favoured by the Victorian collectors and family paper-keepers. As far as collections of physically separate letters are concerned, they can be arranged alphabetically under the name of the correspondent, which provides what I call a ‘self-indexing’ list, although this is somewhat of a misnomer, since this arrangement takes no account of the, often very varied, subjects of the letters, and of cross-references of the type Poor Relief Society, see Jones, W. (Secretary), which will almost certainly be needed. In connection with autograph collections, a point well worth considering, and one that is very easily overlooked, is the possibility and necessity of indexing recipients as well as writers. Collectors may have regularly obtained items from friends or members of their family, or purchased coherent archive groups, which it will be worth identifying. We are well placed at the National Register for appreciating the value and importance of this kind of indexing, since a glance at our Personal Index will readily indicate the absence of information about the survival of the archives of many persons of interest to researchers; in these cases fragmentary survivals assume an added importance.

At the National Register we have the experience both of indexing archives at second-hand from the lists which we receive, and of indexing archives at first-hand, on the basis of lists which we have ourselves prepared, since some proportion of our time, which may vary between 40 and 80 per cent, but usually averages out at about 50 per cent, is spent in listing original manuscripts. Needless to say, in listing, we bear in mind the requirements of the indexer and of the researcher, for whom there will be no direct recourse to the documents, but initially only the information recorded in the list.

As an example of the self-indexing list already referred to, I may mention the Wolseley Papers at Hove Central Library, which a colleague and I listed some years ago. These are basically the remains of the Wolseley archive, the in-letters of Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, which at some time were weeded so that a few letters survive from each of a considerable number of prominent persons, in some cases selected for autograph rather than subject value. To these, some letters acquired by Wolseley or his daughter from friends and acquaintances were added, and the whole was arranged, by his daughter as far as we could ascertain, alphabetically by correspondent. Experience of using the resultant list has indicated that we were too sparing with cross-references, even though a considerable number were incorporated.

In contrast, the N.R.A. is just completing a list of the archives of New College, London, now part of the Divinity School of London University, originally an independent college for the training of men for the Congregational ministry. New College as it is today is the product of a long series of amalgamations of smaller institutions, some of which had geographically wide-ranging responsibilities for the care of churches, and for most of which some, if only fragmentary, archives survive. The archives of New College, seen as the successor of these earlier bodies, are thus large in bulk, and were listed in situ. Since many of them are in frequent use, it was deemed best to disturb the existing physical arrangement as little as possible, although this did not in many cases bear real administrative or archival significance. It is for this reason as much as any other that the index produced as part of the list is of great importance and utility, for under the headings of the individual institutional forebears of New College it has been possible to bring together references to their physically separate records. We realise that this is not as satisfactory as reuniting the scattered items themselves, which one would have hoped to do as the full-time archivist of such an institution, but it seems to us a satisfactory compromise. Institutional entries have an appearance similar to the following hypothetical example:

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No attempt is made in the index to the New College archives which forms part of the list to give subject references; these will be incorporated on the main Subject Index at the National Register, as the main personal and topographical references will similarly be incorporated on the cumulative Personal and Topographical Indexes of the N.R.A. It is my general practice to produce a single index as part of a list, incorporating personal names, institutional names, and place names in one sequence. This differs from, say, German practice with its separate Namen-, Ort-, and Sach-registers, but I prefer having only one alphabetical sequence to search. Which course one adopts may, however, depend on one’s particular needs, and I can see circumstances, such as when a long list requires separate index volumes, in which the index could well be divided into persons, places and subjects.

The indexes incorporated in lists and the static cumulative indexes at the National Register of Archives to some extent represent two different levels of indexing. In the index to an individual list it may be possible to include a reference to every correspondent and recipient, and to any significant mentions of persons. However, when one is faced with this bulk multiplied by 11,500 it becomes obvious that, unless some very expensive and sophisticated mechanical or electrical system is used, criteria must be established to keep the index within manageable bounds. For the Personal Index of the National Register the criteria of the Dictionary of national biography and comparable foreign publications are employed. The application of these criteria is not rigid, there being as it were a gradual ‘shading-out’, to include persons with entries in Who was who, and others known to be of national importance, even if in a limited and specialist field, but who for some reason have not been included in a major work of biographical reference. It is especially important to keep an open-ended index in respect of twentieth century characters, for the number of those of importance in, say, the technological and industrial fields who are awarded a D.N.B. entry is relatively small, compared with the coverage of minor pamphlet-writing eighteenth century clerics.

Each one of you will have your own decisions to make about the criteria to employ for index entry, not only for persons, but also for places and subjects. There are no generally applicable ‘rules’, only certain guide-lines, for the amount of detail you include (the fineness of your indexing mesh) depends on the nature and scope of the archives being indexed, their rate of accumulation, and, of course, on your resources of time and staff, which means ultimately, money. Generally, one may say (1) the more detail the better; (2) an item not indexed is as good as lost; (3) once done, however badly, indexing is unlikely to be repeated; (4) what seems unimportant to you, may be just the clue the researcher is looking for—that is, we must, as far as possible, be customer- or user-orientated. (Also a large accumulation of individually minor references may build up to a meaningful picture.) All indexing involves subjectivity, and we must be aware of the dangers of this, but they can to a great extent be mitigated by thoroughness and an awareness of the uses, likely and unlikely, which will be made of our finished product.

Indexers who will be working on archives covering only a limited sphere of human activity and knowledge, and can therefore perhaps regard themselves as masters of their subject. At the National Register (and this applies also to all non-specialised repositories), since our potential and actual scope is so large, we must resign ourselves to being jacks of all trades and masters of none, with perhaps special interests in a few. For us,
as for the specialist, I believe that a wide
and live interest in the whole range of
human affairs, past and present, is an essen-
tial prerequisite of the work.

This work as it is carried out at the
National Register of Archives I now want to
examine in closer detail, in order to draw
out some particular points about indexing
archives. There are four indexes in the
N.R.A.'s Search Room and one index publi-
cation, Sources of business history in the
National Register of Archives, of which more
later. The key to the whole system is the
Central Index, which records on rotating
visible index stands the short titles of the
lists of archives (which are normally the
names of the archives themselves) held by
the N.R.A., with the last-known location of
the manuscripts, and the filing number of
the list in the N.R.A.'s series. A typical
entry would read 'STOREY PAPERS 10463
Herts. Record Office '. This index is the only
one which is up to date, that is, one on
which an entry is made as soon as a list is
filed. Filing is in Kalamazoo binders, basically in numerical sequence, except for certain
categories, such as parish records, which we
find it most helpful to keep in county files,
arranged alphabetically by parish (a self-
indexing system as far as the parishes them-
selves are concerned). Cross-reference sheets
for these special series reports are included
in the numerical sequence, indicating the
subject location of the particular lists in
question. The Central Index also includes
references to alternative titles (for example,
an archive may be known by an estate as
well as, or instead of, a family name), and
references to sub-sections of lists, that is, to
sub-groups within a main archive series.
This latter type of reference is particularly
important in the case of solicitors' records,
which may include papers relating to the
administration of the affairs of businesses or
individuals for which no other records re-
main. New reports are accessioned at the
National Register at a rate of between 500
and 1,000 per annum (the variation being
due to changes in the staffing situation and
to differing deployment of staff), which
means that the addition of new entry strips
to the visible index stands is not proceeding
too fast for the system to be convenient—
one must always bear in mind the need to
assess the probable rate of new entries when
considering the choice of physical equipment
for indexes: what may be acceptable for an
index which is going to alter little from
month to month could prove cumbersome
and laborious to use if entries have to be
made or changed daily.

In due course, all reports are read by the
Assistant Registrars, who then make detailed
entries on the Personal, Subject and Topo-
graphical Indexes. I have already given
some idea of the scope of the Personal Index,
which I estimate to contain entries for some
6,000 persons, which are constantly being
added to. Entries range from the recording
of a single letter to a reference to the entire
archive of the person concerned, and over
the years a substantial corpus of entries for
a single major figure can be built up, relat-
ing to letters in the archives of many recipi-
ents. This kind of documentation is, of
course, particularly useful to those engaged
in editing the complete letters of A or B,
to biographers, and to those studying politi-
cal or diplomatic history who seek to supple-
ment the official record with the less formal
comments of those involved. We are in-
creasingly making a practice of incorporating
on the National Register's Personal Index
what we term 'No Report' entries, that is,
information obtained from sources other than
the lists collected in the National Register
series. The press is an obvious source of such
information, both newspapers and learned
publications, reporting on the opening or
founding of new collections, donations, be-
quests, and the accumulations of little-known
bodies of various kinds. The bibliographies
and footnotes of newly-published historical
and biographical works provide another
source, and, to an increasing extent, re-
searchers engage with us in a two-way
traffic of information. Similar entries are,
when applicable, made on the Subject Index,
but it is in the field of personal papers that
they are most numerous. During recent
years the SCONUL Survey of Scientific
Manuscripts conducted by A. E. Jeffreys, and
the Library Association's Survey of Manuscripts relating to Persons, have provided the Indexes of the National Register with valuable interim information, which in some cases may not be superseded by full-scale lists for many years.

Turning from the entries themselves to their storage, the Personal Index is arranged in Kardex drawers. The drawers each hold several dozen lift-up sheets, with transparent slips for names or other identification on the forward edge. Eight interlocking cards in rows of four can be fitted on to each sheet. In practice it is found that the inserting of new sheets (for newly indexed names) into the existing system and the interlocking of individual cards on them can demand more dexterity and patience than one would wish to be necessary in connection with a rapidly growing index.

For the Subject Index the physical arrangement is 5" x 3" paper slips filed in four-post loose-leaf binders of the pillar type, which can be split at any point in the sequence of entries for additions to be made, two prongs attached to the spine retaining the lower sheaf of entries, and two removable prongs picking up the upper sheaf. Headings and sub-headings are separated by handwritten linen tags, and the range of contents of each volume is indicated on the spine by Dymo labelling. Within each section or sub-section chronological filing order is the normal rule (except with classes such as Enclosure Awards and Tithe Papers, for which a geographical breakdown is deemed most useful). General cross-references of the kind Engineering see also MINERALS, MINING & METALLURGY; TRANSPORT are filed first, followed by undated entries, which are followed in turn by the main chronological sequence of entries, in which entries are filed under the lowest date of any given sequence, for example, n.d. C.13 1201 1250 1310 1350-1470 1363 C.15 1402.

So much for the physical arrangement of the Subject Index: we must now turn to a contentious question, that of classification, which is one I find many local archivists shy away from, placing misguided faith in ‘direct access’ specific indexing, with, it seems to me, too little realisation of the inherent usefulness and naturalness of classifying, with no thought of the problem posed by the relationship of, say, ‘Chair’, ‘Table’ and ‘Furniture’, and no thought of the problems raised by synonyms and by differing nomenclature from one period to another. In saying this, I do not wish to imply for one moment that the ‘home-made’, alphabetical-classified system used at the N.R.A. is a model of its kind. It has grown up over a decade or more, and bears too little relation to any pre-existing classification scheme. One can say, with some confidence, that it works, but the time and effort spent in developing it ex nihilo might, I believe, and I have not yet had the opportunity of testing this belief, have been more profitably spent adapting an already developed library classification system, such as Dewey or U.D.C.

Two compilations are available in the N.R.A. Search Room to users of the Subject Index. These are the N.R.A. Subject Index Scheme, which gives the complete classification system, and the Word List, from which the enquirer can see where the subject he has in mind (left-hand column in the List) is dealt with under the National Register’s classification system (right-hand column). In any subject index to archives one or both kinds of guide will be needed. For example, even a soi-disant direct-access index will involve frequent choice between synonyms and some reference to related items.

Although it may at first sight seem simpler and more direct to use a verbal classification system, this is not, to my mind, really so, since one must, in all except the most elementary systems, interpose a Guide and Word List between the enquiry and the system, and in that case a numerical code may well be simpler to note down than a long string of words.

As you will have gathered, at the N.R.A. we are still at the paper and typewriter stage of indexing, that is, it has not yet been deemed feasible or vitally necessary to employ mechanical methods. As I see the position at present, we would gain little from a com-
puter for the end process of indexing, the sorting and arrangement of the entries (unless one required printed index volumes and indulged in the expense of computer print-out). Unless the person producing the archive list incorporates in the list at the stage before reproduction the appropriate coding and instructions for the computer, we still have to employ two trained persons, lister and indexer, to produce a marked-up copy from which computer feed-in can be prepared.

Now such a scheme might well be feasible for those working on a single archive over which they have full control, but in the case of the National Register's indexes a nationally agreed subject classification scheme would have to be developed and implemented by at least the majority of archivists who at present co-operate in the provision of lists. Given the present doubts some archivists have about the value of any kind of subject indexing, it is difficult to be sanguine about the prospects of any nationally agreed scheme of classification suitable for computerisation. Over the past three years a North-Eastern Group of the Society of Archivists, in co-operation with the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Commission, has been considering the use of the computer in indexing archives. Meetings have been held at irregular intervals since 1964, but I think it would be fair to say that little progress has been made beyond square one, although much useful exploratory discussion has taken place, and the subject has at least been brought out into the light of day.

In the archive world one continually comes up against what I can only term the myth that, because archive material generally differs from books, their subject matter cannot be classified by the same system, that the subject matter of a document cannot be assigned to a subject class in the same way as a book's. This myth often co-exists with a confusion between subject content and physical form—deed, court roll, plan, letter, and so on. In practice, we find that for every one enquirer who requests a particular form of document recording a specified form of transaction, perhaps to illustrate the legal processes of conveyancing, or the business structure at a given time, there are literally hundreds who require subject references. If one is interested in, say, brickmaking, then account books, bills, correspondence, deeds, plans of brickfields and photographs of installations are all relevant and welcome. For an enquirer in a subject such as this, unless there are individual entrepreneurs or innovators in technique whose activities were important enough to merit them an entry in the D.N.B., the N.R.A.'s Personal Index is likely to be of little use. On the other hand, the researcher into some aspect of twentieth century politics or diplomacy will be most likely to find the information he is seeking on the Personal Index, or on the Central Index, in so far as references to lists of major archives are concerned.

The standards for inclusion of material on the Subject Index are difficult to define precisely; this does not, however, mean that they are wholly subjective. A large amount of personal judgment within general guiding lines is nonetheless involved. There are no limits based on the number of documents which qualify for an entry: if a single letter, plan or report seems to have potential significance, it is indexed, as would be several hundred items on the same topic. This means, of course, that to say we have 200 entries on iron and steel means very little, since each one could represent either a single document or an entire archive. One basic general rule for deciding whether or not to make an index entry is to try to put oneself in the place of the researcher: will the item in question be helpful to him? In fields in which I have some limited experience of research, namely industrial archaeology and business history, I have found this kind of yardstick both realistic and helpful. It does raise the problem of new lines of research and new kinds of question which will arise over the years, and will have to be answered from the index entries we have already made, but this particular problem seems to me simply to emphasise the need to adopt a comprehensive and proved classification system at the very beginning of one's subject index.
In the course of lists dealing with one or two main subjects (for instance the papers of John Pollitt, a motor engineer who was also a historian of the industry, which I have listed), a number of entries may well be made on the Subject Index which refer to the list as a whole, without specifying individual items, for example, under **TRANSPORT: LAND: ROAD: MOTOR VEHICLES and ENGINEERING**, and **HISTORY**, with individual entries being made for subjects represented by a more limited number of specific items, in this case, coachbuilding, aviation, cycle manufacture, doctors' enquiries about a vehicle advertised in 1899 as a 'Doctor's Car', Australian enquiries about a possible agency for this vehicle, and so on. Such references on our Subject Index would bear the numbers of specific items; but in the case of lists which contain much material on one topic scattered throughout the list, either as a result of the structure of the archive itself or of the way in which the list has been compiled, then I feel it is preferable to give, as in the case of the **Motor Vehicle** reference to the Pollitt list, a single reference to the list in its entirety, so that the researcher is obliged to peruse the whole of it himself, in which case he might identify important related material, which only he, as a specialist, would be in a position to do. If it is desired, a general entry under a particular subject can be supplemented by more specific ones under the same subject, for example, a list containing much information on building might receive an index entry under **BUILDING: GENERAL**, to the list as a whole, with more detailed specific references to **BUILDING: BRICKS and BUILDING: STONE-Masons**.

The Subject Index supplements the Personal Index in that certain occupations receive alphabetical sub-divisions for their practitioners, irrespective of their national standing. Thus we find **ARCHITECTURE: ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERING: ENGINEERS, LAW: SOLICITORS, MEDICINE: PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS**, and, a potentially enormous section, **RELIGION: CHRISTIANITY: PRE-REFORMATION CHURCH & CHURCH OF ENGLAND: CLERGY**. Together with sections on **FAMILY HISTORY (A-Z) and PERSONAL PAPERS** (partly on an alphabetical basis), these sub-sections enable the Register to extend its coverage of persons on a less rigid basis than the Personal Index alone provides, and make available material both for the subject specialist and for the genealogist.

As a general rule, in accordance with the Commission's terms of reference, subject entries in the main series are held to relate to England and Wales only. Scotland, Northern Ireland, Eire and all other territories are classified as foreign countries, which are then treated as subjects. Double entry of material is made, under the country concerned, subdivided into the main subject groupings employed throughout the Index, such as **AGRICULTURE, ESTATE PAPERS, RELIGION, SCIENCE, TRANSPORT**; and also under the relevant subject, assigned to a Foreign subsection, in which countries are arranged alphabetically.

I will take an example to illustrate this—it is simpler in aims and practice than I can make it sound by description. The manuscript in question is the diary of an Army officer serving in India in 1900, which includes numerous observations on railway journeys which he made in the U.K. and in India (he was definitely a railway enthusiast, even noting train running details on his honeymoon in India!). As he was serving in the Indian Army, the military reference would be to **INDIA: ARMY**, rather than to **ARMY**, which relates to the British Army only. The Indian railway interest would be catered for under **INDIA: TRANSPORT**, which is as yet, owing to the relatively few entries it contains, not further sub-divided; and under **TRANSPORT: LAND: RAIL: OPERATION: FOREIGN: INDIA**, the observations on train-running in the U.K. coming in the main (England & Wales) part of this subsection. The officer concerned was not of **D.N.B./WHO WAS WHO** status, so is not included on the Personal Index, but there is direct access to his name through the Central Index, since it forms the main part of the short title of the report.

So much for the details of the subject-indexing process. Whilst discussions on the
use of a computer in indexing have been proceeding we have continued to build up the N.R.A. Subject Index by 'manual' methods and have not, to date, made any radical changes in these methods. With practice one becomes more adept at devising general entries to cover major sections or subjects of lists, although this does not solve the intractable problem of the single document giving an isolated but important reference which conscience demands should be indexed. One way of cutting down the indexer's work would be to omit from the entry all description of the material referred to, other than the classification, the reference and perhaps the covering dates. This would save the indexer's time, but enormously add to the time spent by the searcher, who could have no idea of the likely value to him of the index entries without recourse in every case to the lists. In this connection it is well worth remembering that an index entry is made once, but referred to hundreds of times. For this reason we employ multiple entry for items falling in a number of subject fields, rather than one full entry with several cross-references.

The N.R.A. Subject Index is supplemented in the sphere of business records by an annual list of Sources of business history in the National Register of Archives, of which one issue and two Supplements have appeared to date. At present it takes the form of a single alphabetical listing of the names of business undertakings of which some information on surviving records is listed, but it is possible that the projected five-yearly accumulations will be arranged both by firms and under a broad subject classification, although in the latter case it should be remembered that eventually all the entries will be found classified on the Subject Index. I say eventually, because it is now possible in many instances to make entries for Sources of business history as a new report is filed, by scanning its contents list for example, thus making information on business history more readily available than the backlog of detailed indexing would otherwise allow. The original criterion for inclusion of an entry, that it should refer to the archive or a significant part of the archive of an undertaking, has now been expanded to take in smaller fragments and to include such material as sizable accumulations of correspondence from firm A to firm B which may have survived in B's archives, which will have extra significance if firm A's archives were destroyed by bombing or taken for salvage in the last war (as so many were).

Topographical indexing at the National Register has recently been revived on new lines, so that only the more recent reports can be said to be covered by the new system. The previous system had proved unsatisfactory on two counts—the entries did not indicate the type or volume of material referred to, and the equipment used—large rotary visible indexes with long thin strips for entries—was too cumbersome in practice for the frequent additions and consultations which had to be made. The new Topographical Index is therefore housed in the same type of binders as the Subject Index. Entries are arranged alphabetically by county, and again alphabetically within each county, by parish or larger local government unit. Particular attention is paid to the indexing of 'out county' material—Essex deeds in the papers of a Devon family for example—and to large accumulations, such as a solicitor's records relating to a single locality. Our concern for 'out county' material indicates a useful general 'rule'—the maintenance of a special awareness for the identification and indexing of material in unlikely contexts.

This topographical indexing at the National Register covers only England and Wales, other countries being dealt with, as indicated, in a broader fashion on the Subject Index. Naturally the amount of detail given and the fineness of breakdown of material for any one town is much less than one would expect to be the case in the local record office, county or city, covering that town, when a street-by-street breakdown would be both desirable and possible. Similar comparisons can be made for the other types of indexing carried out by the National
Register. If you are indexing the archives of one firm, one locality, one institution or even one subject field, I would expect your subject classification, and your criteria for person and institution indexing, to be much finer than we can hope to work to on a national level, indeed than perhaps we need to work to on this plane, although I believe that if we err at the National Register it should be on the side of too much rather than too little detail. To illustrate the difference in approach at the different levels, I will use again, if I may, the archives of New College as an example. As the secretary or historian of the College, I should need index entries referring not only to individual committees, but also to the different types of records—minutes, correspondence, reports created by those committees—whereas in my capacity as research assistant at the National Register I need to know basically what New College is, that is, its role and history as a Congregational theological college, and what in broad terms (minute books, correspondence, building papers, students' applications), and broad dates (mid-seventeenth century to twentieth, with a particular bias towards the first half of the nineteenth), has survived of its records. Detailed listing of the correspondence, to take one class of records, to give potential Personal Index entries is obviously desirable, but it is not essential for the basic purpose of making the archive available to those likely to need it as a primary source, for example, of Congregational history. Detailed indexing is, however, a sine qua non for making the archives available for secondary purposes, for such things as showing a biographer whether any letters from his subject have survived in the archive in question, or indicating to a historian of the building trade in Greater London the availability of relevant material from this source.

Different kinds of indexes can thus do different jobs, so that we should try to assess what kind of jobs we shall want our indexes to do, and therefore what kind of indexes we shall need, before we commit ourselves too far to any particular system or set of criteria. It is only on the basis of the indexes that the archive lists and therefore the archives themselves can be properly exploited. If our indexes work well, we shall ourselves benefit, for the indexed lists then become works of reference in their own right, and persons and subjects which prove elusive in the standard works of reference can be traced in earlier indexes which we have made ourselves; this is one of the most rewarding experiences in this exacting work.

In conclusion, as a kind of appendix, I set down ten points to bear in mind about any kind of archive-indexing:

1. Index in as much detail as resources (money, manpower, time) allow.
2. Establish criteria and institute classification schemes and guides at the beginning of the work.
3. Choose a system with some flexibility to allow for expansion or alteration.
4. Allow one slip or card for each entry.
5. Use multiple entry, except for 'built-in' cross-references such as Engineering see also Transport.
6. Bring out as many proper names as possible.
7. Make the reference system quite unambiguous: distinguish between references to the list itself, for example to a page number, and references to document numbers.
8. Start an index in good time: your archive may as yet be small and your memory excellent, but no one is infallible, and all archives tend to grow.
9. Remember that indexes can, and should, become works of reference in their own right.
10. Consider indexing not as doing the work of the researcher for him, but as merely making it possible for him to do his own work.

As we go to press we learn with deep and sincere regret of the death of Mr. E. Alan Baker, former Honorary Secretary of the Society.