Report on the Sixth Training Course in Indexing

This course, which was arranged by the Society in conjunction with the School of Librarianship at the North-Western Polytechnic, was held in London from 5th to 9th June, 1967.

Thirty-five full-time and thirty part-time students enrolled. Three more lectures were held than in recent courses; these were on medical indexing, legal indexing, and automatic and post-co-ordinate indexing. One additional session was devoted to practical indexing. Throughout the course more emphasis was placed on the practical aspects of indexing than previously.

Students were asked to complete questionnaires on the course; these should be very useful in guiding the Committee responsible for organising the next course.

CORRESPONDENCE

11th April, 1967.

The Editor, The Indexer.

Dear Editor,


‘[Sir Frederick] Pollock is reported by his son to have said: “. . . A man who thinks that the author of Bacon’s prose could have written Shakespeare’s prose deserves to be damned with the authors of books without indexes who lie ten miles beyond hell, where the devil himself cannot go for the stinging nettles.”’

A footnote gives the citation for this as: Sir John Pollock, Time’s Chariot (1950), p. 66.

Yours very truly,

A. B. Lyons.

10th June, 1967.

The Editor, The Indexer.

Dear Sir,

Dr. Johnson and Indexes

All Johnsonians will appreciate and be grateful for Dr. Robert Birley’s felicitous description of Dr. Johnson’s search for knowledge in his survey of Messrs. Carter and Muir’s important publication, Printing and the Mind of Man (Cassell) in the Times of 25th May. When he says, however, that this work has ‘something which must have been unknown to Dr. Johnson . . . a very full and competent index’ he is obviously unaware of A General Index to the first Twenty Volumes of the Gentleman’s Magazine, which was published in 1753. This publication, ‘printed by E. Cave’, was not only known to Johnson, he actually wrote the Preface to it.

Dr. Birley may be excused for not knowing about this index as it is very rare. It was unknown to Boswell, to Boswell’s editors from Malone to Birkbeck Hill, and to Johnson’s great bibliographer, W. P. Courtney. When I reprinted the Preface in 1942 in Essays and Studies by Members of...
the English Association (vol. xxviii), I knew of only two copies, my own and that in the British Museum; since then Dr. J. D. Fleman has located six others and Mr. H. W. Lisbert of Yale has acquired two more, one of which he generously gave to the Bodleian, of which he is an American Friend.

The Index itself consists of a series of indexes, of which those to the Essays, the Poetry, and the Books are the most important: they are certainly very full and reasonably competent: they may not perhaps reach the present day standards of the Society of Indexers. Mr. F. D. Foxon has included the 'Index of Books' in his recently published volume The Gentleman's Magazine, 1731-51 (Gregg Press Ltd., 1966).

Yours sincerely, L. F. Powell.

PERSONALIA

Three of the 12 pages of the July, 1967, issue of Catalogue and Index, the periodical of the Library Association Cataloguing and Indexing Group, are taken up with a racy account of 'The Indexers', by G. Norman Knight, a Vice-President and immediate past Chairman of the Society of Indexers.

Mr. Knight classifies indexers into three main groups, author-indexer; professional indexer, permanently employed; and freelance, and discusses briefly their working practices, training, and remuneration, basing his remarks on both personal experience and on the information garnered through the years by our Society.

The affinity between librarian and indexer is well noted, and, while the writer of this note has no intention of trying to rob either of these professions of its distinctive characteristics, he is very much of the opinion that both would add to their expertise by knowing more and more of the techniques of each other.

J.M.S.

STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS FOR PERIODICAL TITLES

Standard recommendations for the abbreviations of periodical titles have been published as BS 4148: 1967—Recommendations for the abbreviation of titles of periodicals (£2 plus 2s. postage to non-subscribers), after many years of both national and international work.

The purpose of abbreviating periodical titles is to save time and space in writing, typing or printing such titles for bibliographical references and title lists. It is important to do this with maximum consistency, so that it may be possible to identify a periodical readily from its abbreviated title, referring to some authoritative list of serial publications—such as the World List of Scientific Periodicals—when an exact reconstitution of the full title is needed.

The starting point of this British Standard was the International code for the abbreviation of titles of periodicals, which was published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in 1954. But whereas the Code simply prescribes certain basic rules, this British Standard attempts a comprehensive and systematic treatment of the subject, first setting out the purpose and the general principles of abbreviation of titles, next distinguishing clearly between abridgment of the title as a whole and abbreviation of individual words, then dealing more fully with special classes of words like 'generic' names and geographical names, and finally providing an alphabetical list of words with their abbreviations and a complementary list of abbreviations with their full forms. The recommended abbreviations deviate as little as possible from the usage of the World List and other major lists of serial publications.

It is hoped that adherence to the rules and principles laid down here, and attention to the numerous examples included, will lead to more uniform practice by authors and editors, and so make identification easier when only the abbreviated title of a periodical appears in bibliographical references and title lists.