RAISING STANDARDS

The frustration of reading excellent books which have been published without indexes or with inadequate indexes has led two of the Society’s registered indexers, including the Chairman of Council, to write to the publishers concerned. Pursuing one of the aims of the Society’s Constitution, may we suggest that other readers, thus frustrated, follow a similar course.

Mr K. G. B. Bakewell had a most courteous reply from Melvyn Bragg when he wrote to tell him how much more he would have appreciated his excellent book *Speak for England* if it had been equipped with an index.

Similarly, Mildred Brownlow wrote to Weidenfeld & Nicolson, the publishers of Paul Johnson’s *A history of Christianity*, about her difficulties in using the index and suggested to them that they might care to contact the Registrar for experienced and competent indexers.

May we urge other readers interested in raising the standards of indexing to write similar letters.

E.J.W.

EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS

*edited by Bruce S. C. Harling*

Items in this issue are arranged under the following headings: No Indexes, Inadequate Indexes, Satisfactory Indexes, Excellent Indexes, Unusual Indexes, Exploiting Indexes.

If readers would like to suggest alternative headings these would be received with interest, as indeed would any ideas for adding to the usefulness and interest of ‘Extracts’.

Contributions of review extracts are always welcome and thanks are due to the following: Mrs June Angus, K. G. B. Bakewell, Melvin L. Bashore, Michael B. Dean, Mrs Veronica Findlay, Neil Fisk, Mrs. Dorothy Frame, M. R. Hails, L. M. Harrod, Dr J. E. Holmstrom, N. F. Moore, D. Pygott, Anthony Raven and J. L. Thornton.

NO INDEXES


‘The absence of an index is unfortunate and the book contains only selected references.’


‘... has no index, although it richly deserves one . . .’


‘There is a brief but adequate summary of Test match statistics at the end and all that is missing is an index.’

*Theatre through the ages*, by Cesare Molinari (Cassell, 324pp., £7.50). Rev. by R. A. Wollen, *Eastword* Jul. 76.

‘The lack of an index . . . is a very serious weakness in the book and greatly restricts its usefulness.’


‘It is full of typographical errors, and there is no index or bibliography.’


‘It would have been helpful to have had an index of illustrations giving the provinance (*sic*) and present location of each object.’

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Climate and the affairs of men, by Nels Winkless and Iben Browning (Peter Davies, £6.00). Rev. by Michael Hunt, Eastern Daily Press 2 Jul. 76.
‘There are no chapter headings and there is no index.’

‘Beautifully produced and not unreasonably priced, the book is utterly disgraced by the lack of subject and topic indices.’

‘It is unfortunate that it does not include a detailed alphabetical index.’

On human finery, by Quentin Bell (Hogarth, 239pp., £6). Rev. by Stella Mary Newton, TLS 12 Nov. 76.
‘In the next book, index, please.’

‘Because this book lacks an index or even a thumbnail guide, the reader must first turn to the contents.’

‘The lack of an index can make finding what you want a bit of a hunt . . .’

Values and evaluations, by Z. Najder (Clarendon Press, OUP, 185pp., £4.50). Rev. by Mary Warnock, TLS 12 Nov. 76.
‘It’s one demerit is that it lacks an index of topics.’

‘It is unfortunate that the bibliography lacks a subject index; without such an index it is only marginally useful for most purposes.’

‘Considering the density of much of the material and the variety of subjects treated, the lack of an index is most regrettable. A bibliography of the numerous and often obscure books cited would also have added to the value of the work. It is to be hoped that both will be added to the second edition of what must become a standard work on Yeats.’

Cagney by Cagney (New English Library, £3.95). Rev. by Peter Grosvenor, Daily Express 8 Apr. 76.
‘But a black mark to the publishers for the piddling economy of no index.’

The There must however remain one regret: there is no index, an unfortunate omission in so careful an edition and the more frustrating as several references in the introduction indicate its existence at an earlier draft stage.

No regrets, by the Earl of Carnarvon (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 227pp., £5.95). Rev. by E. S. Turner, TLS 24 Dec. 76.
The earl does not bother fully identifying those he nicknames so freely; he scorns footnotes and index.’

INADEQUATE INDEXES

The index is unfortunately uneven; Thorndon (or Old Thorndon) Hall, for instance, which features prominently at least eleven times, does not appear in the index at all.

The life of Noel Coward, by Cole Lesley (Cape, 520pp., £7.50). Rev. by Alastair Forbes, TLS 22 Oct. 76.
‘. . . the miserably unreliable index can scarcely be blamed on the author.’

‘. . . the index is rather skimpy . . .’
The fruit of that forbidden tree, by John Adlard (Carcanet Press, 139pp., £2.80). Rev. by James Sutherland, TLS 22 Oct. 76.

'...although he notes in the index of authors that an asterisk indicates that an item has been abridged, he does not always use it when he should.'


'Particularly painful are the errors in spelling French words and names which I found on over sixty pages, on many of which these mistakes are multiple. Curiously, once the error has been committed, it tends to be repeated, with consistent exactitude, even unto the index, as if a spirit of order were trying to mitigate the ravages of negligence that had already erupted.'


'The coverage of European instruments is certainly encyclopaedic, but the index does not do it justice. Not only is there a singular lack of cross references (essential in dealing with this subject unless you already know that piffero is a type of shawm and sackbut a trombone), but some instruments described in the text do not appear in the index at all. It was only because I already knew what they were that I found that arpeggione, vibraphone and duoaine were dealt with in the book, for they were not in the index.'


'...it would have been of help to the historically vague if the relevant dates...could have been listed in the index, instead of being slipped into the text.'


'A comprehensive series of maps and pictures contribute to the general reader's pleasure and understanding, though I found the index skimpy.'

Schumann, by Alan Walker (Faber & Faber, 128pp., £3.25). Rev. by Joan Chissell, TLS 24 Dec. 76.

'...the index erroneously gives A major as the key of the Piano Quintet, plus a spurious page reference.'


'...bibliographies, as mines of information, should yield their wealth more readily than this example. The 400-keyword index is only to the running heads. Thus, "Languages of Eastern Asia, Oceania and Africa" (running to over 25 pages—about 450 items) is given only three double entries, with no detailed headings to break up the sequence of entries. This is quite inadequate as a subject key.'


'Useful appendices, but a sparse index which does not do justice to the work.'


'I wish equal care had been devoted to the captions...too often uninformative, inaccurate or banal...Again, the index, as one comes to expect nowadays, is quite inadequate.'


'The 76-page index, however, is confused, incomplete, misleading, and nearly useless. For instance, the Mexican War entry does not mention material in the John Gwinn, Matthew C. Perry, or Porter Family Papers; while the manuscripts in the Albert S. Greene and Louis A. Kimberly collections relating to the 1889 Apia hurricane are listed only under "Samoa, hurricanes" but those in the James W. Carlin Papers appear under both Apia and Samoa. Had the indexer been more conversant with the collection, or with American naval history, many of the errors could have been avoided; but as it now stands the index is a glowing indictment of computer, "key word" indexing.'


'Professor Blumenthal varies at will the dose of first names for the same person, as well as omits de as the mood takes him, giving us Charles Remusat, George Louis Buffon, Gustave Beaumont, and other non-existent characters. In this regard, the index, which is far from adequate or consistent, is as chaotic as the text.'
The automobile, by Enzo Angelucci & Alberto Belluci (Macdonald & Jane's, £4.95). Rev. by Peter Stubbs, New Scientist 6 May 76.

'It is ... disconcerting to find the historical continuity of the text interrupted by (unindexed) "spreads" dealing with specific marques.'


'The only criticisms are petty ones: the plates are badly distributed, the notes and bibliographies are tiresome to refer to, and the index is at the very least perfunctory.'

Obituaries from The Times 1961-70, compiled by Frank C. Roberts (Newspaper Archive Developments, 952pp., £17.50). Rev. by Alan Bell, TLS 5 Mar. 76.

'A subject index would be an advantage. It will not be easy for the layman to remember Carlton and Whinfield as the inventors of Xerography and Terylene respectively. The most recent DNB supplement (which contained 760 lives for 1951-60 and was published in 1971) was accompanied by a physically embarrassing little booklet (always falling out) giving lengths of articles under broad subject-headings. That might be even less suitable over the longer distance of a Times selection, but the example of Sir Edgar Williams's long and ingenious editorial prefaces to the recent Dictionary of National Biography could be studied by The Times's compilers as a means of introducing some sort of subject guidance into this mass of heterogeneous and wholly fascinating information.'

British botanical and horticultural literature before 1800, by Blanche Henrey (OUP, 3 vols, 1128pp., £70). Rev. by Wilfrid Blunt, TLS 5 Mar. 76.

'Two features of the book call for particular comment—the bibliographies and the indexes: both are divided into two parts around the year 1700 ... The two admirable indexes include title entries and grouped subject entries as well as individual ones, thus enabling the reader to find an artist, a printer or a garden under its own name or in the relevant group entries. The duplication that this involves is more than justified by the additional convenience it provides. It is unfortunate that some last-minute alteration to the order of the colour plates in the second volume has caused errors (for which the compiler of the index was not responsible) in the numbering in the index of Plates 17 to 30. (I have, however, been informed that an errata slip is being prepared. It will be sent to purchasers on request.).'

Early children's books and their illustration (OUP 263pp., £15). Rev. by Nicholas Tucker, TLS 2 Apr. 76.

'While the layout . . . is sometimes confusing, the accompanying notes unnecessarily sparse and the index inadequate, it is still a very handsome volume.'


'The Index has been incompletely revised: the entries there for Missal No. 558 in the Museo de S. Marco are wrong; and the puzzling little Madonna in the Fogg Art Museum (Figure 61) still appears there as "Style of Gentile da Fabriano", contradicting the new text (p.12).'


'The index is very selective.'


'... [the] index has no entries under several names in the bibliography, e.g., A. C. Bradley, T. S. Eliot, W. R. D. Fairbairn, H. Loewald, A. Rothenberg, so that one cannot use it to find or re-find the passages where he uses their ideas.'

The road to Stalingrad, by John Erickson (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 616pp., £12). Rev. by Amnon Sella, TLS 7 May 76.

'Technical intricacies here and there and the not very full index may place some obstacles in the way of inexperienced and uninformed readers.'


'The sloppy editing and the sottisier of an index, with its general confusion of names, styles, titles and sexes, as well as multiple misspellings and mis-references, can be attributed to the contagious English disease whose slow stain has now spread across the Atlantic, since the present volume is a reproduction of the American edition, save for the sacrifice of a number of the author's rather less happy snaps.'

'At a mechanical level, the indexing methods are not tight enough to cope with the author's variety of approaches . . . Worst of all perhaps is the shocking treatment of the book's illustrations, which have been changed from their original sizes without notification (and frequently coarsened in the process), which bear many inaccurate captions, and which are granted no index references—faults which may well be laid at the door of the book's "designers" who these days seem to be obligatory to any publication.'


'... a much more adequate index would be useful.'

SATISFACTORY INDEXES


'The indexing is comprehensive and the user should experience no difficulty in locating the desired formulas.'


'... there is section for the "ordinary" yachtsman, complete with a separate index for a simplified approach.'

The conquest of the American West, by John Selby (Allen & Unwin, 270pp., £5.95). Rev. by Philip Taylor, TLS 14 May 76.

'... its index is adequate . . . '

Handy matrices of unit conversion factors for biology and medicine, by C. J. Pennycuick (Edward Arnold, 1974, 47pp., £0.95). Rev. by John A. Bushman, Medical and Biological Engineering May 76.

'There is a brief introduction and a good index.'


'The index and bibliography are equally well done . . . '

Europe: hierarchy and revolt, 1320-1450, by George Holmes (Fontana, £1). Rev. by Conal O'Donnell, Eastern Daily Press 23 Apr. 76.

'An adequate index . . . '


'Not only are the manufacturers arranged in this (sc. alphabetical) order but additionally they are cross-indexed under works, persons, railways, tramways, locomotive types, locomotive names, customers and general. This is a system which could with advantage be copied by all who may write on such matters.'


'The book is well designed with a comprehensive index . . . '

The efficient use of energy, by I. G. C. Dryden (IPC Science & Technology Press, 602pp., £30). Rev. by J. A. D., Marine Engineers Review May 76.

'... there is a comprehensive index to enable easy location of any particular item.'


'Miriam Benkovitz's editing has been a work of devotion. She explains, in notes after each letter and a biographical index at the end, everything that needs explaining.'


'The indexing is no more than adequate in relation to the comprehensiveness of the book.'


'... scholars may find Dr White's index one of the most useful parts of his book.'

'The indexes and the printing are all that one could wish . . .'


'At the end of the book there is a glossary of twenty-five pages and an index of names and works mentioned in the text which justifies the omission of a general index.'

The Luciano Testament, by Martin Gosch and Richard Hammer (Pan, £0.95). Rev. by Colin Bevan, Eastern Daily Press 23 Apr. 76.

'. . . 434 pages of text—complemented by a comprehensive 13-page index of Who was Who with numerous references to murder . . .'

Graph theory with applications to engineering and computer science, by Darsingh Deo (Prentice-Hall, 1974). Rev. by Norbert R. Malik, Proceedings of the Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers (USA) Oct. 75.

'The text is well-written . . . and contains an adequate index.'


'His publishers are to be congratulated too on the appearance of the book, the quality of the reproductions, the useful biographical index of artists, and the careful proof-reading.'


'The encyclopedia index—an alphabetic section of 106 pages—lists chemical compounds that may cause environmental effects. Interspersed are topics such as oxidant or particulate, followed by a concise encyclopedic article . . .'


'This book has a good index and glossary, which will be of great use to Pauline scholars.'


'The book is well indexed . . .'

EXCELLENT INDEXES


'As one would expect, the book is meticulously indexed.'

The Great Instauration, by Charles Webster (Duckworth, 630pp., £13.50). Rev. by Quentin Skinner, TLS 2 Jul. 76.

'There are scarcely any misprints, the index (compiled by Margaret Pelling) is outstandingly full and accurate, and the whole volume is superbly produced.'


'. . . excellent index, bibliography, glossary . . .'


'The book also contains a bibliography of about 725 entries, and an excellent separate author and subject index, to add to its scholarship.'

A cumulative analytical index to The Dickensian 1905-1974, compiled by Frank T. Dunn (Harvester Press, 199pp., £25). Rev. by Graham Storey, TLS 2 Apr. 76.

'Frank Dunn's admirably comprehensive and discriminating index (which includes a most useful index to the illustrations: one of the great attractions of The Dickensian) is the essential guide to it ("Dickens Land").'

Early Victorian Methodism—the correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1830-1838, by W. R. Ward (OUP for the Univ. of Durham, 1976, £12). Rev. by the Rev. Ralph Lowery, Methodist Recorder 1 July 76.

'. . . with thorough cross references. The indexing is excellent.'


'. . . a magnificent index.'

'... the book has an excellent index ...'


'The problem of locating particular information has to a large extent been overcome by means of a detailed contents list (of 17 pages) and a comprehensive subject index extending to 47 pages. There is, too, an author index.'

UNUSUAL INDEXES

The bird-watcher's key, by Bob Scott and Don Ferrent (Warne, £3.95 or £2.25 softback). Rev. by C. V. Roberts, Eastern Daily Press 28 June 76.

'Endpapers showing bird shapes are keyed to a colour fore-edge index so that, having chosen the general outline you want, you can open crisply to the required section with a flick of the thumb.'

EXPLOITING INDEXES


'Neither "Club of Rome" nor "oil crisis" appear in the index of this book completed, apparently, in 1973, the last of the years of cloudless confidence. It is, consequently, a success story, with only one or two question marks left hanging over the future.'

The first cuckoo; a selection of letters to The Times (Allen & Unwin, 350pp., £4.50). Rev. by Paul Jennings, Sunday Times 2 May 76.

'But, oh, the marvellous mad minutiae—the equivalent of the hawking scene carved under the misericord, the umbrella-footed mythical sciapod carved on the bench-end, the mad hidden faces! You've only got to run your eye down the index: arithmetic (systems of), bathing (undergraduate), birds (luminous), chewing gum (police use of), cricket—the biggest section in the index—fainting (soldiers), French pied, future (the), horse wearing spectacles, porridge, postage stamps as wallpaper, Quaker nudity, squirrels as food ...'


'The dominant quality of these essays is tough-minded scepticism, relieved by a delightful sense of humour. Is it an accident that, in the index of names, Lord Balogh and Lord Beveridge are kept apart by Hilaire Belloc, and that Lenin's immediate neighbour is Tom Lehrer?'


'Towards the end of the book, when Gambart is contemplating retirement ... an exhibition of French painting is held in London with large numbers of works by Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Degas, Sisley, Courbet, Fantin-Latour, and others. None of these names appear in the index and in the text these superb artists are noted but quickly pushed out of sight.'


'... there is not a dull page in this book. Even the index is funny, with an entry for "rabbit manure" slipped in between Rabbit, Run, Rabbit, Rich and Rabbit Redux.'


'The introductory chapter, which binds the work together in the absence of any conclusions, makes rather heavy, jargon-laden weather of some obvious and simplistic theorising about opposition and dissi-dence, apparently in an attempt to enable the reader to see the wood for the trees ... An adequate index could classify with almost as much subtlety ...'

Roman Baroque painting. A list of the principal painters and their works in and around Rome, by Ellis Waterhouse (Phaidon, 163pp., £15.95). Rev. by Gregory Martin, TLS 7 May 76.

'The topographical index contains some 260 entries—an indication of the mammoth proportions of the task which Sir Ellis set himself some forty years ago, and to which he has since intermittently returned.'


'These (the disadvantages of abjuring academic method) include ... a riot of far-fetched comparisons that makes Mr Miles's index look like a reading list for a crash course in Great Books ...'


'It is symptomatic of the balance of this disappointing book that, while each of Ettie's admirers is (properly) listed in the index, none of her son's poems is thought worthy of inclusion.'