

All three papers appear in full in the proceedings of the conference published by the Library Association in January 1981 at £12.50 (ISBN 0-85365-563-4), together with several other papers of possible interest to the indexer such as 'Publishing and bookselling: the shape of things to come, by Julian Blackwell, and various papers on computerized information retrieval.

There were 94 stands in the excellent exhibition of library suppliers, furnishers, publishers, booksellers and computerized services; and Lord Kearton particularly commented on the British Library stands during his closing remarks. It is a pity that the Bowker Publishing Company did not consider it appropriate to display *Indexers on Indexing* on its stand.

Compensations of indexing

Rebecca Smith

Why do I like this job so much? The mother of three small children, living in a far from stimulating, remote area, in a wildly untidy house with no appearance of organization, a life apparently too hectic to allow a job to be fitted in. . . .

Then there are the pangs of self-doubt; the thought of judgement of other indexers when the book is published—'who did this? Not an accomplished indexer!', they may wonder. With philosophy as one of my specialist subjects I am exposed to some very abstruse and convoluted works—with little knowledge of some areas of the subject. I worry about needing to contact the author and reveal my ignorance, making a crashing blunder or including a meaningless reference. . . .

But still, when a telephone call comes from a publisher, I agree to undertake the job, however busy I may be, and feel the same thrill, even when tinged with panic. I look through the proofs when they arrive with the magic feeling of one embarking on a creative task, just as in writing the first word on a sheet of paper. Even a slightly sinking sensation on finding that this particular index is going to be heavy going disappears as, with the eldest child at school, the others settled to absorbing activities, my equipment set about me and my mind cleared for the task, I settle to it.

Since I was a child, publishing has held an aura of glamour for me, and knowing the publishing world more closely has increased my excitement. I love seeing important new books in their embryonic proof stage, and feel I really belong there when a book that I have indexed is reviewed.

As for the actual discipline of indexing; it provides a focus for our day, and more gets done when each minute has to be planned. On my working days there must be a small area of order in the house, in great contrast with its surroundings. I concentrate totally on the text in hand—find references 50 pages back, compose neat phrases to summarize a page of abstract thought—and feel my brain sparking as nowadays it seldom can. For a while I can enjoy the sensation of

being a real academic. I take pride in the speed with which I compile an index, usually returning it several days earlier than the publisher's deadline. I almost equally enjoy proofreading, charging a different hourly rate; finding a mistake in proofs is a little thrill every time.

I enjoy browsing through other people's indexes, spotting possible improvements, and gaining a feeling of superiority if I find a really inadequate index to an important book, thinking how much better I could have done it. I enjoy the money earned from indexing; as do my children, for I usually reward them for being good and quiet by buying special presents when the cheque arrives.

At this stage in my career, tied to the house with a brain itching to be properly used, I find compiling indexes a useful, challenging discipline which puts me in touch with the wider world of books and people.

Articles of interest

Ken Bakewell, our Society's vice-chairman, writes in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* No. 412, 26 September 1980, p. 12, of the complexities of index compilation and the guidance available; 'How to let your fingers do the walking, and not lose the way.'

'Printed indexes to later 19C Probate records' by Jeremy Gibson appears in *Family History News and Digest*, 2 (4) Autumn 1980, 123-5.

PASCAL, MISTRAL et DIANE

'Bases de données et centres serveurs' is the title of a special number of *Documentaliste* (vol. 17, no. 6, Nov.-Dec. 1980) devoted to a survey of data bases and information services, national and international, originating or available in France.

As a contribution to the International Year of the Child (1979), staff members of the All-Union State Library of Moscow compiled an index of Russian and other authors of children's books: *Bibliographical index on books for children*.