The question to be decided before writing this article was whether to deal with the subject in a general or a specific way, and whether to try to encompass children’s books in general, or only those published in Australia. My solution has been to try to do a little of both. I have strong views on indexes in general, some of which have been aired here. Since, however, I live and work in Australia, my remarks on specific book indexes refer mainly to children’s books published in Australia during the last two or three years. In my selection of these books I relied mainly on those reviewed in Reading Time, a journal published by the Children’s Book Council of New South Wales, along with others which came to my notice. I collected as many of the recently-published books as could be easily borrowed or bought, and worked from them. The books published in England, whose indexes have been examined in some detail, are a random selection of recent publications borrowed from the shelves of the school library on the last day of term; I tried only to have a representative of several well-known series by well-known publishers. The absence of American books reflects only their absence from the library shelves. It should also be pointed out that when writing of children I am thinking of those between the ages of say nine and fourteen.

It has long been my opinion that many people think that expert knowledge of a subject is not necessary when writing a book for children. The evidence for this belief lies in the number of series in which books on widely differing subjects are written by the same author. Surely the writer of a children’s book needs a detailed knowledge of his subject in order that he may know when and how to simplify his subject matter without resultant confusion and inaccuracy. Far too many children’s books are merely watered-down versions of adult books, written by people whose knowledge of the subject is completely superficial. The same is equally true for indexes. It is vital that the index for a children’s book be accurate, comprehensive and easy to follow. In order to achieve this the indexer needs some knowledge of the subject matter, and of the basic rules of indexing, and should keep in mind ‘the user over his shoulder’. Children are often slower readers than adults; some are very slow by the average literate adult’s standard, but at school they are expected, more and more, to use reference books, and to find their own information. For some children, even finding a specific entry in an alphabetical index is a labour, and they are easily frustrated if the index is at all difficult. Indexes would be easier for children to use if a space was left between each letter of the
alphabet, and if the print were always of a reasonable size, not significantly smaller than that used in the text, as is sometimes the case.

I remember in particular a twelve-year-old boy who had been told to look up Henry Lawson, and then told by me that he must look this up in *The Australian encyclopaedia* under L. He stood in front of the complete set, and it was after some time with much prompting from me, that he picked out the volume entitled Hospitals to Marsh. He is not a naturally timid boy, and I am quite sure was not rendered incapable by fright. Although I knew that many children had difficulty with alphabetizing, this was the first time it was brought home to me how the omission of some letters from the spine of encyclopaedias could impede the user.

This is not, of course, the indexer's responsibility, but it does indicate the difficulty of his task. I have watched children laboriously reading through the index to an encyclopaedia to find the entry they want, and then be baffled by a multiplicity of volume and page references. *The Oxford junior encyclopaedia*, presumably to avoid confusion, gives the volume reference in roman figures, and the page reference in arabic numerals, but the volumes themselves are numbered on the spine in arabic numerals. This causes that very confusion the indexer hoped to avoid.

While on the subject of encyclopaedias and their indexes, perhaps a mention should be made of *Newnes pictorial knowledge*. The index to this was incomplete, with many entries missing. A member of the Society was commissioned to do the additional indexing necessary for a new edition some years ago, and when he pointed out the deficiencies of the index to the publishers, was told that his job was purely to provide the references for new material. My method of finding material not listed in this index was to skim rapidly over pages in what I thought were the relevant sections. This is something beyond the capabilities of the children for whom the encyclopaedia is intended.

Many children's books are published without an index. The most recently published volume in the Australian Way Series, *Athletics the Australian way*, edited by Ron Clarke (Lansdowne, 1971), received a glowing review in *Reading time*, and will certainly be very popular with the eleven to fourteen age group. It is a well-produced book, and contains many photographs of well-known athletes in action, but there is no index, and the table of contents only identifies the event dealt with in a specific chapter, and the author of the chapter. Two other recently published Australian books contain neither index nor table of contents. *Australia's insects*, with text by John Child and John Currey (Lansdowne, *circa* 1971) is a lavishly produced book with some beautiful colour photographs of various insects, and a certain amount of text about each. The second section of the book is more technical, with many diagrams explaining such things as the parts of an insect, and appears to my inexpert eye to be well and clearly written. A nine-year-old would enjoy the pictures, while a twelve-year-old would appreciate it more fully. In the Young Nature Library Series the volume entitled *Possums* by Bruce Edwards (Lansdowne, 1972) is a less expensive but still attractive production of the same sort. As well as lacking an index, in neither book, so far as I can discern, is there any logical order to the contents, and the second has no pagination. How the publishers rationalize their actions is hard to imagine. Another book, *Australian stamp collecting*, by Ian F. Finlay (Lansdowne, 1971), aimed probably at the twelve plus age group, endeavours to overcome the lack of an index in an unusual way. The table of contents is fairly extensive, and after the first chapter, which deals with the history of stamps in general, the topics in each chapter are dealt with alphabetically, and listed thus in the table of contents, a compromise which might be satisfactory if the reader were sure under which chapter heading he should look. Lest I should be thought to be unduly severe on Australian publishers, perhaps I
should say that English publishers also do the same thing. Three recent books published without table of contents or index are: *The story of the alphabet* by John Biggs (O.U.P., 1968), *Ships and seafarers of the South Pacific*, and *Ships and seafarers of the Orient*, both by Victor Hatcher (Collins, circa 1970). All three are aimed at the ten to twelve age group.

In many other recently-published children’s books, the indexes are inaccurate or inadequate, or both. In volume 3 of the Seeing History Series, called *Colonies to Commonwealth* by K. M. Adams (Lansdowne, 1971), the entry in the index for ‘Aborigines’ cites pp. 109-112, but there is no reference to aborigines on p. 109, which deals mainly with kanakas; the section on aborigines starts on p. 110. As kanakas are different from aborigines (the former terms being used to describe the natives of the South Sea Islands, brought here, willingly or unwillingly, to work in the sugar plantations of Queensland), and yet can be easily confused with them in a child’s mind, this must be regarded as a serious error. In the same volume there is a chapter entitled Education, but there is no heading ‘Education’ in the index. Various schools are mentioned by name in this chapter, and there are illustrations of several of them, with brief descriptions of their foundation and early days, but only two of these schools appear in the index. Neither is there a heading ‘Schools’, although ‘National Schools’ and ‘Independent Schools’ appear under N and I respectively. In volume 1 of the series, *The first Australians*, Dirck Hartog (a name well-known to generations of Australian school children) is listed in the index under his christian name. This dismal catalogue of errors could be continued indefinitely. A further puzzling aspect is that the index to *The story of China* by Lo Hui-Min (Angus and Robertson, 1970) is accurate and reasonably comprehensive. The indexer has, rightly in my opinion, omitted references to Voltaire and Leibnitz made by the author to illustrate his arguments. The main criticism that can be made is that the illustrations are not indexed. Thus both the pictures of Kublai Khan and Mao Tse-Tung are likely to be overlooked by the child researcher, as it is necessary to turn over the page from the reference given in the index to see them.

More examples of poor indexing can be given from *Wildlife of Australia* by Vincent Serventy (Nelson [Aust.], 1971). Here again the illustrations are not indexed, a very serious defect in a book in which the illustrations play such a major part. The index entry for ‘Frogs’ refers the reader to pp. 56-58, but between pages 52 and 53 are large colour photographs of the burrowing frog and the green and golden tree-frog, neither of which appears in the index. It should also be pointed out that pages 52, 53 and 56 have no page numbers. In this same section there are headings in the text devoted to different species of frogs, some of which appear in the index, and some do not. The selection seems to be completely arbitrary.

Another question arises: should an index have explanatory notes or not? The problem here is that many readers, both children and adults, will not read these notes, especially if they run to more than a few lines, but for those who will, a few rules, simply stated, will give assistance. The use of bold type should be explained, and also the use of italics.

In *Tortoises, terrapins and turtles* by John Goode (Angus and Robertson, 1971), italics are used in the index to identify the scientific names of individual species, but there is no explanation of this. The illustrations are not indexed, but as they seem to be always on the same or adjacent page to the reference in the text, this is not such a serious omission as in some other cases.
The index to *Australian animal behaviour* by Harry Frauen, one of the Periwinkle Series (Lansdowne, 1971), tells us that 'Numbers in italics indicate illustrations', but my eye finds it difficult to discern which figures are in italics. A similar although more expensive series is published by A. H. and A. W. Reed: in *Australian crustaceans in colour* by Anthony Healy and John C. Yaldwyn (1970), and *Australian insects in colour* by Anthony Healy and Courtenay N. Smithers (1971), the indexes are prefaced by the brief note that 'Bold figures indicate colour plates or black and white figures'. In addition to this, each such entry is labelled either 'pl.' or 'fig.', and all illustrations are numbered. In *Australian spiders in colour* by Ramon Mascord (1970), however, this admirable practice has not been followed, and the index is much more difficult to understand. Here again italics are used to indicate the names of individual species, but no explanatory note is given. A publisher's representative with whom I discussed this matter claimed that it could be too complicated to do this, as italics are used for so many proper names, such as ships, aeroplanes, newspapers, titles, etc., but since in most children's books only one class is involved, surely it could be done. It is depressing to have to add that the index to *Australian insects in colour* is the only one of the last four books mentioned in which errors and omissions were not easy to find. My favourite is the entry in *Australian crustaceans in colour* which reads, 'Elegant coral shrimp', surely a case of a misplaced adjective. The last two series considered are probably not written specifically for children, but are widely used by them.

From my observation indexes to children's books, whether published in Australia or elsewhere, contain few sub-headings, and this, I am sure, is a good thing. When helping children to find information in encyclopaedias, it is obvious that they are usually confused when faced with a number of sub-headings. Some may be necessary, to avoid a large number of unidentified references, but great care should be taken that page references are not given unnecessarily. Sometimes the reader turns to a page to find that a single word or phrase of little relevance is his only reward. As stated earlier, selective indexing can help to overcome this problem, and a few well-chosen sub-headings will give additional assistance. 'See' and 'See also' references should also be used sparingly, especially as in most children's books it is a comparatively easy matter to duplicate the reference under a second heading. This does make me wonder, as a librarian, about the value of these references in my catalogue, much as the prospect of cataloguing everything under all possible headings daunts me.
Children's books need indexes, but they need good indexes. For short simple books, a fairly detailed table of contents is sometimes sufficient, but a simple index can replace this, as in Prehistoric animals, in the First Library Series (Macdonald, 1970), where thirty-one pages of text, interspersed with illustrations, have a two-page index. Every species mentioned in the text is illustrated on the same page, so that the lack of indexing of the illustrations cannot be felt to be a fault.

It appears from a cursory glance at some illustrated adults' books, mainly of a biographical and historical nature, that it is not necessarily the custom to index illustrations, but for children's books this should be the general rule. Almost without exception the books I have catalogued for the school library over the last two years have been illustrated, and the illustrations are usually an integral part of the text. The index should also differentiate clearly between verbal and pictorial references, except perhaps in the case of a very simple book such as Prehistoric animals, which is discussed in the previous paragraph.

Children need to be taught how to use indexes, and this is the responsibility of the teacher and librarian, but having so learnt, they have a right to expect that the indexes they consult should be accurate, comprehensive, and simple, also that there should be an index to consult. My research has led me to the inescapable conclusion that much is lacking in these respects. I have written both to Lansdowne Press and to Angus and Robertson asking for information on the subject. Angus and Robertson replied promptly, saying that the question of the inclusion of an index was decided jointly by the author and the editor, and that the index might be compiled by any of the three possibilities I had suggested, the author, a member of the publisher's staff, or an outside indexer. Their reply does not, however, make it clear that there is any firm policy on this matter. Lansdowne Press has not replied to my letter after six weeks. Angus and Robertson also mentioned a book recently published by them with an index, a junior edition of What bird is that? by Neville Cayley, but I was unable to borrow a copy. I think it is true to say that these two firms publish a large number of the non-fiction books written specifically for children, and excluding those in a more strictly educational category, in this country. My sample of English publications is small, but I think representative, and reveals that although the position is probably better there, the situation is far from perfect, especially when publishers of high reputation can produce books without either index or table of contents. I do not know whether any member of the Society specializes in indexing children's books, but there is certainly 'Room for improvement in Australia'.

References

(1) ‘What is a good index” by F. H. C. Tatham (The Indexer, volume 8, no. 1, April 1972).
(2) Title of article by Mr. H. Godfrey Green (The Indexer, volume 8, no. 1, April 1972).

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE ON BOOK INDEXING

We understand that it is hoped that the Correspondence Course in indexing will be ready in June. Those wishing to have particulars of the course, which has been prepared by a member of the Society, should write to the Careers Adviser, Rapid Results College, Tuition House, London, SW19 4DS.