Reference Books for American Indexers

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This list of reference books, based on the needs of American indexers, consists of general works in single volumes. In the main, they are within the means of the average book indexer, or of relatively easy access in public libraries. All are useful and most are absolutely essential. The various subject fields are not covered, as indexers in specialties are presumed to have knowledge of, and access to, reference tools in such areas.

Prices and editions noted here have been checked in Books in Print, but if use is made of the list in the future as a buying guide, the possibility of later titles and increased prices must be considered.

It is hoped that readers will suggest additional works which they have found practical in general indexing. The value of reference books to the indexer improves with their use. By checking two or three works for the same item of information the real virtues of the various arrangements can be appreciated. If there are discrepancies, it is useful, educational, and often highly entertaining to follow them up.

The indexes to reference books are valuable guides for index design, forms of entry and the like. Such general indexes as Reader's Guide, Public Affairs Information Service, etc., are often used for authority information, forms of names, terminology, etc., for current topics.

BOOKS ABOUT REFERENCE BOOKS

Mr. Harling's article 'Indexers' Reference Books', The Indexer, Vol. 7, 1971, pp. 151-5, very wisely places the works on how and where to find information at the head of the list. The most comprehensive guides can easily be consulted in public libraries. Their arrangements into subject fields and their own indexes are keys to specialized works not included in this general list.

The indexer doing a book on, for example, hydraulic engineering can locate a dictionary of the subject in Winchell.


Other, similar guides are listed in the Subject Guide to Books in Print under Reference—Bibliography.

**DICTIONARIES**

An unabridged dictionary, though expensive, is the reference book most needed by the indexer. It can be used even for scientific terms except in very special fields, and thus can fill the function of several works. Encyclopedic information is given about the word or thing itself, often with illustrations, and quotations. The special lists and addenda are also useful.

*Webster’s Third new international dictionary of the English language, unabridged.* Springfield, Mass., Merriam, 1961. $54.50. Scientific and technical terms are well represented. No proper names are listed. Since the second edition is not likely to be reprinted, this third edition is being widely used. It is based on the concept of acceptability even of uninformed usage rather than the conventional and traditional approach. Many libraries have wisely retained the second edition.

*Random House dictionary of the English language.* N. Y. Random [1966]. $30.00. Personal and place names are in the main alphabetical sequence of this dictionary. Never, though obviously not so large as the standard unabridged dictionaries, it is not only generally useful but much more moderate in price.

*Shorter Oxford English dictionary on historical principles.* 3rd ed. Oxford, Clarendon Pr., 1962. 2 v. $30. This work may have importance for some indexers, especially for identifying the historical significance of a word.

*Webster’s Seventh new collegiate dictionary.* Springfield, Mass., Merriam, 1963. $6.95. This desk dictionary is based on *Webster’s Third new international dictionary.* It is useful for “standard language”, but includes little in the way of slang or colloquialisms. There is a list of synonyms, a list of biographical names, and a gazetteer.

Another well-liked work is the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English language.* Houghton, 1969. $8.95.

**DICTIONARIES—SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS**

*Roget, Peter Mark. The original Roget’s Thesaurus of English words and phrases.* N. Y. St. Martin, 1965. $6.95. This Roget has a dictionary arrangement.

*Roget’s International Thesaurus.* N. Y., Crowell, 1962. $5.95. This one is arranged in categories with an alphabetical index, thus making it easier to use.

*Webster’s synonyms, antonyms, homonyms.* East Weymouth, Mass., Dennison Pr., n.d. pap. $1.00.

**DICTIONARIES—BILINGUAL**

*Cassell’s new compact French dictionary.* N. Y. Funk & Wagnalls, 1968. $4.50.

*Cassell’s new compact German dictionary.* N. Y. Funk & Wagnalls, 1965. $3.95.

Other foreign language dictionaries, both monolingual and bilingual, can easily be located in Winchell. A Latin-English, English-Latin work (Cassel’s or Harpers’) is frequently useful for indexing historical or literary works.

**ENCYCLOPEDIAS**

Multi-volume sets in general use are *Encyclopedia Americana* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

*Columbia encyclopedia* in one volume. 3rd ed., N. Y. Columbia Univ. Pr., 1963. $49.50. The Columbia is strong in place names and biography. Cross-references are in special type, and should be useful to and used by the careful indexer.

**ATLASES AND GAZETTEERS**

*Goode’s world atlas.* 13th ed., Chicago, Rand McNally, 1970. $10.95. Goode’s is an excellent small, student atlas, with a good index. Maps are of several types—physical, political, product, etc.
**National Geographic atlas of the world.**
3rd rev. ed., Wash. D.C., National Geographic Society, 1970. $18.75. This is a recently published atlas, well-balanced in coverage, with more than 125,000 place names in the index.

**Columbia Lippincott gazetteer of the world.**
N.Y. Columbia Univ. Pr., 1952, with suppl., 1961. $75.00. Published with the co-operation of the American Geographical Society, this gazetteer is much in use in publishing houses as a basic authority for place names.

**Shepherd's historical atlas.** 9th ed. N.Y. Barnes & Noble, 1964. $17.50. The index of this most useful historical atlas is in three parts, the two later ones for the new section (1930-64) and for additional changes.

**Webster's Geographical dictionary.** [Rev. ed.] Springfield, Mass., Merriam, 1962. $9.50. The front matter of this gazetteer gives a list of geographical terms with their equivalents in various foreign languages.

Gazetteers are more useful to the indexer than atlases, but because of their cost, authors and editors should certainly be encouraged to use them more assiduously and frequently than they do now, even to the extent of placing alternate forms of names in the text, or as notes, so that the indexer may make needed cross-references.

**INDEXING**

*The Indexer*, Vol. 1, 1958-
Members of the Society of Indexers and of the American Society of Indexers receiving *The Indexer* consider it the journal of a truly professional group, representative of all types of indexing.


Wheeler, Martha Thorne. *Indexing: principles, rules and examples*. 5th ed. Albany, Univ. of the State of New York, 1957. (Univ. of the State of New York. Bulletin no. 1445) pap. $1.50. This excellent manual is a must for beginning indexers and is useful to the experienced for reference to every phase of indexing from the reading to the published work. The examples are dated, the concepts not at all.

**INDEXING—STANDARDS**


**INDEXING—AIDS, COPY PREPARATION, ETC.**


Sears list of subject headings. 9th ed., N.Y. Wilson, 1965. $10.00. The section of Sears for the beginner in subject heading work is a must for experienced indexers as well. Large or cumulative indexes especially need the type of authority file or thesaurus of headings and See and See also references which Sears provides for the general library.
University of Chicago Press. *A manual of style.* For authors, editors and copywriters. 12th ed., 1969. $10.00. The chapter on indexing is also available as a separate publication as under.


Von Osterman, Georg F. *Manual of foreign languages for the use of librarians, bibliographers, research workers, editors, translators, and printers.* 4th ed. rev. and enl. N.Y. Central Book Co., 1952. This work may be out of print, but it is to be found in good libraries. It is useful for indexers having to deal with unusual alphabets and with transliteration.


INDEXING—SERVICES


Freelancer's Newsletter. Jarrow Press, Inc. 1556 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10028. This service is issued twice monthly at $12 per year and lists names of freelancers (at $2.00 per entry) as well as publishers seeking indexers, copy editors, proof readers, manuscript markets, etc.

Literary Marketplace. N.Y. Bowker, 1940—Annual. $9.95. This business directory of American book publishing lists only indexers of experience, those who have done more than two or three indexes, or who have worked for more than one publisher.

ALMANACS, YEARBOOKS, COMPENDIUMS

*Statesman’s year-book.* N.Y. Macmillan, St. Martin’s. Annual. $13.50. This compendium has information on the United Nations and other international organizations as well as on all countries of the world. It pays to browse through, as there is more for the indexer here than is immediately apparent.

*World almanac, and book of facts.* N.Y. World-Telegram. Doubleday. Annual. $3.95. All kinds of miscellaneous information on the world and the American scene are to be found here. Remember that the index is in the front of the book.


ART AND MUSIC

Gardner, Helen. *Art through the ages.* 5th ed. rev. Harcourt, 1959. $12.50. This work has a valuable glossary of art terms and a comprehensive index.


Thompson, Oscar. *International cyclopedia of music and musicians.* 9th ed. N.Y. Dodd, 1964. $35.00.

The self-indexing and the indexes of these books are used in some house styles as authority information on names and terms.

BIOGRAPHY

Biographical dictionaries are of three main types: (1) general, (2) national or regional, (3) professional or occupational. Each may be subdivided into (1) general or retrospective, and (2) contemporary. The indexer makes much use of the general dictionaries.
Chambers's biographical dictionary. New ed. N.Y. St. Martin's, 1962. $17.50. The subject index, keyed to the biographies, is a unique and interesting feature.

Webster's biographical dictionary. Springfield, Mass., Merriam, 1969. $9.50. This dictionary of names of noteworthy persons is used as an authority by many publishers. With the six-page Addendum its coverage includes fairly recent personalities.

For national or regional biography the indexer will consult such works as, Who's who in China, Who's who in the Midwest. For professional or occupational biography there are such titles as, Who's who in art, Who's who in engineering.

HISTORY

Carruth, Gorton and associates. The encyclopedia of American facts and dates. 5th ed. N.Y. Crowell, 1971. $7.95. There is a detailed index to this work. The text presents facts in columnar form for the various fields of politics, books, painting, science, sports, etc.

Langer, William L. An encyclopedia of world history. Rev. ed. Boston, Houghton, 1952, with corrections, 1968. $17.50. There is a comprehensive index in two sections to the chronologically arranged text: (1) to 1945, (2) 1946-52.


LITERATURE

Benét, William Rose. The reader's encyclopedia. 2nd ed. N.Y. Crowell, 1965. $8.95. This most valuable work helps identify writers, books, allusions, expressions, literary movements, plots, characters, etc., for works of art and music as well as for general reading.


Bartlett, John. Familiar quotations. 14th ed. rev. and enl. Boston, Little [1968]. $15.00. This collection of passages, phrases, and proverbs has had additional subject indexing. Older editions should be retained as some quotations have been dropped in the 14th.


SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Only general works are listed here, and their acquisition is optional. Works of which the indexer has special knowledge are excluded. The 15 volume McGraw-Hill encyclopedia of science and technology can be consulted in most libraries.

Chambers's technical dictionary. 3rd ed. rev. with suppl. N.Y. Macmillan, 1958. This work is frequently reprinted at varying prices.


A list such as this reflects the needs of several indexers who have been involved in general book indexing. It can give indications of types of reference works available. Other indexers are urged to suggest favourite titles. The greatest need is to be thoroughly familiar with even a very few reference works, exploiting to the full the special values of arrangement and content each offers.
Indexers' Reference Books: Supplementary Titles

BRUCE S. C. HARLING

These few titles comprise additions to the list of reference works that was published in the last issue of The Indexer. We are grateful to the three contributors; I have taken the liberty of presenting the information mainly in the form that it was offered with additional details traceable in the current edition of British Books in Print—itself a very useful reference source.

Mrs. A. M. Quinn submits the following:


The Western European powers, 1500-1700, by C. H. Carter.

Great Britain since 1914, by C. L. Mowat.

A dictionary of modern history, by A. W. Palmer (Penguin, 1970, £0.35).


Handbook of British chronology (Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks).

Le petit Larousse (Libraire Larousse, Paris).

Atlas of the world, by The Times (Times Newspapers, 1967, 559pp., £15.75).

Most of the national biographies will probably already have been recommended but perhaps not the Dictionary of Canadian biography (University of Toronto Press); volumes I and II are now in print.

'The London Library Subject Index has also been found useful.'

Mr. G. W. Bonsall of the Hong Kong University Press sent the following notes:

. . . perhaps one should add Eric Partridge's Usage and abusage in the Penguin Reference Books Series (Penguin, 1970, £0.45) and the reduced-size two-volume OED although it is not easy on the eyes and rather like early microfilm (Oxford English dictionary. The compact edition of the OED; complete text reproduced micrographically. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, 2 volumes, 4116pp., £28. In slip case with microprint reader.) I like to have Webster's Third available also, even if one does not follow it. Fowler's Modern English usage is also available at 10/- (£0.50) in a ELBS edition.

'There are of course the British and North American texts of the Anglo-American cataloguing rules, but it would seem to be even more important to indicate that there have been amendments. And finally, perhaps B.S. 3700: 1964 (Recommendations for the preparation of indexes) should be included as well as the American standard (U.S.A.S. Z39 4-1968 Basic criteria for indexes).'

The Hon. Editor submits:


Who was who, 1961-1970 (Black, 1972, 1283pp., £6.50). The latest of the ten-yearly volumes in this series.