INDEXING OF PERIODICALS

A survey conducted by students of the Loughborough School of Librarianship under the supervision of Mr. D. P. Woodworth. Written reply by Mr. F. Clements, a student from the Plymouth Public Libraries.

These are the results of a survey of periodical indexes undertaken by second-year students studying the Special Libraries and Information Bureaux section of the Library Association syllabus. The survey was an attempt to assess the importance attached to the index by the publishers of the periodicals and to see if a general pattern emerged. The main section of the survey was concerned with the periodicals' adherence or otherwise, to British Standards 3700 and 2509, which make recommendations for the Preparation of indexes and for Periodicals of reference value respectively; further questions were compiled by Mr. Woodworth, the lecturer in charge of the enquiry. All fields were covered, and the periodicals, numbering about 100, ranged from those published commercially to those issued by societies and by firms. All titles were taken from British Technology Index.

In all cases, results are based on two sources: an examination of the index itself and direct contact with the publishers to obtain information not contained in the index. The results were compiled according to a set pattern for each periodical and then collected to form the basis of this article. A further examination, Part 2 of this survey, gives the same information, but only for the particular subject fields examined, in order to see if any pattern emerges in industrial fields.

In the survey that follows, added comments have been given if necessary, to explain the figures or to comment upon any features that they show. In no case has the title of any periodical been given, but this information is available in its original form.

PART 1

Frequency of issue of index

Annually—71 per cent; Six-Monthly—12½ per cent; Quarterly—3¼ per cent; Three-yearly—1 per cent; None—11 per cent; No reply—1 per cent.

The main figure which stands out is the 11 per cent of the periodicals which do not issue any index. In the field of management there is the most noticeable lack of indexes, but part of this percentage does come from the technical field.

In one particular case in the field of management, the editor stated that managers are rarely interested in what has been written a year or more ago. It is felt that this is a generalization not based on fact, and showing an ignorance of the new techniques being taught at the business schools and of the value of an index in everyday work.

By whom the index is compiled

Editorial Department—54 per cent; Freelance Indexer—14 per cent; Librarian/Information Dept.—7 per cent; Subject Specialists—3 per cent; Publishers—1.5 per cent; Honorary Effort—1.5 per cent; No reply or information not applicable—9 per cent.

A disturbing feature shown by these figures is the lack of appreciation as to the value of an index and the specialised techniques needed in its compilation. In some cases author indexes only, or author and title indexes only, are provided as if the subject material of the periodical was of no importance.

Cost of Compilation

In this section it was impossible to group all the indexes into figures as, in the majority

1 Sometimes this was a subject specialist not necessarily with indexing qualifications or one who may or may not be qualified in a subject, or as an indexer.
of cases, separate information, or sometimes no information, was provided. In only 13 cases were precise figures given and these ranged from £11 to the surprising sum of £3,600, but even here, figures are not conclusive as no information was available as to how these figures were arrived at, and whether or not they included items such as proof-reading, compilation, production costs, or only printing costs.

There was a general reluctance to reveal costs, and 27 journals refused any information whatsoever, either by not answering the question or by giving a ‘nil’ reply; 30 journals stated that the cost of the index was borne as part of the general departmental costs; two stated that the costs equated to five and ten days’ work each year, one as a result of voluntary effort; the remainder ignored this question completely.

Once again, replies indicated that many journals do not rate an index as of great importance judging by:
(a) the amount spent on it;
(b) the class of person involved in the indexing;
(c) the methods of compilation, e.g., one index was compiled in odd moments when other work permitted, and one by more than one person, thus causing lack of uniformity;
(d) the sheer ignorance of the potential of an index.

Charges for Indexes

Of replies received, in only six cases was a charge made; these ranged from 6d. to 2/6d., but in one case 7/6d. was charged. It would seem that these charges bear little resemblance to the economic realities, and their only value can be as a possible deterrent to the frivolous request. Generally, subscription rates covered the provision of this service.

Comparison with BS 2509

This section dealt with clauses 17 and 18 of the Standard and was the result of the students examining the indexes and testing their effectiveness.

Clause 17a—Is an effective index provided?
An analysis of the indexes of those journals which issued them showed surprising variation in pattern. This was no doubt due to the fact that each editor pursued his own policy and ideas as to how an index should be compiled and what kind of index was most suitable. The lack of uniformity in this respect will undoubtedly affect search techniques wherever and however practised.

Eighteen variations of indexes were noted; the most popular variety, almost 50 per cent, was the straight alphabetical index containing, in one sequence, at least author and subject entries. One conclusion drawn from this examination was the lack of appreciation, in all types, of the value of cross-references or duplicated entries. In some cases only one keyword was allowed as an entry, and in certain cases title entries were omitted. But the general omission was the lack of indexing of illustrative matter which, in certain circumstances, can be most valuable. Some journals blamed excessive costs and the time factor, but this appears to be a minor consideration.

The method of compilation of some indexes led to their effectiveness being reduced because of lack of uniformity of entries in the same index in some cases, but more frequently in successive indexes.

Clause 17b—Is the index cumulated?
Despite the proven fact that large sums of money and valuable time are spent on merely searching for information, the value of cumulative indexes for retrospective searching does not appear to be appreciated. In only seven cases were cumulative indexes provided; one irregularly, three every ten years, two every five years and one every fifty years.

Production costs would increase if a cumulative index were provided, but their value to the retrospective searcher would make his task easier and produce a saving in time and in money.

Clause 18a—How is the index issued? This clause deals with the publication of the in-
dex, when it should appear, how its appearance should be indicated, and the information it should give other than that in the index proper.

In many cases the recommendation of the standard is not adhered to, as in only twenty-three cases does the index appear as an integral part of the last issue of a volume and in a further fifteen cases, twelve indexes appear as a 'separate' with the last issue. In thirty cases the index appears at some later date, either as a 'separate' or bound within an issue. It is difficult to understand why an index for the previous year should be bound in with an issue for a following year, apart from cheapness of production, as the journal containing the index would have to be mutilated in order to obtain the index for binding purposes. In only four cases was the index supplied 'on request'.

Clause 18b—Notification. In general it appears that it is left to the individual to discover if and when an index is available. In twenty-two out of the thirty-four cases where the index is published after the end of a volume no notice is given as to its existence.

It would be of great assistance if a note of the index could be included in the contents page of all journals where the index appears as an integral part, and a notice as to its availability in other cases.

Some publishers bemoan the fact that few indexes are circulated or that they are not needed. It might be pertinent to ask whether or not ignorance as to their availability is the root cause.

Clause 18c—Bibliographical details. In nearly all cases bibliographical details are adequately given on the index, but it is by no means as common to find full details on the contents page.

Comparison with BS 3700

Clause 4.1.1.A.—Coverage. This clause recommends the indexing of all matter appearing in print, including such items as introductory matter, book reviews, appendices, letters, advertisements, illustrations, notes, etc. In fact, from the sample, only 28 per cent of indexes cover all matter and the rest cover the material to one degree or another. Thus a great deal of valuable information is, to all intents and purposes, lost. Staff availability, time and money may be reasons for this attitude but it is also possible that a failure to understand, or recognize, the value of such matter is also a case in question.

However, 65 per cent of the journals give limited scope to additional matter such as book reviews or letters, and only 7 per cent of the indexes cover nothing except textual matter. From this section of the survey it is very clear that illustrations, more than anything else, as a class, are left unindexed. This is a woeful lack of appreciation of the value of such matter, and should be remedied. In only rare instances is a statement given at the beginning of the index indicating what classes of material are left unindexed.

Clause 4.2.1.A.—Specificity. This clause recommends that all headings and sub-headings should be based on the text indexed and that other terms should be consistent. It was found that 50 per cent of indexes complied with this, and the remaining 50 per cent differed so much in character that it was found impossible to categorize them. Lack of specificity—some entries were complete titles, differences in usage of singular and plural (e.g. Machine Tool and Machine Tools in the same index), and lack of uniformity, were some of the criticisms made.

Clause 4.2.1.B.—Cross-references. Provision of adequate cross-reference is advised for synonyms or variants although in some cases they may not be necessary, especially in specialist journals, to distinguish them from the scientific or technical and popular journals. Cross-references from abbreviations are necessary, but are infrequently given.

An examination of the findings as a whole portrays a dismal picture, because 72 per
cent of the indexes seem to make no provision for cross-references of any type. This is a disappointing figure, as among the 72 per cent appear a number of highly specialized journals where this provision could enhance the value of the index and of the journal.

Clause 4.2.1.C.—Standardization of words in the singular and plural. The aim of this clause is to achieve consistency of entry of words, appearing in both singular and plural in the text, to be indexed in one form or the other consistently, but 24 per cent were inconsistent, leading, at times, to double sequences of exceptional length.

Clause 4.2.2.A.—Compound headings. The recommendation here is that all compound headings should be entered under the heading most likely to be used. In practice, however, individual indexes appear to have their own methods of inversion, and in some cases similar inversions have not been employed consistently in successive indexes. Only 38 per cent of the journals consistently followed the recommendation, 8 per cent made no inversions at all, 8 per cent are entered under multiple forms, and 46 per cent only under one form with no reference from the form not used.

Clause 4.2.2.B.—Excessive or inconsistent inversions. In 80 per cent of cases examined excessive inversion was not experienced, 10 per cent practised excessive and inconsistent inversion, and the final 10 per cent none at all.

Clause 4.2.3.A.—Proper names. This clause recommends that proper names should always take the form commonly used in the text, and this was generally complied with.

Clause 4.2.3.B.—Compound or multiple proper names (hyphenated or not). The recommendation here is that entry should be under the first surname with any necessary cross-references, and generally this was followed in so far as entry is concerned. However, there is a noticeable lack of cross-references from the unused portion to the indexed form. Some indexes show a tendency to use the form adopted by the author or according to country of origin.

Clause 4.4.1. and 2.—‘See also’ references. The use of references may make all the difference between a good and a bad index, and an otherwise good index can be spoilt by the lack of references. In this section some 85 per cent can be considered deficient in this connection and in the remaining 15 per cent there was mainly a tendency to use one or the other type of reference. It was an exception for both types to be in evidence in one index.

General Comments

Layout, indentation, typography (use of contrasting typefaces, etc.) and spacing can lead to the efficient use of an index. Very few of those scanned passed scrutiny on these points and a considerable number seem to have been put together in a haphazard manner as an apology for an indexing service. It is patently obvious that a great deal of attention can, and should, be paid to the physical presentation of an index in addition to the actual contents. In this respect it is only too evident that indexing is very often a spare-time job for one or more people, often unqualified, and that it is not treated seriously enough. Possibly this is because there is a serious lack of appreciation of the type of literature by publishers and is a lamentable state of affairs.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this survey is that there is a lack of understanding as to the value of an indexing service both as a bibliographical and information tool. Inconsistencies have been revealed throughout, and not only between different journals, but within the same or successive indexes to a particular journal—for this last there can surely be no defence. The ‘information explosion’ has caused difficulties in the dissemination of information and a large portion of the blame must be attached to the publishers of the journals. If they were to appreciate the value of detailed and cumulative indexing it would make literature searching easier; it would also make the literature easier to control and document.
PART 2

SURVEY OF INDEXES IN SELECTED TYPES OF PERIODICAL EDUCATIONAL

Number of Periodicals 13

Frequency
Weekly 2
Monthly 6
Every two months 1
Quarterly 2
Every four months 2

1. Ascertain
(a) which periodicals issue indexes, and if not why?
   All 13 periodicals issue indexes
   Annual 10
   Twice a year 2
   Quarterly 1
(b) How is index compiled? (i.e. by whom?)
   Honorary effort 1
   Subject specialist 1
   Freelance indexers 3
   Editorial staff 6
   (includes two compiled by secretaries in the office)
   No information 2
(c) Cost of compilation
   Only three periodicals disclosed costs and these were given as £25, £175 and £285. The others fell into the following categories:
   Part of editorial budget 4
   No information available 6
(d) Is a charge made for the index?
   Only two periodicals charge for the index, one charging 6d. and the other 1/6d. The others are issued free of charge and are probably considered as part of the annual subscription.

2. Compare how indexes meet requirements of standards
   As a general observation six periodicals compare favourably in most respects, six compare unfavourably and one index was not available for examination.

BS 2509

Clause 17
(a) Form of index
   One alphabetical sequence 6
   Author and subject indexes 1
   Author, subject, and book review indexes 2
   Alphabetical sequence, book review, letter indexes 1
   Author only 1
   Classified by UDC 1
   Not examined 1
(b) Cumulated?
   No cumulations 10
   Cumulated 3
   (one updated by annual supplements and reprinted every 10 years, one 5-year and one 50-year cumulation in progress, neither issued so far)

Clause 18
(a) How issued?
   Last issue with a separate title page 3
   Last issue with no separate title page 2
   Separately with a title page 5
   Separately with no title page 2
   Bound in last issue 1
(b) Notification
   Only applicable to an index issued with last issue of volume as an insert, or when available only on application.
   Notification on contents page or elsewhere in issues in which it appears 3
   No notification 2
   Issued separately automatically 7
   (three of these still announce index is ready)
   Not examined 1

3. Physical form—how issued
   Separately 7
   As an insert 5
   Bound in last volume 1

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4. Is it cumulated?
   See section on BS 2509, Clause 17(b)

5. Reference to BS 3700, how does index adhere to
   (a) Clause 4.1.1.C—Coverage
       Partial coverage 8
       (usual omissions are illustrations, bibliographies, notes)
       Complete coverage 2
       Poor coverage 2
       (one is an author index only)
       Not examined 1

   (b) Clause 4.2.1.
       (1) Headings
           Based on text 8
           Thematic headings 1
           Titles reproduced verbatim 1
           No information 3
           (include one author-only index, one index not examined)

       (2) Cross-references from synonyms
           Used 5
           Little used 1
           None used 5
           No information 2
           (one author index, one not examined)

   (c) Clause 4.2.2.
       (1) Inversion of compound headings
           Inversion from specific terms 7
           Specific terms indexed only 1
           Some inversions 1
           No inversions 2
           No information 2
           (one author index, one not examined)

       (2) Is excessive use made of inversions?
           Not excessive but sufficient 8
           Not excessive but insufficient 2
           No information 2
           (one author index, one not examined)

   (d) Clause 4.2.3.
       Indexing of proper names
       Under commonest form 11
       As in text but no cross-references for compound surnames 1
       No information 1
       (Not examined)

   (e) Clause 4.4.1.
       Use of cross-references
       Cross-references used 6
       No cross-references 5
       No information 2
       (one author index, one not examined)

   (f) Clause 4.4.2.
       Use of 'see also' references
       'See also' references used 4
       'See also' references not used 7
       No information 2
       (one author index, one not available)

General Comment
Only three indexes can be classed as good all-round indexes which assist in exploiting the periodical; a further three are adequate but could be improved. Unfortunately six indexes left a lot to be desired, with omissions, bad indexing, bad presentation or mistakes. One index was not examined.

TRADE
1. Ascertain
   (a) When is index issued?
       Of 21 examined, 17 have indexes.
   (b) How is index compiled?
       59% were compiled by editorial staff.
       6% were compiled by librarian.
       6% were compiled by freelance indexer.
       6% were compiled by publisher.
       In 23% of cases it is not known who were responsible.
   (c) Cost of compilation.
       Of the 17 periodicals which issue an index only four gave a definite answer to this question. Costs were £30, £73, £150 and five working days for those given.
(d) Is a charge made for the index?
Except for one which gave no reply, all made no charge at all for supplying the index.

BS 2509
Clause 17
(a) Form of index.
Each journal had a slightly different pattern. Most had the same form of author and subject indexes. The number of alphabetical sequences varied from one to four, most having about two (author and some sort of subject) index.

(b) Is it cumulated?
100% negative reply.

Clause 18
(a) How issued?
Only in 17½% of cases is it bound into the December issue, and in 12% it is loose in this issue. In 47% it is issued as a loose sheet in an issue other than the last of the volume, and in 17½% it is bound into another issue. No reply was received from 6%.

(b) It was not clear from most of the replies whether a notification of the availability of an index was given or not.

BS 3700
Clause 4.1.1.A.—Coverage
Only 6% covered all matter in print. 53% covered most, and 35% covered just the main articles. In only 6% of cases was any indication of material given clearly stated. In 29% no indication was given and in 59% it was not known.

Clause 4.2.1.B.
(1) Headings
All headings and sub-headings should be related to text and terms standardised.
29% complied
59% were not specific
12% did not reply

(2) Cross-references
These were used in 23% of cases; none used in 70%; no reply from one periodical (6%).

(3) Standardization of words and phrases
47% were consistent
41% were not
12% no reply

Of these:
59% indexed under one form only
29% indexed under multiple forms
12% no reply

and:
59% used some method of inversion
35% did not
6% no reply

Clause 4.2.3.A.
77% complied with standard
17% were not consistent
6% not known

Clause 4.2.3.B.
88% complied with the standard on this point
12% stated that this was not applicable to their index

Clause 4.4.1.
12% see references
17% 'see also'
12% both
53% none
6% not known

General Comment
As a general standard only 6% (one out of 17) of the indexes was classed as good. 35% were bad while 59% were of a low average standard and could be greatly improved.

RESEARCH PERIODICALS
Total of 17 periodicals surveyed.

1. Ascertain
(a) How issued?
Quarterly 2
Annually 11
Every 18 months 1
Every two years 1
Varied 1
No reply 1
Compiled by
Outside indexer 1
Information department staff 2
Editorial staff 9
Journal staff 1
No answer 4

Cost of compilation
£94—including overall printing, paper and corrections 1
£40—£50 1
£41 10s. 1
Not estimated/not available 14

Charge made
No charge (two included in subscription) 12
‘A charge if made’ 1
Charge for extra copies at 7/10d. each 1

2. BS 2509
Clause 17
(a) Form of index
Effective index 10
Very poor 4
Author index only 1
Not provided 1
No reply 1

(b) Cumulated?
Separate cumulations 4
Cumulation of classified list of main papers—bound in issue 1
No cumulations 11
No answer 1

Clause 18
(b) Notification
Issued separately 4
Issued in last issue of volume 9
Table of contents issued separately, but classified list with last issue 1
Title page and contents for volume in last issue, but index issued separately 1
In last issue, but no title page issued for volume as a whole 1
No answer 1

Alternative, i.e. combining Clauses 18a and b
Title page and index in last issue 9
Not provided in last issue 2
No answer 1
Issued separately 3
Table of contents issued separately, classified list with last issue 1
Index with last part of volume, but no title page to volume 1

(c) Bibliographical details
Title, year and volume number indicated on contents and index.
Complied 7
Did not comply 7
Title, year and volume number given on contents, volume number only for index 1

No answers 2

3. How issued physically?
Index issued separately 10
Index bound with last issue 4
Irregular 1
No answer 2

4. Cumulated?
Not cumulated 12
Irregular cumulations (vol. 41-50 (1926-35) and vol. 51-70 (1936-55)) 1
Every ten years 1
Every five years 1
Annual cumulation of quarterly volume indexes 1
No answer 1
BS 3700
(a) Clause 4.1.1.A.
Coverage apparently overall 11
Index article titles only 2
Main article only 1
Index authors only 1
No subject index 1
No reply 1
(b) Clause 4.2.1.A.
Complied 9
Unspecific headings 3
Inconsistent 2
No answer 3
(c) Clause 4.2.1.B.
No cross-references for synonyms 8
Cross-references 2
No cross-references 4
Inconsistent (references for a few synonyms) 1
No replies 2
(d) Clause 4.2.1.C.
Comply 10
Inconsistent (depending on title) 2
Not applicable 1
No answer 4
(e) Clause 4.2.2.A.
Comply 7
Not complying 9
(5 depended on title)
(4 indexed under first element, but with no references)
No answer 1
(f) Clause 4.2.2.B.
Comply (consistent inversion) 6
Not complying 9
(2 inconsistent inversion)
(1 excessive inversion)
(2 keyword entries and cross-references)
(4 depend on titles)
Not applicable (author index only) 1
No answer 1
(g) Clause 4.2.3.A.
Comply 13
Inconsistent 1
Unassessed (no examples in index available) 1
No answer 2
(h) Clause 4.2.3.B.
Comply completely 4
Enter under first element, but no cross-references 6
Enter under first element, but no indication of cross-references 1
Enter under first element, only for hyphenated names—no references 1
Inconsistent 1
Not indicated 1
No answers 3
(i) Clause 4.4.1.
Not used 9
Very few 1
‘See’ references used 4
Author only 1
Not applicable 1
No answer 1
(j) Clause 4.4.2.
‘See also’ references not used 11
Using ‘see also’ references 4
(1 extensive use)
(1 occasional use)
(2 used)
Not applicable 1
No answer 1
Typography
Good 1
Good use of bold type for headings 2
Satisfactory 7
Small typeface but legible 2
Small typeface 3
No comment 2
TECHNICAL
Total of 29 technical periodicals surveyed.
1. Ascertain
(a) Frequency of Index
Annual 22
Two annually 3
Four annually 1
No index 2
No reply 1
(b) Compiler of index
Editorial staff 17
Freelance indexers 7
Qualified subject specialist 1
No information 1

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(c) **Cost of Index**

£40, £26, £12 12s., £11, ‘10 Mondays’

Not given 17
Included in department costs 2
‘No cost’ for compilation 1

(d) **Charge for index**

£1, 5/- (or 2/6d. per quarter, if ordered separately), 9d.
None 22
None to subscribers 1

2. **BS 2509**

**Clause 17**

(a) **Form of index**

One sequence 8
Author and subject 7
Subject/title and author 2
Author and subject and abstract
author/subject 1
Author and subject and editorial 1
Author and subject and advertisement 1
Author and subject and book reviews 1
Author/title and subject 1
Author/title and advertisements 1
Four or five sequences 2
No details 1

(b) **Cumulated?**

Ten-year 1
‘1856-1959’ 1

**Clause 18**

(a) **How issued?**

Issued late, separately (one to be applied for) 13
Bound in last issue of year 1
Separate, with last issue 6

(b) **Notification**

Notified 5
Not notified 7
No details 1

(c) **Bibliographic details**

Details on index 17
Details on contents page 4
Year and volume only 1
No details 3
No answer 1

3. **BS 3700**

(a) **Clause 4.1.1.A.**

Comply with standard (plus five without illustrations indexed) 13
Main articles only 3
Articles and book reviews 2
Do not comply 4

(b) **Clause 4.2.1.A.**

Words as in the text 24
Words usually as in text 1
Words not as in text 1
Consistent in usage 17

(c) **Clause 4.2.1.B.—Synonyms—use of references**

Use references consistently 4
Use few references 5
Use no references 13

(d) **Clause 4.2.1.C.—Consistency of headings**

Consistent, using singular or plural 11
Inconsistent, using singular and plural forms (though these may both be necessary) 13

(e) **Clause 4.2.2.A.—Inversion**

Consistent inversion (plus two KWIC-type rotation) 7
Inconsistent or incomplete 14
No inversion 2
Excessive inversion 2
Inconsequent inversion 1

(f) **Clause 4.2.3.A.—Proper names**

As in the text 23
Not as in the text 3
Compound names
Most under first part of name 21
References 4

(g) **Clause 4.4.1.—‘See’ references**

Many ‘see’ references 3
Some ‘see’ references 6
No ‘see’ references 13
No details 4

(h) **Clause 4.4.2.—‘See also’ references**

Many ‘see also’ references 2
Some ‘see also’ references 2
No ‘see also’ references 22