Indexers for gather

Developments in classification and subject indexing will be the subject of a two-day course at the Holiday Inn, Liverpool, on 1 and 2 July 1980. The first day will be devoted to the classified approach and will include papers on the 19th edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification, the 2nd edition of the Bliss Bibliographic Classification, and problems of reclassification. The second day, on the alphabetical approach, will include sessions on PRECIS, thesaurus construction, on-line retrieval and indexing for publication. Further details of the course, which is being organized by Liverpool Polytechnic’s Department of Library and Information Studies in association with the Library Association, may be obtained from K. G. B. Bakewell, Liverpool Polytechnic, Department of Library and Information Studies, Tithebarn Street, Liverpool L2 2ER. It will be possible for a limited number to attend for part of the course only.

Indexers in a world of change


The nationwide provision and use of information is the subject of a conference to be held jointly by Aslib, The Institute of Information Scientists and the Library Association at the City Hall, Sheffield, 15-19 September 1980. Four main sessions will consider provision of information; user needs, wants and demands; changes and constraints; policies for the future. The Society of Indexers will participate in one of the sessions, on 18 September, at 2.15. Details of the conference may be obtained from the Joint Conference Organizer, Miss E. Lowry-Corry, Aslib, 3 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PL.

A very great book

The greatest single bibliography of European imprints dating from the invention of printing to 1975 is now in course of publication. It is of course The British Library general catalogue of printed books to 1975.

Endowed by George II with the library of the kings of England founded by Edward IV, and by George IV with the library of George III, added to by donations, purchase and the legal right of deposit of all British copyright books, the British Library (until 1973 the British Museum Library) is one of the richest collections in the world of European literature, particularly of pre-1900 publications.

Certainly among the last of the large catalogues to be issued in the familiar, congenial and satisfying format of the printed volume, and a work of careful scholarship and skilled printing, it is a name catalogue in a single alphabetical sequence which records in a series of main entries and cross-references publications by and about individuals and by corporate bodies (including official bodies), anonymous works, periodical publications, and certain other classes of material, entered according to rules developed over the years by the British Museum Library and arranged according to the Library’s filing system. Certain large or difficult sections, such as those under the headings for Shakespeare, the Bible and the names of countries, have their own indexes.

The present catalogue is being photographically reproduced from a prepared copy of the third General catalogue, published 1959-1966, into which have been incorporated the three published supplements to that catalogue, together with additions and emendations, which are being made almost up to the date of printing of each volume. The work is planned to appear in about 360 volumes, at the rate of six to seven volumes a month, from mid-1979 to the end of 1984. Each volume will comprise 500-550 pages, and, in A4 format, will not exceed two kilograms in weight. The cost of the complete set (prepaid) is £9,000. The subscription price for orders firmly placed before publication is £32 per volume. The publishers are Clive Bingley in London and K. G. Saur, to whom the enterprise owes its initiative, in Munich, Paris and New York.

M. P.
John Ainsworth Gordon

I don't want this to sound like a premature obituary, but I can't let John Gordon's retirement as Secretary pass without a few words. It was my pleasure and privilege to have been Chairman of the Society for much of the time John was Secretary, and I therefore know better than most how much work he did for the benefit of the Society and its members. I also know how much we owe to his wife, Cecilia, not only for her practical help on so many occasions such as evening meetings and the 21st anniversary conference but also for her patience and forbearance when John devoted his time to the 'other woman', the Society of Indexers.

Thank you, John, on behalf of all members of the Society—and it's good to know that your retirement as Secretary does not mean that you are retiring from active service on behalf of the Society.

K. G. B. Bakewell

[And so say all of us!—Ed.]

Laurence Urdang's article in The Indexer 11 (3) April 1979, 'The human use of human indexers', was selected for inclusion in Library Lit: The Best of . . . (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press) to appear in May 1980; an annual anthology of the best articles published in magazines which have to do with libraries and library science, now in its tenth year.

Readability research

The Graphic Information Research Unit (founded in 1966 as the Readability of Print Research Unit) of the Royal College of Art produced a series of reports for the British Library Research Department between 1973 and 1979 of interest to those concerned with the presentation of printed information. The reports, described in a leaflet put out by the Unit, cover the relative legibility of alternative letter shapes, the effectiveness of selected typographic variations, the design of typewritten and typeset bibliographies, the effects of poor-quality reproduction on legibility, background 'noise' and legibility, the effects of show-through on legibility, graphics in libraries and museums, the acceptability of microforms, the layout of information on computer output microfilm, and visual presentation in computer output microfilm library catalogues. All except the last are obtainable (as is the brochure) from the Unit at the Royal College of Art, 6A Cromwell Place, London SW7 2NJ, at prices ranging from £3 to £7. The last report is available from the British Library R & D Department, Sheraton House, Great Chapel Street, London W1V 4BH, and costs £8.

Into the technological era

The last few years have seen some revolutionary developments in indexing and abstracting services. People want today's information yesterday, because information is time and money; a factor of which the indexer or abstractor must always be mindful. The techniques we use, especially in indexing, can never remain static; we should consistently monitor our products in order to ensure their performance is optimized.

Three papers from members of our affiliated societies help in this by communicating some of the developments which are now taking place in various countries. We regret that we are not able to include a fuller representation. We hope, however, that these papers will show some of the issues now receiving attention.

The paper on structure in database indexing gives insight into problems which an increasing number of indexers will find they face in the future. This is a new field, although developing fast, in which there is still time for an indexer to make an impact. The qualification to succeed in this, however, is that we indexers must be prepared to learn the language of computer experts in order to be able to talk with them on their own terms.

The paper on evaluating indexing systems acts as a timely reminder that we should look in depth at our output and regard an index as a tool for study as well as for use. It must be admitted that the evaluation of indexing—a practice dating from the 1950s—is not an easy topic to master, and there is still much discussion as to the parameters to be used in testing and their statistical significance.

The survey of Australian indexing demonstrates the need to survey the various services existing in any country to see what is available. The benefit of this operation is that it is possible to take a detached view of the services provided in order to avoid duplication, to discover where weaknesses occur and to enable consideration to be given to making the overall service more effective.

PETER BROXIS

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