CORRESPONDENCE

Indexing Technical Matter

Sir,

May I be allowed to comment on three points raised in the very interesting Autumn 1968 issue of The Indexer?

1. I congratulate Neil R. Fisk on his excellent apologia for letter-by-letter arrangement—something I have long advocated, though I fear less satisfactorily than Mr. Fisk. Perhaps the clearest justification for this method of arrangement is found in the draft revision of B.S. 1749, which unfortunately reached me some time after the closing date for comments. After advocating word-by-word arrangement, the draft standard goes on to explain how to deal with hyphens, apostrophes and abbreviations: there would be no problem with these if letter-by-letter arrangement were used!

2. On page 51, J.M.S. asks whether we should index a name as it is familiarly known or always give it in full. Surely Rule 40 of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 1967 provides the answer to this one.*

3. On page 77, Alison M. Hodgson rebukes Mr. Negus on the subject of time allowed for indexing. As the indexer who responded to Mr. Negus's excellent specification, I should like to reply, particularly in view of Miss Hodgson's suggestion that I may not have produced a good index. While I obviously agree that publishers should allow a reasonable amount of time for the compilation of an index, I think some indexers make too much of this. Surely it is a matter for the individual indexer? When Mr. Negus wrote to me I happened to be reasonably free of other commitments and three weeks provided sufficient time for me to produce, with help from my wife, what I hope was a satisfactory index: certainly I have had no complaints from either Heinemann or the editors. However, even had I been allowed less time—and this has happened—I would have tried, in the interests of good indexing, to accept the commission while making it clear that more time should be allowed in the future—and charging a higher fee! Some of us are quite accustomed to working under pressure every day!

K. G. B. BAKEWELL.

*[Rule 40: 'Enter a person under the name by which he is commonly identified, whether it is his real name, or an assumed name, nickname, title of nobility, or other appellation.'—Editor.]*

J. M. SHAFTESLEY writes:

Mr. Norman Knight's delightful story of the progress of the 'Deluge' to 'Zoology', arising from the dilatoriness of a contributor to an encyclopaedia, related at the lecture by Mrs. M. D. Law which was published in the last issue of The Indexer, may have been ben trovato, but it is paralleled uncannily in an incident related by Mr. A. P. Ryan in The Times on October 5th, 1968.

Mr. Ryan wrote a long, interesting article to celebrate the 200th anniversary this winter of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and referred to the perpetual problem of the lateness of contributors with their copy. As an example, he mentioned Professor (later Lord) Rayleigh, the famous scientist. 'His article on “Light” was not ready in time for its volume,' said the writer, 'so it was held up to come under “Optics”; again it was not finished and the editor put it forward as “Undulating theory of light”; that too failed, but Rayleigh made it in a photo-finish with “Wave theory of light”.'

The several references to encyclopaedias in the last issue of The Indexer recall to me a note I have of a scathing comment by an American reviewer in 1942 on a fellow-reviewer's notice about one of these multi-volume works.

Reviewer No. 2 had written, on the first volume of a new encyclopedia: 'Since the present volume covers only the first five letters of the . . . alphabet, we can expect several additional volumes in the months to come.' To which Reviewer No. 1, with his
tongue in his cheek, responded: "Considerable perspicacity . . . characterized the reviewer . . . That makes five down and twenty-one to go!"

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

'We can recommend the expenditure of two guineas on The sea, ships and sailors, a collection of poems, songs and shanties edited by William Cole (Hart-Davis, 42s.).

'Robin Jacques' decorative illustrations make this an enjoyable anthology to wander through, even without taking the contents into consideration.

'One criticism: the indexing is inadequate. There is an index of authors and an index of titles, but no index of first lines—the most vital one of all.'

This review, from Lloyd's List and Shipping Gazette, could well have been titled 'A case of spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar!'

Weidenfeld & Nicolson received a reproof from Isobel Murray in the Scotsman on the 12th October, 1968. In reviewing the American historian Professor Gertrude Himmelfarb's book Victorian minds she said, 'Professor Himmelfarb has been ill-served by her publishers—footnote numbers constantly go haywire, and the index contains no more than half of the names mentioned in footnotes: as there is no bibliography, this is not merely cumbersome, but a serious omission.'

A review in the British Medical Journal by T. Moore draws attention to the lack of an index in a book on a subject never treated before as a separate sub-unit of the science of nutrition. The book, Natural antinutritive substances in food stuffs and forages by Iancu Gontzea and Paraschiva Sutzescu (S. Karger, Basle and New York), was published first as a monograph in Hungary two years ago. It is well documented, over 800 references being cited, with inclusion of full titles of the original papers. With these titles, and a table of contents in the front, the reader can usually refer to desired topics without undue delay. Nevertheless the absence of either a subject or author index is a serious omission, which should be put right if further editions are contemplated.


'The book is handsomely produced, and one is glad to see the extensive notes placed where they should be, at the foot of the page. But some wrong references have gone unchecked, and the index is an unskilled job: it lumps together the two Anaximanders, the two Aristippi, the two Hecataei, whom Edelstein was careful to distinguish. There is no index of passages discussed.'

The book went to the printer after the death of the author.

'A Richard Aldington (1892-1962) is a writer who has been undeservedly neglected. This "book of reminiscence" [Life for Life's Sake: Cassell & Co.] was first published in New York in 1941 and has only just reached us (still with no index) six years after his death.'—Cyril Connolly in the Sunday Times, November 17, 1968.

The italics in the quoted part are ours. We had always imagined that Messrs. Cassell were among the more index-conscious publishing houses.

The Times Saturday Review of November 23, 1968, commenting on Nobody ever tells you these things by Helen McCully (Angus