The Wheatley Medal

By courtesy of the Library Association, which co-operates with the Society of Indexers in the awarding of the Wheatley Medal for an outstanding index first published in the United Kingdom during the previous three years, we are able to publish the following extracts from the guide to the awarding panel and others making recommendations.

General Consideration. Indexes should be sufficiently substantial to enable an indexer to demonstrate his full capabilities. The index to a multivolumed work may on that ground merit special consideration, but it is important to remember that the result is being judged; the award is given not for difficulties encountered but for difficulties successfully overcome.

Special Criteria. Indexes are intended to help the user to obtain information from the text and the overriding criterion is their degree of success in doing this.

But if certain specific criteria (set out below) are satisfied, an index is usually found to be a successful one. Note that although the criteria cannot be exactly quantified, they must each be satisfied to a high degree before an index can be considered outstanding. Apart from these criteria consideration should be given as to whether the index makes an original contribution to the art of indexing.

1. If there is an introductory note, it should be clear and well expressed.

2. The index must be accurate. The location numbers given in the index must tally with the text.


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4. Where related entries in the index are each given location references, these must be consistent.

5. An index must have enough sub-headings to avoid strings of undifferentiated location references.

6. An index must be arranged in correct alphabetical or other order.

7. Items and concepts in the text must be represented in the index by appropriate well-chosen terms.

8. The terms must be chosen consistently.

9. There must be enough cross-references to connect related items in the index,

10. and to relate out-of-date or idiosyncratic terms in the text to those in current use.

11. The layout must be clear and help the user.

12. An index must be comprehensive (though certain limitations on comprehensiveness may be allowable if clearly explained) and not either scanty or unnecessarily full.

13. The index should serve the text and not be a vehicle for expressing the indexer's own views and interests.

14. If the index departs from conventions the departures should be explained in the introductory note.

15. Abbreviations, etc. should also be explained.

Those making recommendations are informed that "to qualify for recommendation the index shall be the best possible for the work of which it forms part—it should be full but without unnecessary entries, accurate and well laid out. It should be easy to use and if it embodies any unusual features, they should be clearly explained at the beginning of the index (or elsewhere if appropriate). Attention should be paid to features novel to standard indexing which serve a useful purpose.

EXTRACTS
FROM REVIEWS

'

... about as exhaustive as could be wished, though an index of titles would have been useful.'


'An accessory index of popular names and synonyms is very valuable.'


'It is a pity that there is no comprehensive index of the whole book—separate indexes for each volume make subsequent reference unnecessarily laborious.'

Mosaics in Roman Britain, by Anne Rainey (David & Charles, 205pp., £3.75). Rev., TLS, 8 Jun. 73.

'A future edition might well include a map showing the sites and perhaps a county-by-county index.'


'If the texts had been fewer and in the original languages, more space could have been found for a fuller index, which could have helped both teachers and taught, who will often need to use this valuable compendium.'

Great inventions, by Ernst S. Marzell (Kaye & Ward, £0.95). Rev., TLS, 16 Jun. 73.

'The selection and grouping of material were obviously basic problems, not always happily solved ... the composite chapter headings do not guide us clearly enough to their contents, a problem exaggerated by the lack of an index.'

Winds and weather, by John Kaufmann (World's Work, £1.05). Rev., TLS, 16 Jun. 73.

'The organization of the material is weak, there is no index and looking for one specific piece of information is a laborious process ...'