AN INDEX TO SLA NEWS, 1950-1967

BRENDA WHITE

The Scottish Library Association was formed in 1908, and became affiliated to the Library Association in 1931. It is in most respects similar to the regional Branches of the Library Association, being governed as they are by the rules and regulations of the parent body; but one of the conditions of affiliation was that the SLA should retain its national identity, and in practice it is virtually autonomous where matters of Scottish interest are concerned. It has its own President, Vice-Presidents, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, and its own Council, representing not only public but also university, national and special libraries. The SLA Publications Committee, an autonomous committee of the Council, oversees and has direct responsibility for the Association's publishing programme, including the official journal, SLA News.

The first issue of the Scottish Library Association News Sheet, then called, appeared in October 1950, and in its original format was a four-page quarto production containing, in the main, news items and reports. Its purpose, then as now, was to report library activities throughout Scotland and to inform members of developments in Scottish librarianship. In 1955 the size of the News Sheet was increased to eight pages, and in 1956 a complete re-styling took place: the format was reduced to the more convenient demy octavo, the title was changed to SLA News, and frequency of publication increased to six issues a year. SLA News has continued in the same basic format, with gradual increase in the number of pages to an average of 36 in 1967 and with more regular inclusion of articles in addition to news items, reports of meetings and conferences, and correspondence.

Over the years, the view has been expressed several times that an index would be a valuable adjunct to SLA News; but the size of the undertaking, which of course increased as the years passed, proved too strong a deterrent. The incentive to compile a cumulative index was the proposed re-styling, from the beginning of 1968, of SLA News into an A5 format, and, more importantly, the introduction of continuous pagination over a two-year period from the same date. The last issue of 1967, no. 82, therefore provided a convenient terminal point for an index. A Council note in the May/June 1967 issue of SLA News records that 'a Publications Committee recommendation that work should commence on an index to SLA News was approved. A single index volume covering the period 1950-1967 inclusive is to be compiled by Mrs. B. White'.

As the 'official news sheet (more recently journal) of the Scottish Library Association', SLA News is the only current and continuing record of Scottish libraries and librarianship. The issues covered by the Index, nos. 1 to 82, represent eighteen years of it, 1950 to 1967. The Index therefore forms a key to a substantial part of the history of the development of libraries in Scotland. But it would be idealistic to suggest that the record is a complete one. There have inevitably been inconsistencies and omissions in the reportage of the journal: limitations of space and the policy of successive editors are only two of the factors which have dictated the incompleteness of the record. It follows that the Index is also an incomplete record, for it
can only refer to what has been reported. Nevertheless, its value as a historical record and as source material for research is undeniable, quite apart from its practical use as a locational tool.

Within the limits just stated, the aim was historical completeness, and this required that the indexing should be as thorough as possible, commensurate with keeping the cost of the finished product within the budget allocated to it. In the very early stages, it became obvious that to index every proper name and every line of text would be to produce a volume the size of which would certainly not be economically viable. Therefore, a criterion of exclusion had to be defined, and applied throughout. The criterion adopted is this: if an entry in the text of SLA News gives no information other than that which would be contained anyway in the index entry, then it is not indexed. To put it another way: it is desirable, on being referred from an entry in the Index to a place in the text, to find at the place some additional information which made the exercise worthwhile. This criterion has had to be applied mainly in the early issues, where restrictions of space cut detail down to a minimum; over the years, as the text became fuller, the amount of material excluded under this criterion became considerably less. The main categories omitted from the Index because of its application are the lists of examination successes and the outline programmes of forthcoming meetings which featured regularly in the issues of the early 1950s.

The Index itself contains approximately 3,000 entries. Apart from sizeable sections relating to the Scottish Library Association, its Council, and its various Branches, the majority of the entries relate either to persons or to libraries. This is, of course, dictated by the nature of the text, which is concerned largely with libraries and librarians. The entries are fairly full in themselves, and there are two reasons for this. Firstly, the fact that nothing in an index is so deterrent or so unhelpful as a long list of references against one entry without any indication of the aspects to which they refer. Secondly, the fact that, since the extant complete sets of SLA News are comparatively few, the Index will be used in some cases without the text to which it refers and therefore should contain as much detail as possible so that it can make some independent sense. The aim has therefore been, so far as was practical, to identify as specifically as possible each fact or event to which an entry relates in the entry itself.

e.g. Lees, Janet B.

Address

The high proportion of persons and libraries referred to in the Index has allowed a widespread use of 'form' sub-headings at such entries, which makes consultation of the Index much easier as the arrangement is both obvious and consistent. For example, under personal names the form sub-headings Addresses, Appointments, Articles, Letters, are used; under names of libraries the sub-headings Branches, Catalogues and booklists, Exhibitions, School libraries, are used. In all cases, under each sub-heading a specific entry is given for each specific example of that form.

The form which proper names should take presented some problems, which were eventually disposed of by making a firm rule that consistency in the form of heading should take precedence over strict adherence to local or personal usage. Thus, the first forename of each personal name is given in full (where it could be ascertained—considerable time and guile were expended on this, for it was felt that in view of the historical value of the Index it should be so far as possible authoritative in the form of names, and in the end less than a dozen names had to be left blank) and subsequent forenames represented only by their initials, even where personal practice is to use a second or other forename. This practice may well result in a few cases of initial non-recognition!
Corporate names were more complex, simply because there are more types and variations. Basically, it was decided to follow the 1967 Anglo-American cataloguing rules and to enter all corporate bodies direct under their own names with reference from the place name: thus, the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh is entered under Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, with a reference from Edinburgh: Royal Botanic Garden. By the same principle, library systems are entered direct under their own names, for example, Signet Library, Edinburgh; Stirling University Library; Edinburgh Public Library. Having decided on this rule, the form of most corporate entries was clear enough; but a further complication was introduced by the variety of names adopted by public library systems. Municipal libraries can be singular or plural, and can be Burgh, City, Public, Carnegie, or whatever, according to local custom: in the Index, local usage is sacrificed for the consistent form 'Public Library'. County libraries present a more subtle problem: whether the county library is of Aberdeen or of Aberdeenshire. Local usage tends to Aberdeen, Lanark, and so on, but this is not necessarily accurate (English usage tends to keep the -shire, but this is not necessarily relevant). The issue is further complicated by joint county library systems, such as Perth and Kinross. In this Index, the -shire is retained where it forms an integral part of the county's name (e.g. Aberdeenshire) but it is omitted where the county's name normally stands alone (e.g. Midlothian); an exception to the former statement is made in the cases of the joint services, where Perthshire and Kinross-shire is too cumbersome even for accuracy. The reasoning behind this practice was purely etymological, and has nothing to do with the principles of good indexing.

One other point arose in connection with corporate name entries. It was inevitable that a few organisations should have changed their name or their structure during the eighteen-year period covered. The most notable example, in this context, was the Scottish School of Librarianship: until 1964, this was a part of the Scottish College of Commerce in Glasgow, although it was known as the Scottish School of Librarianship; from 1964, with the merging of the College into the University of Strathclyde, the School became the University's Department of Librarianship. In this case, and in the few other similar cases, entries have been made under both headings, and the appropriate references listed under one or the other; there are full cross-references in both directions,

e.g. Scottish School of Librarianship

*From June 1964 see Strathclyde University: Department of Librarianship.*

In an index to the official journal of the Scottish Library Association, a large volume of entries relating to that body is to be expected. This large block has been broken down by the simple expedient of entering independently any branch or function of the Association which has a fairly well-defined independent life (in all cases with reference from the parent body). Thus, under the heading Scottish Library Association appear only those items, such as Annual General Meetings, Conferences, Office-bearers, which pertain solely to the Association. There is a separate independent heading, Scottish Library Association Council, under which appear those items, such as Annual Reports, Councillors elected, Sub-committees, which pertain solely to the Council. The four regional Branches are entered under their own names, as is Scottish Library Association News and the Association's Summer School of Librarianship, both of which have a strong independent life.

It is unfortunate that in so many indexes considerations other than those of good indexing affect decisions which have to be taken regarding aspects of indexing practice. Such considerations, in this case limitations of space, certainly influenced the decision regarding the extent to which double entries could be used, and inevitably precluded their widespread use which might have been de-
sirable in this index. It is always necessary to ask, is this double entry strictly necessary? Would not a reference suffice?. In this particular case, it seemed quite likely that a user might wish to see a conspectus of, for example, Scottish university libraries, or Scottish public branch libraries. However, the extra pages involved in consistent double entry under the name of the library and under its type as a ‘form’ heading would have increased the size of the Index by almost 10 per cent and thus was impracticable. As it is, only autonomous library systems are given independent entry: branch libraries, school libraries, and other designated libraries which form part of a larger library system, are entered under the name of the larger system with reference from the name of the individual library. It has to be admitted that the use of double entries in the index is not consistent. Where they seemed desirable, they have been used if too many extra entries have not been involved; and if too many have been, references have been used instead, e.g. Branch libraries

See Branch libraries under individual libraries

Abbreviations have been used throughout the Index, and a list of 52 is given in the preliminary pages to the Index. Their use, however, has been restricted to sub-headings and references. In all cases, the form of the main heading is given in full.

Arrangement of the main headings is alphabetical, word by word. Under each heading, form sub-headings (if there are any) and non-form sub-headings are arranged in one alphabetical sequence, with the single exception that under personal names references to retirement, death, or obituary are placed in that order at the end of the alphabetical sequence. Under form sub-headings, arrangement may be either alphabetical or chronological, whichever is appropriate: for example, under the sub-heading Branch libraries (of a library system) arrangement is alphabetical by the names of the branches, but under the sub-heading Addresses (by a person) the arrangement is chronological by the date of the meeting at which the address was delivered.

The Index was compiled on 5” x 3” cards, using a tray with two parallel shallow drawers, each one holding about 1,500 cards. In most cases, only one entry was made on each card, but on each card the main heading was repeated and also any sub-heading. Care had to be taken in the correct amount of indentation of each line. When the Index was complete on cards, it was checked right through once for abbreviations and punctuation and a second time for the wording of the entries themselves, spelling mistakes, and inconsistencies. A third complete check was done for the arrangement. Finally, spot checks were done on random sections for references, double entries, and so on.

The cards were passed to a commercial typing agency for typing onto sheets. An IBM electric typewriter was used to produce justified double-column pages, which, when reduced and printed by photolithography, would produce an area of type identical to the type area of the later issues of *SLA News* itself. The finished volume is of demy octavo format and contains 74 pages of double-column index, preceded by two pages of introductory notes and a two-page list of abbreviations.

It is intended that future indexing of *SLA News* shall be done in two-yearly cumulations to correspond with the continuous pagination over a two-year period introduced with the first issue of 1968. The index will be issued with the last number of each two-yearly volume.

Copies of the *Index to SLA News*, nos. 1 to 82, 1950 to 1967 (price 50s.) may be obtained from James A. Tait, Esq., M.A., M.Sc., F.L.A., Hon. Publications Officer, Scottish Library Association, Department of Librarianship, University of Strathclyde, Livingstone Tower, Richmond Street, Glasgow C.1.