CHAPTER HEADINGS

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The following words recently caught my eye: ' . . . chapter headings, which are seldom or never indexed . . . ' The statement as it stands is certainly too sweeping, and it may be nearer the truth to say ' not always indexed ', or ' sometimes not indexed ', but whether to include chapter headings or not is a matter worth consideration when planning an index.

Any decision must depend on both type of index and nature of chapter headings. It is obviously not necessary to index chapter headings where the chapters themselves mark no very definite divisions of the subject matter, as may happen in discursive memoirs or travel books. It may even be that the chapters are headed only by numbers. For such a book, a simple index of names of persons and places is all that is required.

Again, it would be misleading to index a chapter heading with page references covering the whole chapter when the heading has been used in a rather vague way, and actually refers to part only of the following pages. For example, in Green’s Short History of the English People, the chapter called The Great Charter has seven sections, of which one only deals with Magna Carta; the references to the Charter in the preceding and succeeding parts of the chapter are few and only incidental. The index directs the reader to this section in the entry ' Charter, the Great ' (although with three single page numbers rather than with a comprehensive 128-32). Another chapter, called Puritan England, opens with a section on the Puritans, pages 460-74; six of these pages are referred to under ‘ Puritans ’ in the index, along with three later pages in the chapter. From both of these chapters the indexer has justifiably selected the pages specifically devoted to the subject of the heading, instead of giving what would have been rather meaningless references to the whole chapters.

In the same book, however, the chapter called The Reformation, covering the reigns of the Tudors from 1540 onwards, receives no entry under ‘ Reformation ’ in the index, where two page numbers refer the reader to an account of Luther in an earlier chapter. Here the indexer should surely have considered the chapter heading, and inserted ‘ in England ’, with appropriate page numbers from the chapter, in his entry for ‘ Reformation ’, or alternatively should have given a cross-reference to ‘ Protestants ’, in which entry adequate references to the Reformation chapter are provided.

A type of chapter heading that cannot easily be indexed is the obliquely descriptive epithet, resembling the title of a novel, such as several of the chapter headings in A. J. P. Taylor’s English History 1914-1945—The Years of Gold, Unexpected Crisis, Half-Time, Appeasement, Finest Hour, etc.

Chapter headings in G. M. Trevelyan’s English Social History have been curiously treated by the indexer. Chapters I and II, headed Chaucer’s England I and Chaucer’s England II, are indexed as ‘ Chaucer’s England, Chapters I and II ’, with no page numbers. The headings of the next three chapters (England in the Age of Caxton, Tudor England, and England during the Anti-Clerical Revolution) are not indexed. Chapters VI and VII (Shakespeare’s England I and II, pages 139-72 and 173-205) are indexed as ‘ Shakespeare’s England, 60, 97-8, 134, 235, and Chapter VII ’, Chapter VI be-
ing ignored. The remaining chapter headings are not indexed, although they include Defoe's England, Dr. Johnson's England I, II and III, and Cobbett's England I and II. For consistency's sake, either these chapters should have had index entries to correspond with those for Chaucer's England and Shakespeare's England, or the two latter entries should have been omitted, which would undoubtedly have been the wiser course. Readers seeking matter relating to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Defoe, Johnson, and Cobbett will be satisfied with the index entries provided for these writers themselves, and are unlikely to want references to chapters about the periods in which they lived. Such chapter headings may be classed as too general in their scope to be indexed, and are often found.

But there remain books in which the headings of the chapters are clear indications of the whole of their contents, and are indexable in form and meaning; here we can rightly expect to find chapter headings included in the index. Take for example Anthony Sampson's Anatomy of Britain, in which the thirty-nine chapter headings are of the type Parliament, Press, Civil Service, Bankers, Trade Unions, and so on. All but two appear in the index, in the form 'Parliament, 51-65', usually with added page numbers from other parts of the book. The last chapter heading is a repetition of the name of the book, and is understandably omitted, and we must suppose that Chapter 7, with the heading Opposition, escaped indexing by accident.

Such an omission of a chapter heading is not uncommon, and—perhaps in consequence—the contents of the chapter may not be referred to in the corresponding index entry. An example of this may be taken from C. R. L. Fletcher's The Making of Modern Europe, Vol. II. Chapter VI is headed France 1000-1180, and covers pages 238-98. In the index entry for France, there is no page number from this chapter. The entry for Spain, on the other hand, leads off with: ' (see also Chapter VII)', and gives some page references to the chapter as well.

The insertion of chapter headings in indexes brings various problems. If a chapter is not long, and contains practically all that is said on the subject in the book, an entry might simply run:

France, 21, 52, 67-83, 110,
where 67-83 is easily seen to refer to the main account. It can be emphasized by heavy type, or by placing first, if such a convention has been established. But suppose that the book is a large history of Europe, with chapter 5 headed France, and many references to France scattered through other chapters. Then it will not suffice to produce an entry like the above in expanded form:

France, 150-200
army of, 45-7, 203
literature of, 209-14
relations of, with England, 29-30; with Spain, 314
e tc.,
in which the page numbers for the sub-headings are all from chapters other than chapter 5. The topics of the sub-headings are almost certainly mentioned also in chapter 5, so that the sub-headings are incomplete as they stand, and page numbers from within chapter 5 must be added to them. The entry form for France will then become something like this:

France, 150-200
army of, 45-7, 162, 172, 203
literature of, 183, 209-14
relations of, with England, 29-30, 150-2, 197; with Spain, 195-6, 314
e tc.

But in chapter 5 there are other comparable topics not found elsewhere in the book, and it becomes necessary to add more sub-headings:

France
navy of, 166, 167
relations of, with Italy, 189; with the Papacy, 194
e tc.

As this process continues, and the contents of chapter 5 are dissected into their component topics, and divided into sub-headings, the entry 'France, 150-200' covering
the whole chapter, comes to seem superfluous. Some indexers delete it, or never put it in, and this may be defended on the grounds that the chapter heading is in the table of contents at the beginning of the book. However, I think that the overall entry still has value for the index user, in that it prevents the trees of the sub-headings from hiding the forest of the chapter.

Furthermore, a large index of this kind is liable to contain many duplicate sub-headings under different entries, such for example as military references, collected both under 'France, army of', and also in the entry 'armies, of France ... of Spain ... etc.' In order to keep the index to a permissible length, it may be necessary to cancel the longer duplicate sub-headings, by means of cross-references to the other entries under which they may be found. It usually seems best to do the cancelling in the major entries, hoping thus to simplify the reader's search. Thus under France, in the imaginary index we are dealing with, a final sub-heading might be added:

*see also under armies, literature, navies*

and these sub-headings would then be cancelled from the France entry. The further this process is carried, the less will chapter 5 be represented in the sub-headings, and the more advisable it will be to keep 'France, 150-200' at the beginning of the index entry.

I hope that these preliminary reflections may encourage other indexers to give their views on the problem of indexing chapter headings.

AN UNUSUAL METHOD OF MAKING A BOOK INDEX

Sir,

I have been fascinated by the correspondence raised by Mr. Stallybrass; and since my own methods differ from any of those described, and use far less paper, I venture to send you these notes, perhaps for your museum.

I am not primarily a literary indexer, but have spent much time, over many years, as an adjunct to my demography, in making alphabetical lists of personal names, and tribal names, in non-European languages.

My 'card' for compiling an index measures about four inches by one-sixth of an inch, and these weird but economical dimensions will need explaining to the faithful (among whom I am myself numbered) users of the standard 5 x 3 cards.

Having just finished a literary index for a book* that the OUP are bringing out, I will outline my method in attacking such a problem.

I read right through the book in galleys, to see what it talks of, and underline in pencil words or phrases that need indexing, and so am ready for instant action as soon as the page-proofs arrive.

Taking a foolscap sheet and two carbons into my typewriter, which is an elegant Olympia electric, I set margins for two columns, and write my index straight-out, in page-order, as specimen 'A' now sent.

I then take a rather large plastic bowl, one of those kitchen bowls with a snap-on cover.