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.

Extracts are arranged alphabetically under the names of publishers, within the sections: Indexes praised: Two cheers! Indexes censured: Indexes omitted.

Indexes praised

'... there is a particularly useful index of industrial and light railway locomotives listed in date order by makers. There is also an index of foreign-built engines, a list of the principal preservation centres and a general index.'

'The volume is obviously very well indexed! (index completed by Anthony Raven after the author's death).'

W. H. Allen: Yesterday when I was young, by Charles Aznavour (£5.95). Rev. by Ivan Butler, Film Review 80-1.
'... and a comprehensive and easy-to-use index.'

American Chemical Society, Washington: Coal liquefaction fundamentals (ACS Symposium Series No. 139), ed. by D. D. Whitehurst (411 pp., 1980, $38.00). Rev. by J. Gibson, Chemistry in Britain, April 81.
'The text has been photomechanically reproduced but it is clear to read, with good tables and figures, copious literature references and an excellent index all robustly bound.'

'Happily, the indexes are superb.'

'... and a comprehensive and easy-to-use index.'

'... it has an index, of great help in the discovery of markets concerned with specific subjects.'

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.

'... a lovely chapter on rackets and references to numerous pages showing pitfalls in its excellent index.'

'... the compilation of the index must have been a nightmare. Simply because of the title—and the source of the publication—people will scan the index looking for faults, and, as with about all other indexes, faults can be found. Perhaps there are insufficient references, but I found the index adequate and its compiler worthy of commendation.'

'The information is well presented and, with its alphabetical arrangement of entries and easy-to-use index, this directory should be indispensable for anyone who ever needs to trace a voluntary or charitable organization.'

Cambridge Univ. Pr.: The letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay, vols V, VI (each £40, 484 pp.). Rev. by Hugh Trevor-Roper, Sunday Times, 7 June 81.
'The index—180 pages of it—is a treasury in itself.'

'The index in a work of this nature can be a problem. The British bibliography used a simple index of authors. The French bibliography offers a thematic index broken down into many helpful sub-divisions and well provided with cross references. A second index is given on a geographical basis using the 21 regions indicated on the map at the front paper (Normandy is regarded as one region in the index though divided into two on the map). A perfectionist would also demand a brief index of authors, but this would add riches to an already rich feast.'

'The Index maintains the high standard of an excellent production.'


'The index passed every test to which it was subjected.' [The index was by Rosemary Dave. The publication is not one of the most famous in the world—it probably counts as 'grey' literature in the library jargon—but the review is long and thoughtful and the reviewer must have used the index quite a bit before coming to this view of it]


'There is a useful appendix of drug names (but no structures), some suggested further reading, and a good index.'


'Mr Thackrah provides a map, a glossary of general information and a good index.'


'A useful alphabetical index to companies is provided, enabling quick reference to the comprehensive information contained in this large volume.'


'...a thorough index.'


'No reference sections, but a very full index.'


'The calendar is full and carefully arranged, and there is generous additional apparatus ... and indexes which are as helpful as indexes can be.'


'A comprehensive index includes not only terms derived from Latin and Greek but also those adopted from the French, Italian, Spanish, German, Arabic, and other languages.'


'Each section is divided into discussion, apparatus, reagents, procedure. Any method required is immediately found, there are references, a short bibliography and a good index.'


'The inclusion of two excellent indexes at the end of the major chapter of the book, however, helps to alleviate some of the confusion created by the usage of terms. ... These indexes are perhaps the most valuable feature of the book. They provide the most comprehensive catalogues of contemporary Peruvian instruments to date and greatly facilitate reference.'


'Though there is a good index, there is no bibliography of any kind, not even to other popular books.'


'BS 3700:1976, however, on the preparation of indexes, has been adhered to scrupulously by Ken Bakewell in his very thorough fifty-page index, twice as long as many of the chapters.'


'This information is handled in two ways. First, the names of streets, churches, and public buildings are superimposed upon the map, and are then brought together in an index of place names. The index provides additional notes and grid square references (each of the 28 plates is unobtrusively subdivided into six for this purpose) and also refers, where appropriate, to the two companion maps. Second, such largely unnamed items as bastions, wells and conduits, and also "miscellaneous features"—a category comprehensive enough to include "smoke", "laundry basket", "milkmaid", and "City Dog House"—are assigned separate number references on the map which are explained and annotated in a special "symbol index". Hence the "A to Z" of the title: map and indexes are fully complementary, and all the information is equally readily accessible, whichever is approached first.

'Adrian Procter, who compiled the index, and Robert Taylor, who plotted the overlay, have done a real service in reconstituting this information in a way which will encourage these maps to be used widely and readily as a matter of routine. ... All this is brought together by John Fisher's introduction which sets out what is known of these three maps, their relationship and comparative merits, with clarity and conciseness, and then reviews under such separate headings as "Churches", "Water Supply", "Industry" and "Recreation" the mass of information which emerges from the compilation of the subject index.'


'The book includes a comprehensive index. ... '
'The clearly laid out table of Contents and Index makes any particular aspect of the administrative process extremely easy to locate.'
Rev. by Bob Morris, Municipal Review.
'The indexing is exemplary.'
[The index was by Ken Bakewell. See The Indexer 2 (2), 72 and 92.]

New English Library: Marvin, by Donald Zec (£5.95). Rev. by Ivan Butler, Film Review 80-1 (annual).
'A section of illustrations is included, together with a brief filmography and a good index.'

'The book is well documented—with excellent filmographies and a very good index.'

'. . . and an immaculate index.' (by member Mrs J. M. Ross).

'Various improvements and additions to the original German edition are in evidence in this worthwhile English translation. Among these the index now serves an extra purpose as a useful glossary.'

'The book is well produced and illustrated, pleasing to read, and has a very comprehensive index.'

'There are 11 appendices . . . also a 16-page glossary, 3 pages of selected readings, and a good 18-page index.'

'The volumes are splendidly produced . . . concluding with an excellent index—even if it does get my name wrong!'

'However, although at times difficult to digest, this book contains a wealth of information which is readily accessible via the systematic classification and comprehensive index.'

'The index, which sensibly quotes paragraph-numbers (not the usual page references), analyses text-content in such detail that nearly all entries require only one numbered reference; the rest almost never exceed two or three.'

'For those who know from experience the usefulness of a proper index, it will be a delight to discover that not only is there a detailed listing by name and page reference but also another index of identifications or a grouping by occupations within Canada. If one is interested in artisans, authors, fur traders or judges, there is a complete listing.'

Univ. of Warwick Library: Guide to the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick Library, comp. by R. Storey and J. Druker (£1.50). Rev. in Archives 14, 80.
'The whole is blessed with a very full Index, enabling the unwary to trace the fate of some lesser known bodies.'

'The text is also supported by an excellent 70-page index.'

'I found some parts of the book particularly valuable, the footnotes . . . the appendices . . . and the index.'

Yale Univ. Pr.: Prehistoric Avebury, by Aubrey Burl (284 pp., £8.95). Rev. by Paul Ashbee, Antiquaries Journal 60.1, 80.
'A functional index, with principal passages in bold type, facilitates the use of this handsome book.'

Two cheers!

Macmillan: Introduction to radiochemistry, by D. J. Malcolm-Lawes (145 pp., 1979, £10.00 (hardback), £4.95 (paperback)). Rev. by J. C. Cuninghame, Chemistry in Britain, May 80.
'There is a list of suppliers of equipment which is useful but not always up to date . . . and an index which could be a little more complete.'

'The index is limited: typhoid fever and poliomyelitis are not mentioned and hydatid disease is listed only in the spleen / wonder whose—Ed.]; but Marion's disease (does it exist anyway?), Peutz-Jeghers syndrome, and the Zollinger-Ellison syndrome are included.'

'The index often lacks specificity, in contrast with the author’s generally meticulous approach. It is vague and puzzling, for instance, when the author assigns 1 page to the term ‘United Nations’, although she does not break it down further. 'Coverage', as a term alone, seems unnecessary and pointless. In general, however, there are good and explicit cross-references.’


‘About 500 references are all collected together at the end of the volume along with the Subject Index. The latter is a bit skimped, but a useful touch is the index of carbanion equivalents which serves to underline the synthon involvement.’

Indexes censured


'The index is four bicolumnar pages with one posting per entry consisting of a list of pages, therefore lacking in detail. The index also lacks references to people, organizations, or particular items referred to in the text.’


'The index was apparently compiled by someone who knew nothing about the contents of the book; numerous entries refer to the subjects of illustrative problems and of studies cited solely for the method of research used. In addition, there are some mistakes in page numbers.’


‘Nor should such readers take a horrible imperfect index (ignoring scores of works cited or quoted in the text) as in any way representative of the thoroughly-documented scholarship of the rest of the volume.’

J. A. Allen: The role of the horse in man's culture, by Harold B. Barclay (398 pp., £8.95). Rev. by Owen Lattimore, Times Literary Supplement, 22 May 81.

‘The defect of the index is that it is incomplete: one cannot find important indicators of cultural periods, like Hallstatt’ [sic, for Hallstatt].


‘A thoroughly bad index and some rather incoherent dating of key events in Merton’s life are the worst flaws in a biography which sets a very high standard for the year now beginning.’


‘But I must not over-carp. Mr Williams loves his London and his book is nicely illustrated. It is not so well indexed (but publishers are usually mean when it comes to paying for this necessary appendage to every serious work of non-fiction). . . .

David and Charles: Ballet and dance: a guide to the repertory, by Peter Brinson and Clement Crisp (£7.95). Rev. in Dancing Times, Dec. 80.

‘The index is not compiled by the authors, is unworthy of the book.’


‘Dr Patten's demonstration of the improved facilities in small towns for buying such consumer goods as soap, haberdashery and paper, makes one regret all the more the poverty of the index. Soap-boiling, needle-making, button-making, and pipe-making serve as important clues in his search for evidence of more diversified occupations in towns. But having received attention in the text, they are omitted from the index. In addition to the scanty index, the scalograms are printed upside down, and the proofreading is slipshod. This is a valuable survey of early modern towns, written in a lively stimulating prose, but it is less than well served by its printer and publisher.’


‘The author has not been well served by the rather strange index provided by the publisher. Jacquetta Hawkes comes under J, in between “invasion—hypothesis” and “Kellythorpe warrior” and Professor Piggott makes his bow between “people—survey” and “Pilsgate Man”.’


‘... the index repeatedly departs from precise alphabetical order, a lumps calami which modern filing cards seem to generate ever more frequently.’


‘The index is rather odd, including some references of little importance and omitting others of some note, like the Hudson's Bay Company. The sparsity of the index may be a bother to librarians and students trying to locate information quickly.’

'Anyway, why worry, there is the Index! That is, if you can see it. If it is as important as the authors say it is, why does it only warrant such a small type, occupying just six pages? . . . If they mean the index to be simply and easily used, then it must be in a good clear type, or it defeats its purpose. Nor is it a very good index. Under Celebrated Posters there is just one page number, and whilst many artists' names are listed there, it doesn't say under which ones more details can be found. Main entry page numbers need to be in heavy type.'


'On a more minor point, the indexing for a volume of this nature is far from adequate. The only index is for the names of MPs and even here the page number of the entry is not given. The authors mention that they have been struck by the large number of railwaymen who have become MPs and the success of certain trade unions in obtaining parliamentary representation unmatched by equal success in the ministerial arena. However, without some sort of an index to throw more light on this fascinating information it would be beyond the determination of most readers to get at the full figures.'


'The index is not quite as comprehensive as the handbook itself.'


'. . . the book's usefulness as a work of reference is gravely diminished by a most slovenly index.'


.' . . the index is not entirely reliable as a random check showed. Anglo-Saxon personal names cause difficulty where the same person may appear and be indexed under three different spellings, as SS Werburgh and Etheldreda do.'


'. . . a 'General Index' of only eight pages which does justice neither to the book nor to the reader.'


'The index is worthless. For example, Letter 3 has references to the Bible, Enfield's Speaker, Euclid, Eutropius, John Hazlitt, Margaret Hazlitt, Ovid, the Royal Academy, and a Mr Vaughan, none of which are listed given in the index. Margaret Hazlitt, who is also mentioned on pp. 43, 47, 48, 49, 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 73, etc. etc., has no entry at all.'


'The index is defective and there is no list of illustrations.'


'An extensive bibliography (over 100 entries) is followed by an overblown index, confusingly unorthodox in the layout of subheadings and replete with entries leading to information of minimal significance. This diminishes the accessibility, for reference purposes, of the book's rich factual content . . . '


'There are few black marks. Worth noting are the skimpy and inadequate chapter on market information for exporters, and the indexing style which prefers to use broad headings rather than specific ones.'


'The index could also have been more useful with more subject entries, if necessary to the exclusion of names of persons mentioned casually in the text. Who, for instance, is going to be hunting in this book for references to Pi Sheng? On the other hand, somebody seeking information about paper will find but a single entry (paper sizes, system of) and in the case of type metal none at all. This shortcoming should be made good in future editions, of which there will surely be many.'

Indexes omitted


'Worst of all, the book contains no index!'


'Though these two have good source notes neither has an index, which is a regrettable omission.'


'On the debit side, one must regretfully point to the complete lack of an index. . . . It is thus difficult if not impossible to pinpoint information short of reading the volume cover to cover and by taking copious notes.'

The Indexer Vol. 12 No. 4 October 1981
'There's no index.'

'The photographs are splendid but there is no index.'

'It is disappointing that the book lacks an index or a complete list of illustrations.'

'The lack of an index for this volume is a drawback and an irritation.'

The second volume concludes with a bibliography listing about 3000 references to papers involving electrophoretic analyses of lipoproteins in humans. These references are, however, listed in methodology and subject groups, and they merely give, without comment, the name of one author and the title in English of the paper; an author index and a more detailed subject index would be helpful.

Blackwell: Making a comprehensive work. The road from Bomb Alley, by Peter Dawson (£3.95). Rev. by Margaret Miles, ILEA Contact, 20 Feb. 81.
'As the names of people, institutions and organizations are frequently referred to in the text, an index would have been helpful.'

The second volume concludes with a bibliography listing about 3000 references to papers involving electrophoretic analyses of lipoproteins in humans. These references are, however, listed in methodology and subject groups, and they merely give, without comment, the name of one author and the title in English of the paper; an author index and a more detailed subject index would be helpful.

'...but its value for reference is curtailed by the lack of an index.'

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'None of these (otherwise valuable) books is indexed!'
‘These volumes have one major flaw common to most archaeological publications: the lack of an index. . . . The lack of an index coupled with the sheer volume of information presented in this publication will hamper convenient and efficient use by the occasional reader. A certain familiarity is required to use this reference effectively as this detailed in-depth study of the pipe-making industry is occasionally a labyrinth of information. An index would definitely enhance the book’s value as a research tool.’


‘. . . has NordMedia published the Maxwell-Hyslop manual to fill a gap left by Philips? As the cost of the manual is £39 for 102 typescript pages and no index, the question seems reasonable.’


‘Professor W. H. C. Frend has provided a select bibliography. . . . An index would have been equally welcome.’


‘Besides, how can you take seriously a book with no index?’


‘More serious is the absence of a general index, which is a nuisance if one wants something in a hurry. All encyclopaedias arranged thematically, as this one is, ought to have an index.’

[All encyclopaedias, whether arranged thematically or not, need an index!]


‘. . . his biography is an oddly wispy book, lacking footnotes, an index and, it must be said, substance.’


‘It is a pity that the book does not contain an index of the passages cited.’


‘My second reservation is not a plea, but a forthright and thumping condemnation: *There is no index*. This omission (and it is useless to say that the table of contents will do because it won’t) from such a talented source is a mystery. The absence of an index seriously diminishes the value of the whole work; but it is still a marvellous book and every orthopaed will have to buy it.’


‘Had the volume been provided with an index of names . . . it would have read like a rather complete *Who’s Who* of late seventeenth-century thought. There are no indexes. In a just society, librarians would catalogue such books without shelf-marks; or perhaps they would be reviewed without mention of their publishers’ names.’


‘Typewriter composition detracts from the readability and the book lacks an index—an inexcusable omission for a student text.’


‘There is a page index at the end of the book giving the title and authors of each article but no subject index. Since the [ninety-six] articles cover a very wide range, this makes it difficult to judge the coverage given to any particular topic, especially as there has been no attempt to order the articles according to subject.’


‘Although it mentions many names, it has no index.’


‘But there is no index, which would have been particularly useful in a work like this where the names of individuals and organizations inevitably recur in different contexts.’

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**Tailpiece**

Index not linked


‘A warning to any freelance thinking of augmenting his reference-book collection with the shorter edition of the 1981 Whitaker’s Almanack.’

‘Before deciding to buy he would probably scan the index to check for subjects in which he has a particular interest. It is unlikely, in the nature of things, that he would notice the footnote across the bottom of the page: “Pages 693-1196 are omitted from the shorter edition”.

‘The index, in fact, is for the complete edition. In the history of printing this must be the first instance of one book carrying the index for another. Surely this merits a Granada award for profitable sloppiness?’

Ivor Smullen, Leeds'
A copy sent to the publishers brought this reply:

'It is not considered practical to provide different indexes for
the Complete and Shorter Editions. The compilation and
printing of an index of the present size is in itself an annual
problem both to the Editor and to the printers in view of the
short space of time available when the book itself has been
compiled. To prepare a second index to part of the same
material and have this printed simultaneously is not
impossible, but it would involve greatly increased costs and
these would be reflected at once in the published price of the
book. It has been our experience that the extra entries carried
by the Shorter Edition Index have rarely been considered a
drawback by its readers.'

Our warm thanks to those contributing to this section: Ken
Bakewell (Liverpool), Hazel Bell (Hatfield), Diana Boatman
(Slough), Anne Cope (Chadds Ford, Penn.), Michael Dean
(Norwich), Philip Found (St Buryan), John Gibson (Stourport-
on-Severn), Christopher Gowers (Oxford), Dennis Nisbet
(Ottawa), George H. Klumpner (Oak Park, Ill.), Kenneth
Langford (Ingatestone), Cherry Lavell (London), A. B. Lyons
(London), Jackie McDermott (Dewsbury), Dennis Nisbet
(Blenheim), Jay M. Pasachoff (Honolulu), Hilda Pearson
(Cambridge), Lucy Pollard (London), David Pygott (Ashhead)
Annette Surrey (Colchester), Janey Tucker (Glasgow),
Elizabeth Wallis (Kew).

Contributions of review extracts are always welcome by
Norman Hillyer (Hatherleigh Vicarage, Okehampton, Devon
EX20 3JY). Closing dates 1 July and 1 December for the
subsequent issues.

A key keyed

Some indexes lead to material of such vast extent and
complexity that they cannot themselves avoid a degree of
complexity. Ranging through many years and a diversity
of subject matter, the 15,000 papers produced by US
Congressional committees between 1830 and 1969 have
been indexed by the Congressional Information Service,
who have now issued a 32-page booklet on the use of the
index. Entitled An Introduction to Congressional
committee prints, the guide indicates what types of
information may be found in the documents, shows how
to use the index, and illustrates a sample search and list of
titles.

The Introduction may be obtained free from The
Education Director, Congressional Information Service,
Inc., 4520 East-West Highway, Suite 800-C, Bethesda,
MD 20814, USA.

How many norms make a standard? We ask because
within the space of weeks we have received copies of
ALA filing rules (American Library Association),
BLAISE filing rules (British Library) and Library of
Congress filing rules, and also notification that BS 1749
is to be revised. We hope to review the three recent
publications in our next issue.

Is enough enough?

'Notice to all English-language book publishers with
manuscripts in process relating to the subject of
indexing: "Cease and desist immediately". No more
such monographs should be published now or for
another five years at least. The need is fully met.'

This is the view expressed by Professor Eugene B.
Jackson, Teacher of indexing in the Graduate School of
Library Science, University of Texas at Austin, in a
review essay of books on indexing which have been
recently published in England and America. It seems
that the spate began in the 1950s and has continued
fairly steadily since then.

Professor Jackson selects three books of special use-
fulness, and says 'Among these three works there is a
highly adequate coverage of overall concepts of
indexing', and 'Valid additions to the monographic
indexing literature in the next half-decade will only be
those that synthesize experiences with families of
machine-aided procedures'. Nevertheless, it is to be
hoped that authors with books on indexing in progress
will bear in mind that this is but one person's view, and
not be too discouraged from producing their major opus
within the next five years.

H. M. P.

1. 'Indexing: a review essay'. Journal of library history 15,
(3), Summer 1980, 320-5.
2. The Society of Indexers was established in 1957.
3. Indexing concepts and methods by Harold Borko and
Indexing, the art of by G. Norman Knight. London:
Indexers on Indexing by L. M. Harrod. London and

Hearts and 5 x 3's

Two novels reviewed in The Indexer 12 (2), 108-9, are
now available in paperback; both from Granada
(Panther) at £1.50 each. Jailbird by Kurt Vonnegut, the
first (we think) novel to be originally published with an
index, retains the index in its paperback form. No fond
return of love by Barbara Pym, gentle, romantic tale of a
freelance indexer, now sports a paperback cover
featuring a sheaf of index cards with pastel hearts
drifting above them. If only it were always like that. . . .
— P.S. Vonnegut was not quite the first. Virginia
Woolf's Orlando was published by The Hogarth Press in
1928—complete with 150-line index.

Journal volume indexes

The United Kingdom Serials Group, according to its
Group Newsletter No. 6, 1981, has persuaded a monthly
medical journal to issue its index for a completed volume
with the last issue of the volume instead of with the third
issue of the following volume. The Serials Group hopes
that other journals will follow suit and ensure 'that
indexes don't cause unnecessary problems for librarians
and readers'.

222 The Indexer Vol. 12 No. 4 October 1981