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: Obiter dicta.

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.

Indexes praised

‘A good bibliography and a detailed index enhance the scholarly value of the book.’

‘There is a full bibliography and an excellent index.’

‘This first class book is well produced and well indexed and the liberal use of subheadings makes it easy to read.’

‘... and an invaluable index.’

Bodley Head: Help the aged, by Kenneth Hudson (1982, £7.95). Rev. by Rosamund Essex, Church Times, 5 Nov. 82.
‘It has a good bibliography at the end, and above all an excellent index—something which such books as this often omit.’

‘The book is effectively organised into numbered subsections, enhanced by a 20-page glossary and well served by a 50-page index. It fulfils my definition of a handbook—a comprehensive reference book for the professional’s desk.’

‘The book has a good index.’

Cambridge Univ. Pr.: The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union, ed. by Archie Brown et al. Rev. by Iverach McDonald, Times, 3 June 82.
‘... the textual material is not listed in alphabetical order from Abakumov to Zysin (except in the index) but is classified according to subject in twelve broad sections... I found the index as serviceable as the text.’

Cambridge Univ. Pr.: Celestial lancets: a history and rationale of acupuncture and moxa, by Lu Gwei-djen and Joseph Needham (1980, £45). Rev. by Christopher Cullen, Jnl of Royal Asiatic Society 1, 82.
‘As in all productions of the Science and civilization in China project, the scholarly apparatus of this book is impeccable, with good indexing and the usual excellent bibliographies.’

‘... and the two excellent indexes assist the reader who is interested in pinpointing any particular explorer, location or period.’

Collins: There’s a time and a place, by Jamie Wallace (1982, £2.50). Rev. by Keith Walker, Church Times, 27 Aug. 82.
‘The format of the book is good and the index exhaustive.’

Hodder & Stoughton: Hymns for today’s church, ed. by Michael Saward and David Wilson (1982, £6.95, words only £2.95). Rev. by Margaret Daniel, Church Times, 12 Nov. 82.
‘Technically this hymnbook is well produced and looks good. It has excellent indexes—particularly a comprehensive list of hymns for each Sunday theme of the new lectionary.’

‘... a scholarly text which deals with some eleven hundred plants. The appendix, index and bibliography are all that could be desired and there is a generous list of addresses just in case there should be difficulty in obtaining some of the plants mentioned. Details like this are essential to a book of such wide scope.’

‘The basic handbook has been published in instalments since 1978 and is now in five parts plus index and tables... The
comprehensive index and system of pagination make it easy to find one's way around the text . . . ' 

'There is a good index and plenty of cross-referencing throughout the text.'

'There are a good index and a useful bibliography.'

'The body of the book is in dictionary form, with copious indicators to alternative and additional headings, and a very full index.'

'The guide is now much better organised on science and technology. Its index is bigger and better . . .'

'There is also an outstanding index, truly a model of its kind, though its compiler is not so much as named, let alone thanked, in the acknowledgements.'

Murray, John: Lord Byron: Selected letters and journals, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand (1982, £12.50). Rev. by Martin Fagg, Church Times, 26 Nov. 82. 
'What better to dip into on holiday than a book of Byron's letters and journals? But which of the eleven volumes of Professor Leslie Marchand's superb collection edited to take? (The twelfth is mostly devoted to the Index—a work of art in itself in an undertaking of this scale.)'

'The collections are listed alphabetically and a name, place and detailed subject index facilitates the use of the directory.'

'The four indexes are all that the user could desire.'

'Although the alphabetical order of entries makes information quick to find, a more detailed index is also provided.'

'Hopefully the foregoing will display the wide scope and great profit of this volume, enhanced as it is by excellent indices [sic].' 

'. . . there is an invaluable 50-page index.'

'The index is excellent—containing themes as well as people.'

'With excellent bibliography and full index, the volume also contains ample footnotes.'

'The index is good and the book is very well referenced.'

'The indexing of the book is excellent and identifies instantly not only the page, but that part of the page to which reference needs to be made.'

'The book is logically arranged for easy reference and is well indexed.'

'The Lisle Letters are organised so as to make possible an enthralling reading from cover to cover—they are not simply a printed collection of documents—but equally, many will derive much pleasure from following Jonathan Swift's advice "to get a thorough insight into the Index, by which the whole Book is governed and turned, like Fishes by the Tail". 
'The excellent index will give all of them every assistance [referring to] 'students of Tudor history, Tudor language and literature, and indeed Tudor life.' (index by Charlotte Roberts)

Two cheers!


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'The reader will be a useful reference work and in particular because it includes the complete indices [sic] to IEJ up to 1970. It is, however, in some ways difficult to use. The indices give no indication of whether a particular article referred to is included in the collection. The user has to discover this for himself by searching the long contents list.'


'No matter how splendid the new edition may be, and splendid it certainly is, the quality of the index is absolutely crucial. It is the means by which the user gains access to the almost boundless riches of this verbal Aladdin’s cave. Access there is. Easy access ... well, the publisher would be wise to consider supplying the next edition with a copy of BS3700 (available to our members at a discount rate)! [The Longman Group has been a member of The Society of Indexers for many years.]'


'The inclusion of an index—albeit a not totally accurate one—is certainly an advance on last year, but for ease of reference the former alphabetical system was definitely superior.'

**Indexes censured**


'I regret that the index is incomplete as a guide of this type needs to be a reference book too.'


'The index is frankly appalling. A spot check revealed 34 errors in the 151 entries provided, including three errors of alphabetization, and 45 omissions ...'


'... the index is not good.'


'The index? Middling to rotten, which is about par for the course these days. Not many reviewers test an index, or if they do they rarely tell us their verdict. That is why inferior indexes are now the rule—because publishers, correctly, think they can get away with them ... But at the back there is a scholarly looking bibliography, and eight pages of references notes, arranged by chapters, without any clue as to the page of origin. Without running heads or table of contents, Messrs Collins, how can we find anything? And how, without each time leafing through all the pictures, can we ever find a specific photograph, without a list of illustrations? (Certainly not by consulting the index, where they are not mentioned.)'


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'An index like this, quite indiscriminate, is almost worse than none at all.'


'This book suffers from sloppy editing: misprints and spelling mistakes abound, and the index is woefully inadequate. For £7.95 I think the reader is entitled to expect something better.'


'Cowboy Culture was revised in proofs after adverse advance reviews. Perhaps for that reason the index is unworkable in spots.'


'The index (primarily one of names) leaves something to be desired.'


'More irritating are what I take to be the publisher’s errors: the inadequate index (which omits names that appear frequently in the text) and the appallingly bad arrangement of the plates.'


'Macmillan’s should look to their editing; disinterested is not the same as uninterested, not eutepic as euphoric, and what is meant by “Buddha’s impermeability” I cannot imagine—I never heard anyone complain that Buddha let the rain in ... And the index is useless.'


'The index is poor, drugs having to be searched for under other subject headings, for example steroids appear only under asthma and topical skin preparations.'

**Indexes omitted**


'Arranging the entries alphabetically by title and also listing them similarly as a contents page is practical, but the book would be much more useful if it had a subject index; in fact, to make it easier and quicker to use the book this is essential (as I pointed out, with examples, in my review of last year’s volume), and it is surprising that the members of the Committee, who are
presumably all librarians, have not already realized this. Indexes of authors, compilers, and editors would also be useful.'


'Because this book contains so many documented facts, I feel that an index would have increased its value.'

Conway Maritime Pr.: Below the belt (a collation of reprehensible tactics in naval warfare), by John Winton (£5.95). Rev. by Peter Cherry, Eastern Daily Press, 10 July 81.

'... and so full on [sic] information that one regrets the lack of an index.'


'Its contents deserve, however, a handier format, a more durable binding, and an index.'


'An index of subjects would have been helpful.'

Gower Publishing: The strategy of British and German direct investment in Brazil, by Peter Uwe Schliemann (1981, 193 pp., £16.50). Rev. in British Business, 6 March 81.

'Statistical tables provided are useful and revealing, but the lack of an index, coupled with a text photographically reproduced from an indifferent typescript original, reduces its accessibility and readability. It is to be hoped that such a production will not form a pattern for future offerings from this publisher.'

Granada: Scottish walks and legends, by Janice Anderson and Edmond Swinglehurst. Rev. by David Hewson, Times, 6 May 82.

'Just to make sure you really do get lost, the publishers have kindly transposed the main maps in the two volumes and omitted to provide indices [sic], so if you find someone looking for Culloden in Dumfriesshire this summer, you know whom to blame.'


'There is no index.'


'The Directory of Organisations at the end is invaluable, but an index is a notable omission.'


'An unscholarly point is that the book ought to have an index and hasn't.'

Lutterworth: Journeys to the past, by David Attenborough (£9.95). Rev. by Joan Forman, Eastern Daily Press, 4 Jan. 82.

'This is a book which cries aloud for the index the publishers have seen fit to deny it.'


'But Mainstream have produced a work that was much needed, albeit without an index (which was also needed).'


'The provision of a list of these tables is helpful, but an index would have been even more useful; as with all these Metra studies, the seeker for any specific fact has to do some hard quarrying. The end result may be worthwhile, but at the price asked, easier access should be given, not to mention a more durable binding method.'


'Metra has provided the means for much initial spadework, but it is a pity that for the price asked there is no index as a key to the mass of detail offered.'


'On a more mundane level, the book is let down by its impoverished bibliographical furniture—there is no index, inadequate contents list, no bibliography and some rather dubious illustrations of Prestel frames. The lack of an index may not be universally acknowledged as a major omission from a work of 100 pages, but coupled with a minimal contents list it means that over half the book is dubbed "Systems" and the reader is left to discover its layout for himself.'


'The book's weakness is that it lacks an index.'


'Let us be charitable, and assume that Harrison hurried the writing of this book, having been given an impossible deadline by his publishers (who, to their shame, have failed to include an index, and whose proof-readers should be shot—see page 118, for example). Even so, this is an unmitigatedly bad book.'


'But why have two such fastidious scholars allowed the Oxford University Press to omit an index?'


'Excellence of content, however, presupposes heavy use and the need for speedy retrieval of facts. Unfortunately it seems that in some areas of present-day publishing, durability of binding and the added convenience of an index are luxuries that cannot be expected, even with the higher-priced product.'

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Pluto: Sexism: The male monopoly on history and thought, by Marielouise Jansen (£4.95). Rev. by Harriott Gilbert, New Statesman, 11 June 82. 'Nor is it as useful a reference work as it might have been had it had an index.'

Robson Books: Leningrad's ballet. The story of the world's greatest ballet school, by John Gregory and Alexander Ukladnikov (£9.50). Rev. by Antoinette Faulkner, Eastern Daily Press, 7 Aug. 81. 'A more methodical approach, as well as a more critical one, would have helped the book live up to expectations. There is no index, no list of illustrations, no repertoire summary. There is a quote from an un-named John Masefield poem under the last picture. But that's not what we want when we are trying to plumb the depths of Russian ballet.'

Royal Society & British Academy: The emergence of man. A joint symposium (1981, 216 pp., £21). Rev. by Thurstan Shaw, Antiquity 56, 82. 'There is one blemish in an otherwise excellent publication: no index.'

Saudi Advertising: Saudi Arabia trade directory (2nd ed., 1981, 656 pp., £57.50). Rev. in British Business, 4 Dec. 81. '... there is a product list by modified standard industrial classification (for which a contents schedule is given, but not an index) ...'

Sharpe, New York: The bronze age civilizations of Central Asia. Recent Soviet discoveries, ed. by Philip H. Kohl (1982, 442 pp., $35). Rev. by Gina Lee Barnes, Antiquity 56, 82. 'Only the lack of an index, and the untranslated titles of reference works, detract from the usefulness and informative potential of this collection.'

Thomas, Charles C., Springfield, Ill.: Psychiatric illness in physicians, ed. by Samuel E. D. Shortt (1982, 329 pp., $34.75). Rev. by Andrew C. Smith, Lancet, 6 Nov. 82. 'The whole is thoroughly informative although there is much overlap. There are suggestions for further reading, up to 1980, but no index.' [Maybe that missing index would have exposed the overlapping before publication!]

Univ. of Oklahoma: The British and Irish in Oklahoma, by Patrick J. Blessing (1980). Rev. by V. Lyle Haskins, Chronicles of Oklahoma, Summer 82. 'The most frustrating omission in the book is its lack of an index. It is impossible to find any topic quickly. To complicate matters, the author has structured the book into five chronological chapters, forcing the reader to search page by page through two or more chapters for the complete discussion of most major topics.'

Univ. Press of America, Washington, DC: Nineteenth century German Protestantism: The church as social model, by John E. Groh (1982, 636 pp., $30.75). Rev. by Donald J. Dietrich, Journal of Church & State 24.2, 82. 'Likewise, in a work of this length and factual richness, an index is necessary, but is unfortunately lacking.'

Westbury House: Readings from Futures: a collection of articles from the journal 'Futures' 1974-80, ed. by Ralph Jones (1981, 386 pp., £14). Rev. in British Business, 18 Dec. 81. 'Now 32 articles from the journal have been reprinted in one convenient and substantial volume—although marred by the absence of an index.'

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**Obiter dicta**

Bingley, Clive: Abstracting and indexing, by Jennifer E. Rowley (1982, 155 pp., £8.75). Rev. by K. G. B. Bakewell, The Indexer 13.2, Oct. 82. 'And if Ms Rowley really thinks that manual post-coordinate indexes are not amenable to searching by the library's clientele (p. 70), I suggest that she visits Codswall Comprehensive School some time.'

Chatto: Letters: Sylvia Townsend Warner, ed. by William Maxwell (£15). Rev. by Rosamond Lehmann, Standard, 3 Nov. 82. 'In his introduction to this admirably edited volume, William Maxwell says: "To index these letters would be pointless; everything is as interesting as everything else."'

Elm Tree Books: No turn unstoned: The worst ever theatrical reviews, compiled by Diana Rigg (1982, £6.95). Rev. by Hilary Spurling, Observer, 12 Sept. 82. 'All in all, and whichever way you look at it, this is an extraordinarily comforting book; and what one may call its blitz spirit is neatly emphasised by an index that includes no critics' names at all (not perhaps a significant omission since the printers have in any case cut off getting on for half the page numbers of my copy).'

Hale, Robert: An author's guide to publishing, by Michael Legat (1982, 192 pp., £7.95). Rev. by M.H. in Bookseller, 9 Oct. 82. 'With some skill [trying hard not to advertise?] he manages to keep all actual publishers out of his index and all but two or three out of his text.'

Murray, John: The Lyttleton Hart-Davis letters: Vol. 4 (£12.50). Rev. by Neville Braybrooke, The Tablet, 19 June 82. 'Cricket enthusiasts with an eye for fantasy should turn to the page where George Lyttleton brings up the suggestion of a single-wicket match between Marilyn Monroe and Diana Dors to raise funds for the MCC at Lord's. The page is 156—and I give it because whereas other names such as Cowdrey, Hutton and Keith Miller are included in the index, those of Marilyn Monroe and Diana Dors are not. This seems hardly cricket.'

Murray, John: The trouble of an index: Byron's letters and journals, Vol. XII, Anthology of memorable passages and index to all volumes, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand (1982, £15). Rev. by Richard Holmes, Times, 5 Aug. 82. 'A general index may sound dull, but try dipping into the marvellous short anthology of Lord B's [sic] lethal aphorisms and fruity bon mots which comes with it. Something for every mood and occasion: Women, Children, Writing, Ennui, Religion, Reviews, whatever takes your fancy, or your imagination. The quote here must surely be: "I have been more ravished myself than anybody since the Trojan war . . ."'

'On page 4 he refers to the failure of schools to teach pupils how to work efficiently; he might also have referred to their failure to teach information skills, including the use of book indexes to locate information, and done something to rectify this failure by explaining to his professionals how useful a good book index could be to them.'


'There is also an admitted reluctance to mention men in the index.'

**Odds to end: (1) Record index?**

HMV has reissued *A record of singers*, not a book but two boxes of six discs, featuring 71 singers who appeared at Covent Garden between 1899 and 1919. In his review in *The Guardian* (9 Nov. 82) Edward Greenfield comments: 'It is an attractive enough idea, but in practice without an index it is hard to find what you want . . .'

**Odds to end: (2) Screen index?**

The National Consumer Council have published *Prestel in use: a consumer view*, by E. Scott Maynes (1982, 70p). In *Audiovisual Librarian* 8.4, 82, Peter Liebscher quotes the author as singling out 'the indexing systems, both external and internal, for particular criticism and recommends that they be scrapped and replaced with others more efficient and consumer orientated. Scholars and librarians may find the present indexes useful but not the private individual.' From the examples he cites, adds the reviewer, even librarians would be extremely frustrated at times.

**Our medieval forebears?**

At his most characteristic, medieval man was not a dreamer nor a wanderer. He was an organizer, a codifier, a builder of systems. He wanted 'a place for everything and everything in the right place'. Distinction, definition, tabulation were his delight. Though full of turbulent activities, he was equally full of the impulse to formalize them. War was (in intention) formalized by the art of heraldry and the rules of chivalry; sexual passion (in intention), by an elaborate code of love. Highly original and soaring philosophical speculation squeezes itself into a rigid dialectical pattern copied from Aristotle. Studies like Law and Moral Theology, which demand the ordering of very diverse particulars, especially flourish. Every way in which a poet can write (including some in which he had much better not) is classified in the Arts of Rhetoric. There was nothing which medieval people liked better, or did better, than sorting out and tidying up. Of all our modern inventions I suspect that they would most have admired the card index.

This impulse is equally at work in what seem to us their silliest pedantries and in their most sublime achievements. In the latter we see the tranquil, indefatigable, exultant energy of passionately systematic minds bringing huge masses of heterogeneous material into unity. The perfect examples are the *Summa* of Aquinas and Dante's *Divine Comedy*; as unified and ordered as the Parthenon or the *Oedipus Rex*, as crowded and varied as a London terminus on a bank holiday.

But there is a third work which we can, I think, set beside these two. This is the medieval synthesis itself, the whole organization of their theology, science, and history into a single, complex, harmonious mental Model of the Universe. The building of this Model is conditioned by two factors I have already mentioned: the essentially bookish character of their culture, and their intense love of system.

—From *The discarded image* by C. S. Lewis (1964). Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.