

Indexes Past

We delight to print in full the index to *London labour and the London poor: the condition and earnings of those that will work, cannot work, and will not work*; Vol. ii, *London street-folk* by Henry Mayhew, published in 1865 by Charles Griffin and Company of London. (The index appears at the front of the volume.)

Before reading it through, try your hand at finding references to the following topics: chimneys of steam-vessels, employment of master sweeps, London traffic (3 refs.) and water in the streets, Mike the young crossing-sweeper, old shoe renovation, seasonal variations in labour (2 separate entries), sellers of animals, fish, and second-hand articles for amusement. Don't give up too easily; all are there.

Punctuation and order are reproduced exactly as in the original.

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□ Russell Ash in *The Bookseller* (14 Jan. 1984) suggests new eponymous origins for bookish terms, including the hitherto unsung—

Jacobus Index (c. 1446–1502), an Italian scribe and halfwit, gave his name to the 'index' despite the fact that his first attempts were less than useful as he had totally failed to grasp the concept of alphabetical order.

A man of honour by Joseph Bonanno (Deutsch, 1983) is the self-aggrandizing autobiography of a Sicilian Mafia leader or 'Godfather'. Its 10-page index (to 406-page text) shares this tendency regarding the book's main character. Bonanno's entry takes nearly a full page, including the subheads:

- generosity of
- handsomeness of
- intellect of
- language skills of
- tact of
- wit of

which may doggedly indicate only half a sentence of text: 'handsomeness of, 175' leads only to, 'In general, people considered me an attractive man'; 'intellect of, 176', to, 'They kindly praised my charm and intelligence'; 'wit of, 168', to, 'They used to say that I was the toasting champion of the dinner table'—no example is cited.

The technique is used against others, though, either as disguise or heavy sarcasm. Under 'Luciano, Charlie' is included a somewhat startling subhead, in gangland context;

literary sophistication of, 14, 161

and under 'Magaddino, Stefano', also is listed, 'literary sophistication of, 14'.

Turning to these references, we find that page 161 refers to Charlie Luciano thus: 'Although illiterate, he possessed a shrewd intelligence and level-mindedness that made him a good leader and superb organizer'. So *this* is literary competence . . . ? And in the Introduction, which begins on p. 11, we find, 'Men such as Charlie Luciano, . . . and Stefano Magaddino were baffled whenever I would slip a literary allusion into our conversations. When I spoke Italian, they often complained that I used words they did not understand. They had grown up in the impoverished fields of Sicily or in the tenement streets of America. Their language was coarse and expedient.'

Unfortunately for the indexer's irony, if that is what it is, the prelims pagination was presumably changed after page proof stage; for page 14, to which readers are directed for these literary flights, is in fact blank. Perhaps, after all, more appropriately.



In *The Indexer* 13 (2), 123–4, we examined Gordon Wells's *The successful author's handbook* (Macmillan, 1981) which included three pages of advice to authors on preparing indexes, but itself had a deplorable index. Now Mr Wells has brought out a further book of advice to writers, *The craft of writing articles* (Allison and Busby, 1983). This tenders no advice on indexing; but we turned with interest to its index to see whether the lessons we suggested had been learnt, and grieve to find that this is not the case. Again, Mr Wells provides a terrible index to his book of advice to writers.

The index is of two pages (to a 95-page text), and repeats all the faults of its predecessor. Strange terms are lifted straight from the text and shoved into the index without explanation: 5WH test; WWWWH test; Using a model (i.e. of writing style—not for photography). The first pages only of references extending over several pages are cited; instead of 'SHE 36–8, 82, 83', we have only, 'SHE 36'. Many topics and references are omitted from the index. Topics are strangely dispersed: 'Accounts 87, 92' and 'Book-keeping 84' have no linking cross-reference. 'Target magazine' (4 refs.) is not listed under or cross-referred from 'Magazines' (4 other, different refs.). 'Closing paragraphs', 'Linking paragraphs', 'Middle paragraphs' and 'Opening paragraphs' are all entered thus, and omitted under 'Paragraph content/Length'. 'Drawings, pen and ink 72' is missing under both 'Illustrations' and 'Pictures'. These two terms are not cross-referenced, neither is either to or from 'Photographs', which also lacks 'Black and white photographs' and 'Backgrounds (for photographs)', both of which are listed only under B. A sample entry, illustrating this indexer's understanding of pagination, punctuation and alphabetization in indexes, is:

- Writing ability 9
- a series 11 [should be 11–12]
- methods 48
- style 50 [should be 50–3]
- the article 11.

We suggest that in future editions of his books of advice to writers, Mr Wells includes as a golden rule; *Engage the services of a professional indexer to index your book.*

H.K.B.

