INDEXES REVIEWED

edited by Norman Hillyer

This selection of extracts from reviews does not pretend to represent a complete survey of all reviews in all journals and newspapers. We offer only those quotations which members have sent in.

Our reproduction of comments is not a stamp of approval from The Society of Indexers upon either the reviewer's assessment of an index, or his competence to give an opinion.

Extracts are arranged alphabetically under the names of publishers, within the sections—

INDEXES PRAISED: INDEXES CENSURED: INDEXES OMITTED: INDEXES ENHANCED.

INDEXES PRAISED

‘Indexing and bibliography are excellent.’

‘... supports a very readable story with a comprehensive bibliography and index.’

‘The book is divided into short chapters— with a very useful index.’

‘All have bibliographies and good concise indexes.’

Cambridge Un. Pr.: Church and state in Yugoslavia since 1945, by Stella Alexander (£15). Rev. by Michael Bordeaux, Church Times 28 Sept. 79.
‘It is also a delight to read a book virtually free of misprints... and superbly indexed.’

‘And if he has written a model political biography, his publisher has produced a model answer to the typographical problems of handling a mass of references, notes and footnotes, and a closely organized and tightly written text, and given it an impeccably serviceable index.’

‘Page notes are down to a minimum; it is well indexed and there is a long section devoted to critical bibliographies.’

‘There are 16 pages of colour photographs and 24 of black and white plus some excellent line drawings and a good index.’

‘The list of references, bibliography and index are first-class, as one would expect from an Emmanuel scholar and Goldsmith exhibitioner.’

‘Meanwhile, as prizes in indexing appear to number only two—one of which does not apply to literature—let me add my own non-recurring Colonnade award to the book for the quality of its own indexes, alphabetical, subject and geographical.’

‘In addition, a 31-page index with excellent cross-references provides ready access to all aspects of the guide.’

'The index is good and unique in that it provides access to many subjects under more than one index entry, rather than being a series of endless see references. For example, page references for the Abridged Dewey Decimal Classification are found under that term, under "Classification schemes, Abridged Dewey Decimal", and under "Dewey Decimal Classification, Abridged".'


'Each item has a serial number and these are used in the 130 page index. This brings into one sequence authors, places and subjects. Whereas the main body of the bibliography arranges subjects under country, the index arranges country under subjects, thus facilitating an alternative approach to the material contained in this thorough and relatively inexpensive compilation.'


'It is profusely illustrated, largely in colour, with numerous maps, and—one of the most valuable features in this sort of book—has a comprehensive index which effortlessly pinpoints the information being sought.'

Macdonald & Jane's: Entertaining with Tovey—How to star in your own kitchen, by John Tovey (£6.95). Rev. by M. C., The Bookseller 20 Oct. 79.

'The comprehensive index, in which key recipes are shown in heavy type—a convention repeated in the text—makes it an easy book to use.'


'There is a glossary of German terms and a comprehensive index. The authors have made an excellent list of this Quartermaster's nightmare.'

Macmillan: You and your body, What people do, People and customs, Prehistoric world and Ships and boats (each 64pp.). Rev. by A. R., ILEA Contact 6 July 79.


'There's a new computer-compiled index which is remarkably full and helpful. . . .'
"There is a good bibliography, clearly organized in double columns on the rather large pages, and a massive index which has been very carefully thought out to suit the complex nature of the material."


'. . . there is [sic] a comprehensive index and bibliography.'


'The photographs are superb, and the index is admirable—a rare virtue in modern publishing.'

INDEXES CENSURED


'The index . . . is not an adequate guide to the contents of the volume.'


'Perhaps a more satisfactory form of index could have been devised, because such headings as "Asphyxiation", "Blunt Instrument", "Firearms", and so on presuppose the kind of knowledge that one would consult the book to discover, even though the text gives the murderers in alphabetical order.'


'Unfortunately, the index is not good enough. There is an unacceptably small number of cross references, especially for romanized names that are capable of various spellings—indeed which have various spellings within the body of the books. The Hebrew index of titles is obviously too short; it covers only 1½ pages. Many Hebrew titles are in the index in romanized form only—this would be acceptable if there were no Hebrew alphabet index to mislead the reader; and some Hebrew titles are not to be found at all (of the 20 titles on p. 99, only 10 are indexed). . . . Subject entries are deliberately excluded from the index. For a book so wholly dependent on an index—it has 548 unedited pages of mostly unorganized data—the index should have been outstanding.'


'Although there is a bibliography, there is no index—which is a serious flaw.'

INDEXES OMITTED


'The failure to give an Author Index is deplorable in a scientific work.'


'Although there is a bibliography, there is no index—which is a serious flaw.'


'Alas, there is no index, not even a list of chapters, so that anyone wanting to read about his own problem in this book is going to have to conduct a search of the pages.'

'The word "inflation" does not appear in the index, but some information on inflation in OECD countries can be found. . . . Opec has only one reference in the index, although there are others in the book itself. . . . By country, it gives the reader much useful information. Where it is less successful is by topic, and that could be improved a great deal by a bigger investment in the index.'


'Brief, slightly inconsistent index.'


'The index is a hollow joke upon so worthwhile an intellectual product.'

‘Thought-provoking, even enjoyable in parts, but its full exploitation will be hampered by the lack of an index.’


‘Basil Blackwell, the publishers, are either lazy or mean. This is just the sort of volume—various essays in which the same subject is touched upon a number of times—which cries out for an index. An indigent economic student could have done one for under £100. [Do we agree?—Ed.] There is no index.’


‘This excellent volume suffers from the absence of an index.’


‘The colour jacket is beautifully evocative, but there is no index of names, which is advisable in such a book.’ [Discretion being the better part of valour?]

Rev. by Roland Grant, *Dy Telegraph* 1 Nov. 79.

‘The book has one defect, shared by so many French books—no index.’


‘... the text is significant enough to merit an index.’


‘Its value perhaps is as a stimulus to thought rather than as a straightforward commentorial manual: more’s the pity, then, that it has appeared without an index.’

Cape: *Parliament for Europe*, by David Marquand (£4.95, pbk £2.95).

Penguin: *The European parliament*, by Robert Jackson and John Fitzmaurice (95p).

Macmillan: *The first European elections: a handbook and guide*, by Chris Cook and Mary Francis (£7.95, pbk £2.95).


‘None of these books has an index, and this is perhaps most unforgivable in David Coombes’s more academic but interesting *The future of the European parliament*.’


‘I have only two faults to find with this book. Firstly, that there is no index; secondly, that the source material for some of the quotations... is not given. Possibly this would diminish its value for the future.’


‘... poorly laid out (e.g., no contents list, references and bibliography not headed as such). No index.’


‘There is a long bibliography, but no index.’


‘There is an excellent bibliography, but no index.’


‘Certainly it should have included an index so that those facts may be easily located.’


‘But a crippling omission in what presumably aspires to being a standard reference work is the lack of an index.’


‘Gollancz should be ashamed of themselves for not copy-editing it more carefully and particularly for not providing us with a desperately needed index to such a gallimaufry of facts.’

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'The difficulty of tracking a path through the dense writing is greatly increased by the lack of an index.'


'The historical section is incomplete. There is, for example, only one selection listed by Luigi Robecchi-Brichetti, a scholar who wrote prolifically on Somalia. Among the missing items is Somalia and Benadir (Milan, 1899), which runs to 726 pages. There are other Robecchi-Brichetti items listed under other sections, which emphasizes another shortcoming. There is no general author index for cross-reference purposes, making it extremely difficult to chase down such omissions.'


'…my biggest gripe is the lack of an index, a bizarre omission in a book clearly intended to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover.'

Hamish Hamilton: Gilded butterflies: the rise and fall of the London season, by Philippa Pullar (191pp., £7.50). Rev. by E. S. Turner, TLS 6 Oct. 78.

'Where the saucy details come from is not always clear, for the book is without notes or bibliography, or even an index. Not many writers have the nerve to score a triple like that.'

Harvester: The territory of the historian, by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, tr. by Ben and Sían Reynolds (£12.50). Rev. by E. R. Chamberlin, Dy Telegraph 19 July 79.

'The new historiography apparently disdains the old-fashioned index—an omission of some magnitude in a book of this nature and price.'

Heinemann: The dream of Kilimanjaro, by Rolf Edberg (179pp., £3.95). Rev. in Economist 7 April 79.

'This remarkable outburst of rhetoric and erudition would be much better with some maps and an index.'


'Unfortunately there is no index.'


'The glossary…does not quite serve as a complete subject index, the absence of which is the only shortcoming of the volume…Anyone who uses the volume intensively will feel obliged to make his own subject index.'


'There is no author index, which some might regard as an unfortunate omission. The subject index is good but not perfect.'


'those will curse Hutchinson’s for—incredibly in such a work—leaving out even the rudiments of an index.'


‘An alphabetical index to companies is provided, but as the directory is company rather than product-orientated, there is unfortunately no product index.'


'More detailed references to other textbooks and to the original literature would have been helpful to the student, together with a name index.'


'What is lacking, which would have made the work easier to refer to (though undeniably more complicated and costly to produce), is an alphabetical subject index. Trying to decide where to look for “Forestry”, for instance, means searching through the Contents List as far as the 26th entry (out of 46) before probably settling on “Agriculture”. I tend to expect Dictionaries to be under “Reference” (idiosyncratic but not unreasonable)—here, equally reasonably, they are under “Languages”.'

'These excellent reference books would be a great deal more accessible were there a general index, even if only in the last volume, or at least a general contents list in each.'

Prism Pr.: *Practical solar heating*, by Kevin McCartney with Brian Ford (£3.95, pbk £1.95, 209pp). Rev. by J. C. McVeigh, *Electrical Review* 204.17, 4 May 79.

'Apart from minor spelling and type-setting errors there is only one criticism: there is no index.'


'Although Professor Wilken may be right to urge his readers not to look back, his publishers would have added to their service by providing an index.'


'Most unfortunate of all—and a serious error in an otherwise excellent publication—is the lack of an index.'


'It is to be hoped that the second volume, when it appears, will provide, *inter alia*, an index to the first. [It didn't, though Vol. 2 did at least have its own index.]


'That is the one big fault I find with *The little green book*—where's the index?'


'Nonspecialist readers will find the absence of a subject index most irksome, but it does encourage a full reading of the book. [And, for future reference, making one's own index—in the absence of a photographic memory?]

INDEXES ENHANCED


'An excellent and helpful idea is the contents index being in the form of miniature colour illustrations, with page references, of each species/variety of tree, thus giving an instant outline guide to help the reader quickly to an identification.'

MORE, PLEASE!


'To have achieved all this . . . will be seen as a major achievement by anyone who has compiled an index or read some page-proofs. . . . But these petty criticisms do not prevent us from begging Professor Houghton to give us two more volumes after he has published the fourth. First, we need a subject-index to the four volumes—a tedious but relatively routine task by comparison with what has gone before. This is necessary, not simply to round off the Index itself, but because the Index covers periodicals and includes material from them which was omitted from W. F. Poole's monumental *Index to periodical literature* launched in 1882. Lastly, we need a Wellesley Index of Edwardian periodicals, for the monthly and quarterly reviews retained much of their influence right up to 1914 and the Index cuts off some of them rather arbitrarily at 1900.'

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