

administrative information. From 1984 the standard terminal for shared services will have an IBM/PC, that is, it will include a microcomputer which can be used for other purposes as well as OCLC functions.

New files being added to the DIALOG database catalogue include SCISEARCH files going back to 1970, TRADESCAN (currently active US trademarks), Congressional Record Abstracts from 1976, Family Resources Database from 1973, Information Science Abstracts from 1966, Religion Index from 1975, and World Affairs Report (a digest of news as seen from

Moscow) from 1970.

Hansard can now be accessed via POLIS. Individual contributions are indexed so that it is possible to go from index to text online. The file will go back to 3 November 1982, the beginning of the last session of the last Parliament.

Cuadra Associates' *Directory of online databases* (quarterly, comprising two complete reissues and two updating supplements) now covers more than 1800 online databases.

Mary Piggott

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## INDEXERS IN FICTION

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If Barbara Pym shows us the value of indexing amongst the virtues of wife or helpmeet (*The Indexer* 13 (3), 197-8), Angela Thirkell in *County chronicle* (Hamish Hamilton, 1950) has an index as an aid to love (and marriage). Our thanks to Hamish Hamilton for permission to quote these extracts as the tenth instalment in our series.

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'And while I was in Barchester', says Lord Silverbridge on page 268, 'I bought a card index. You know, a kind of whatnot with very long drawers and you put A to C and X to Z on them and write things on cards and then don't know where you've put them'.

He goes on to explain that though he works for a publisher 'turning a fairly honest penny' all the card index stuff is done by a secretary. 'The other day she was out and I wasted hours looking for one of our authors called Spenderton-Cook because she had put him under E.'

Isabel Dale, the heroine, whom he's just met, falls for this and says she supposes it was a mistake. 'As a matter of fact it wasn't,' says Lord Silverbridge, 'at least not exactly. His name is Evan-Spenderton-Cook and sometimes he hyphens them all and sometimes he doesn't. But I thought the secretary could have done a kind of cross-indexing if that's the right word and put them in under everything. She's one of those educated young women that are obviously going to bully their employers all their lives till they marry one of them.'

Actually this is just ill will, for we do not find him henpecked at all, by anyone, not even the ebullient Lady Cora, his sister. Nor is this gifted pianist quite so dumb on indexing as he appears, and when Isabel and he and the card index cabinet are sitting together, at this juncture with a chaperon and a teatray, he soon gets the hang of it. Why is Isabel the expert? Well, she is a leading light in the Barchester Hospital Libraries, like some

others of Angela Thirkell's heroines, and, unknown to his Lordship, is author of some of his favourite books, which she writes anagrammatically under the name of Lisa Bedale. She is also a natural genius with everybody's papers.

You may want to know why the Duke of Omnium's heir is messing about with his own card index at all. This is quickly answered. Unlike Isabel's other potential suitor who is absorbed with a newly-discovered variant on Bohun's 'Sonnet on his Mistress's Pox', Silverbridge has a real book in hand, the *War history of the Bassetshire Yeomanry*. By page 292 of *County chronicle* he has mastered the card index, and although its use is never quite explained to us, one gathers it enables him to find details of the members of the Yeomanry. By this time Isabel is helping him to sort out the reminiscent contributions and the work is likely to be completed within a year. However, Mrs Thirkell's novel itself has to finish quite soon,—it has only 348 pages—and when the Conservative 'do' is over Silverbridge proposes to Isabel and is accepted. Their union is going to be most useful to the Omniums: Isabel has just become heiress to what sounds like millions, and the Omniums are a bit strapped for cash. Silverbridge is now going to be able to stand for Parliament—guess in whose interest? I hope he doesn't lose sight of the card index, which has done much for him and must be one of the most important indexes in English fiction, at least to the followers of Bassetshire fortunes. What does happen to the Silverbridges I don't yet know. I'm only on my 26th Thirkell and there are ten more to go. They take some concentration. I'm beginning to wonder if I should make a card index; the Divine Angela must have been pretty familiar with them.

J.D.L.

