Appended to this article is a list of the 15 special criteria which are employed as guidelines by the Wheatley Medal selection committee. If there is difficulty in deciding whether an index is really outstanding, or if it is desired to determine which of several indexes should rank highest, it is possible to use this list to award marks on a four-point scale. Allot three marks for each criterion which achieves a rating of ‘good’ in the index under consideration, two marks for those which have an ‘average’ rating, one for those rated ‘poor’, and no marks for any criterion which does not apply. There is potentially a highest score of forty-five, which is unlikely to be achieved, but any index which gets a score above thirty on this scale will probably be outstanding in at least some respects. However, it is perfectly possible for an index which achieves a score lower than thirty to be successful when judged by a sixteenth criterion, not on the list, which recognises that a proven record of successful use to retrieve information from the text is a sufficient measure of a good index.

Appendix

Criteria used as guidelines by the Wheatley Medal Selection Committee

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.
4. Where related entries in the index are each given location references, these must be consistent.
5. An index must have enough subheadings 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. There must be cross-references to relate out-of-date or idiosyncratic terms in the text to those in current use.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 neither scanty nor 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.

WHEATLEY MEDAL 1975

This year there were twenty-three submissions for the award and it is good to be able to record that overall the quality of the indexes was higher than it has been in some earlier years.

On this occasion, the Library Association/Society of Indexers Joint Committee had the unenviable task of deciding whether a particularly fine index was, in fact, eligible for the award. The work was *The laws of the Lagos State of Nigeria* (edited by Sir L. Brett) in eight volumes: reluctantly the Committee decided that it could not be considered as it was not first published in the United Kingdom, which is one of the conditions of the award.

However, the Committee had no doubts as to which was the best of the indexes which were eligible. It was Mrs Margaret Anderson’s for Judith Butcher’s book *Copy-editing: the Cambridge handbook* (Cambridge University Press, 1975). It is not a lengthy index nor is it particularly elaborate nor innovatory, but it is thoroughly appropriate to the book and its likely readership. The Committee found it difficult to fault; it is well laid out and uses sub-heads economically and sensibly. We could discover no significant omissions, the page references were full and accurate. The only faults we could find were occasional cases of items within the text which seemed to deserve an index entry and some under-use of cross-referencing; but there were not many instances of either.

It is not just a competent index: it is an excellent one which fully deserves the award of the Medal. We hope that Mrs Anderson’s work will serve as a model for other indexers who have not achieved the high standards which her work exemplifies.

Michael Wace,
Chairman,
Wheatley Medal Committee.

*Compiled by
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