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

'There is an extensive index by subject, and one to location.'

'All issues of The Bead Journal have been indexed completely, so that all subjects and authors are covered. In addition, all references cited in articles, and reviews of publications and exhibitions have been indexed under their respective categories. When dealing with subjects as complex as beads/jewelry, this type of index is enormously helpful. Despite having edited this Journal, I am constantly referring to the Index when I need to find anything in past issues.'

'Cambridge University Press has produced a slim, readable volume, with clear diagrams and a helpful index and references (up to 1981).'

'But the prodigious mass of facts is marshalled with a steady hand, the footnoting is exemplary, and there is an outstanding index, its compiler—Frederick Smyth—for once acknowledged: o si sic omnes.' [index by one of our members]

'The index (in a novel?) is a veritable catalogue of fashionable 1980s table talk. It's funny too. Enjoy. Enjoy.'
Rev. by Anthony Thwaite, Observer, 24 July 83.
'The Index must have been fun to do but isn't much fun to read. That last remark isn't my final judgment on the whole book; but there were times when I felt it might be.' [Yes, the same book before both reviewers. Maybe the index was reviewing the reviewer.]

'...the grand old days of journalism... when journalists were emphatically writers and you could quite easily recognize the maestros by the cut of their columns, by the tenor of their jokes. This is the great tradition which Bernard Levin, last bastion against journalistic flavour-blur, belongs to, and it is the spirit—humane, lucid and aggressively inquisitive—that pervades the 264 pages (I include the very readable Index) of this book.' [index by Oula Jones]

'The index is a thing of beauty and a miniature history of society in itself.'

'Among the beauties of the splendid volume are not merely an Index of First Lines but an Index of Last Lines.'

'Ver the author and subject indices [sic] are excellent, except that they do not include Kisch's annotated references.'

'Eighty pithy chapters of intimate and disrespectful commentary make up one quarter of the book; they are interspersed with pictures, some in colour reproduction of moderate quality. The picture pages are not numbered, but the index knows what the numbers should be; furthermore, if you want to locate the source of a picture you have to thumb your way down the alphabetical list of Commonwealth and American archives until you light upon the number sought.'

'It contains a glossary of 300 terms, a detailed index and an index of cited author names.'

'Beare, an antiquarian book dealer, deserves some kind of
award for indexing comprehensiveness. Besides standard author and subject approaches, there is also an index of illustrations. Numerous appendices provide specific access points to children's stories, illustrated interviews, anonymous cartoons, multi-author series, etc. The subject index is a treasury of information on government figures (Sir Winston Churchill), cinema, theatre, animals, music, and, of course, royalty.


'The reason for using numbered subdivisions, when the various subheadings are clearly set and the "contents" and three indices [sic] are good, is obscure.'


'The account of *Struggles and Strategies* is supported by a mass of examples. The book has a detailed index and, for the researcher, there are copious notes (78 pages of them) with additional references.'


'The nature of the thematic treatment means that readers may not instantly find all the information which they seek on particular topics, but the book is well indexed.'


'There is a useful appendix on the preparation of thin sections and the book ends with a good index of all the rocks and the textures shown.'


'This book is full of meat and detail and has obviously been meticulously researched: fully a quarter of the book comprises notes, indices [sic] etc. But the notes are apposite and useful, the indices good, and the maps excellent. It is pre-eminently a good book of reference worthy of constant consultation by anyone with more than a passing interest in the Gulf.'


'I am impressed by the skill with which information is marshalled. But to make full use of the 8.9 million words-worth (7700 entries, 3500 contributors), the excellent index is essential. Unlike the micropedia of the *Britannica*, one cannot locate items quickly by flipping through the alphabetical volumes. That way, you would find *drone* (= pilotless aircraft). You would never discover the other type, which crops up under *bee*.'


'A comprehensive index includes the previous three editions of *Update*.'


'... a splendid book, well indexed and well produced.'


'Both books are simply written, clearly laid out and well indexed...' 


'The bibliography of 312 references and the index of about 325 names are excellent.'


'The book is well indexed and simply written, and should prove easy to use.'


'The book concludes with a bibliography of other texts in structural geology and allied disciplines, a list of British Geological Maps and a comprehensive index.'


'A detailed reference list is given at the end of the book, followed by a comprehensive index.'


'The notes and the indexes... make reference to the survey possible and fruitful in a way which would have surprised King William.'


'The information is very clearly presented and there is an excellent index, together with a list of useful names and addresses of organizations and suppliers.'


'I would not hesitate to recommend the book, and the arrangement of material certainly provides a more gentle and easily understood introduction to difficult concepts than many slimmer volumes. Yet this very arrangement, even though well indexed, rather precludes rapid consultation and reference...' 

[but isn't this why we have indexes?]

Rev. by Mary Lu Moore, Arizona Highways, Aug. 83.
'. . . the author's research, notes, bibliography and index are good.'

'This new edition is magnificent. Scrupulously annotated, spacedly introduced, precisely informative about the plagiarisms or "plagiarisms", and superbly indexed, these volumes meet the very high standards of this great edition of Coleridge's Collected Works.'

'The book is well presented, with clear tables and monochrome diagrams and an excellent index.'

'It is well indexed.'

'There are two useful indexes.'

'The book, arranged by family, genera, species, and varieties, includes separate sections on documentation of research data, a glossary, references cited, reference maps, and a meticulous index.'

'... provided with excellent indexes.'

'There is an excellent index, along with notes and a bibliography.'

'Harvey Carter's competent biographical and bibliographical essay and an extensive index make this study all the more valuable.'

'Its use as a source book is aided . . . by the inclusion of an author, subject and locality index.'

'The index is much better than is to be found in many multi-authored books.'

'As with his other books, the index is extensive—four separate entries for concepts, minerals and materials, chemical formulas and authors. (There is no index of indexes!)'

'Jennifer Hughes has produced a well laid out, well indexed book which can be recommended as offering more than most examination preparation books.'

'The index, though at times circuitous, is a most useful feature and often serves to highlight themes not always apparent in the text.'

Two cheers!

'Occasionally information about the use of the drug in liver disease is thrown in for good measure but since this is inconsistent and not indexed, it is not very useful . . . There is also a very useful bibliography and a brief but generally adequate index.'

Lane, Allen: The Penguin dictionary of proverbs, by Rosalind Fergusson (331 pp., £8.95, pbk £2.50). Rev. in Economist, 23 July 83.
'The Penguin Dictionary is very comprehensive and is neatly organized under subject-headings, with an index of keywords (only one for each proverb).'

Manchester Univ. Press: Catalogue of the Pybus collection of medical books, letters and engravings, 15th-20th centuries, held in the University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, ed. by Joan S. Emmerson (270 pp., £35). Rev. by David McKitterick, Times Literary Supplement, 7 May 82.
'Quite apart from recording the contents of Professor Pybus's remarkable library, Joan S. Emmerson had the good sense to index her catalogue extensively. The indexes to the book trade and to provenances promise to be especially useful, though they are to some extent spoilt by mistakes that a further revision might have eliminated: the French Imprimerie Royale has never operated from Turin, Richard Heber is indexed under B for Bibliotheca, and the Royal Library at Munich appears in two places in the provenance index.'

Indexes censored


'The index is not always easy to understand, because of the choice of headings in the alphabetical sections, and it is not extensive. However, the compilation of indexes is always difficult, and no doubt the likely reader of this book will be conversant with the subject matter and therefore not too concerned with the index.' [no comment]


'Nor should such readers take a horribly 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.'


'The index is disappointingly brief. Topics covered in the text but absent from the index include amnesia, court reports, and head injury.' [now ‘amnesia’ we can understand]


‘On the production side, the volume is well illustrated, well printed, and strongly bound, but the index is patchy.’


‘The references to articles in journals, in the notes, and in the two bibliographies lack pagination, and the index is not comprehensive. For example, entries for his life are included mainly under his name (where there should be an absolute minimum of entries), and there they are arranged according to their appearance in the book. There are no entries in the main body of the index under Austria, Bristol, Cambridge, Hungary, Oxford, Vienna, and many other places with which he was associated, quick reference to which would have been helpful to many readers.’


‘The index is erratic [sic]—for example, The Scotsman is not mentioned and neither is Edinburgh in the instance just given, although it is listed later when referred to in a letter as “Modern Athens”—but perhaps that will have been put into shape by the time volume eight appears.’

Cambridge Univ. Press: Pattern of the past: studies in honour of David Clarke, ed. by Ian Hodder et al. (443 pp., £27.50). Rev. by P. J. Ucko, Times Literary Supplement, 7 Jan. 83.

‘The index is poor.’


‘Mr Harris has not been well served by his publishers. Most of the blemishes indicated could have been removed by competent editing. The inadequacy of the index to a work of this length, complexity and price is a disgrace.’


‘There is a vast literature of self-managed enterprises which he ignores, and “Yugoslavia” does not appear in the index.’

With such long chapters, and with headings that do not indicate their content in the usual way, a comprehensive index is vital. Here there is a disappointment for the index is sparse, certainly not matching the profusion of the references; this is another of the book's weaknesses.


'The index rather typifies this drab New Appraisal (the old volume did not have bibliography or index). Its twelve close-packed columns look professional, but turn out to be drastically incomplete. You will find entries for Antiochus of Ascalon and Antiochus of Syracuse, but not for Hardy, Marx, Nietzsche, Pound, Reinhardt (Max or Karl) or Vico, to name but seven. They are alluded to little enough in the text without adding index to injury.'

Collins: Anna Pavlova. Her life and art, by Keith Money (SA75). Rev. by Geoffrey Hutton, Age (Melbourne), 23 July 83.

'Only one thing disappoints me about this splendid book: that the index omits Pavlova and her career entirely. Browsing through it again, as I shall, I would like a few signposts. Perhaps later editions will fill the gap; I imagine there will be more.'


'It remains to add only, in apprehension of the English version, that the index is inadequate, that it shares with the original an irritating refusal to provide crucial references, and that the bibliography is simply absurd. It seems to have been abridged for the sake of the English-speaking reader, but many books which have been translated are only listed in their German edition. That sums up the slapdash nature of the whole production.'


'A technical text such as this, no matter how lucidly written, requires a truly thorough index. In the introduction ... Lien says that the book offers "an Index, for easy reference after you've learned it all, but forgotten where you learned it." The index of this first edition omits, however, such key terms and concepts as: keyword; basic command, function and statement (for which subsequent distinctions are promised on page 36); wild card, protected, Lowercase mode and Ummyass [sic], a word (?) which the author introduces without definition and uses repeatedly. In addition, unless the index is made totally comprehensive, a glossary should be considered essential.'


'The family trees, lists, maps and illustrations are excellent; it is all the more irritating that the index is grossly inadequate for a book of this kind. People will consult it for years after they have read it: they will not be helped by mistakes in page numbers and alphabetical order, or by the bizarre decision to exclude place-names altogether except for references to libraries, museums and theatres. One hopes that this failure will be remedied in a full general index when all three volumes are complete.'


'The British book is much deeper, more closely focused on the proceedings themselves, and far more thoughtful about them; the Tusas have also had access to a mass of unpublished papers apparently not available to Mr Conot, including the minutes of the Tribunal's closed deliberations on verdicts and sentences. Moreover, their style is firmer and much more graceful, and their overview displays a remarkable and scholarly historical grasp. And they have a narrowly conceived but excellent index—36 columns topically broken down in most helpful detail—whereas Mr Conot's is useless—here, for instance, is the whole of one typical entry:


'... better maps, and a better index, would have been helpful.'

Oxford Univ. Press, for Institute of Historical Research: The Victoria history of the county of Sussex, vol. 6, pt 1, ed. by T. P. Hudson (307 pp., £48). Rev. by R. Horrox, Local Historian 15, 83.

'We could pursue such cross-referencing much more easily if we were given more comprehensive indexes. Expense presumably limits the length of an index, and as the price of each volume is already beyond the reach of most individuals, reform is perhaps impossible. However, the present indexes hardly do justice to the scale of the enterprise. The coverage of subjects is scanty, except under parish headings. So is the coverage of minor place names: local historians trying to trace non-manorial names are given no help unless they already know in which parish the place was situated, and not always then. This has been a weakness of the History from the outset and remains a major drawback to anyone trying to track down specific details, rather than reading up a whole area.'


'We have here, in a neat format, a new dimension to the man. It is to be regretted that insufficient attention has been paid to some of the more important points of book production. On what principles has the select bibliography been drawn up? Ditto for the index. Sadly, too, the copy-editing and proof-reading leave much to be desired. One can only hope that Bernard, who himself experienced trouble with enthusiastic copyists, would have forgiven such peccadilloes.' [ 'more important points' ... 'peccadilloes': now, which?]

'The organization of the book is "slightly odd", as already noted for volume 1 (Lancet 1981; 1:757), and the index is peculiar. Thus, references to chapters as such are not to be found in the index: in order to find, say, what chapters deal with meningitis, one is forced to read all 58 chapter headings in the table of contents (spread over 15 pages) to find out that there are two such chapters—21 and 46. The usefulness of the index table of contents (spread over 15 pages) to find out that there are two such chapters—21 and 46. The usefulness of the index is not helped by having some entries under "cerebrospinal fluid" and others under "CSF". Strangely enough, these two sections do not cover the same ground; when they coincide, the pagination does not (e.g., lumbar CSF pressure appears once under "CSF pressure, lumbar . . . 637" and once under "cerebrospinal fluid, lumbar pressure in . . . 604").'


'The presentation of the various banks, some of which are quite obscure, is often matched by affected comments on their quality and efficacy. Each chapter being self-contained, some duplication was unavoidable; it is neither annoying nor without usefulness; on the contrary, the opinions which different specialists can form of the same book are instructive. One will regret all the more the absence of an index of the quoted banks, which would have made it possible to find quickly all passages in the work where such-and-such a bank is concerned.' [trans. from French]


"Required Writing" would be a treasure-house even if every second page were printed upside down. Lacking the technology

Indexes omitted


"The only deplorable absence of an index mars a volume notable for consistent scholarship, sustained insight, clarity of expression . . . ."

Blandford: The beginner's guide to good gardening, by David Carr (£5.95). Rev. by Tony Venison, Country Life, 22 Nov. 79.

"Unfortunately, though about a quarter of the book forms an "Index of terms and tasks", there is no overall index; anyone unaware whether dollar spot is a disease, planting aid, flower, or area of rich soil must search the pages."


"... and I wonder if it was a false economy to dispense with a bibliography and an index of biblical quotations."
to accomplish this, the publishers have issued the book in paperback only, with no index, as if to prove that no matter how self-effacing its author might be, they can be even more so on his behalf.'


'Mr Saunders has taken the opportunity to correct many of the more grievous errors pointed out in my review of the 1st edition and has expanded it slightly, but has still not provided an index.'


'...access to a poem by its first line has been discontinued. Given both the limited scope of each volume and convenience to the user, this first-line index should be reinstated in future volumes.'


'The absence of an index ... is a constant irritant.'


'...incomplete bibliography and no index.'


'An index of topics and the persons dealt with would have greatly added to the usefulness of this valuable book.'


'Unfortunately the book lacks indices [sic] and has the briefest table of contents.'


'The book would also have benefited from a proper index of legal cases.'


'This is the best commentary yet available on Numbers. I wish it had a bibliography and index.'


'There is no index, which is a nuisance for the reader, but to have compiled a truly adequate one would have been an heroic task, and would have added much to the cost. Better by far to have none at all!' [which leaves us speechless]


'...there is no index.'


'There is no index.'


'There is an inadequate bibliography, no general review of the topic in any depth and no index.'


'...and an index would have increased the ease of reference.'


'The absence of an index in an archaeological report of substantial size is always a regrettable omission.'


'A young relative asked me what I knew about mitochondria ... Van Nostrand's SE gave me a cross-reference from mitochondrion to Cell (Biology). I assumed that mitochondrion was the singular form of mitochondria (the term mitochondrion doesn't seem to be mentioned), and learned that the mitochondria transforms food into energy in the form of ATP. Fortunately I knew what ATP was (adenosine triphosphate), because it wasn't defined in the article, and there is no entry for ATP in the encyclopedia itself. This points out one of the shortcomings of the Van Nostrand's SE: it has no index. If one finds no article and no cross-reference, all one can do is guess at related topics that might contain the information.'

Rev. by Bernard Dixon, New Scientist, 14 July 83.

'...and a clutch of indexing errors (look up salmonella and you are referred to toxin, which is nowhere to be found). [Was there an index or not? Either way, improvements are called for, it seems.]'


'However, the usefulness of this book to any but those using it as a programmed text book is severely limited by the fact that no index is included—a surprising omission for any serious scientific book.'
Obiter dicta


'... I turned to the index for references to that enigmatic character I find most interesting in ecclesiastical matters. There was, however, a notable gap between "Indira Gandhi" and "Earl Godwin". God, it seemed, was not to figure largely in the memoir. Perhaps it would be considered an impertinence to put the Almighty in the index. But what I take to be the splendours and agonies of the religious life, the blazing moments of mystic revelation, the torments of doubt, the dark nights of the soul, the heady sensuality in which some famous divines have experienced the Love of God, are notably absent from *The Making of an Archbishop*, which is informed, polite and uniformly bland. It might, indeed, be describing the career of a thoroughly good chap who worked his way up to becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer in a dull year...

Among the glories of England—trial by Jury, the poets, the great British Breakfast—are undoubtedly thousands of village churches, and in spite of its idiotic abandonment of the greatest prose ever written and the banality of its present language, I do wish the Church of England exceedingly well. I also hope for some contemporary Trollope, also well versed in the works of Ronald Firbank and Evelyn Waugh, who will prowl the corridors of Lambeth Palace and write the great contemporary book on this extraordinary institution, a volume which will include both God and Mrs Gandhi in the index.'

* Catalogue of complaints

'...It must be a long time since booksellers pleaded with publishers to issue their catalogues to a standard format; has anything been said since Peter Stockham wrote a treatise on it? For a bookseller, the problems of keeping them remains, and even if we have to substitute A5 for crown 8vo, this would increase shelvability. No marks at all then to Hodder & Stoughton for their Children's Books Complete List in an obstructive A4, which must have been fun for their production people but a nuisance in the bookseller's reference library. A place-name alphabetically, attributing to each a definition and referring, not to the page on which they occur, but to the place-name itself—thus:

- Kalami (n.) The ancient Eastern art of being able to fold road-maps properly
- Oshkosh (n., vb.) The noise made by someone who has just been grossly flattered and is trying to make light of it.

The final 34 pages are a (single-column) 'Index of meanings', taking topics from the contents of the definitions and referring, not to the page on which they occur, but to the place-name itself—thus:

- Gusto, terrific, tuneless: Royston
- Hat behind, leaving one's: Hidcote Bartram
- Lawnmowers, frustrated: Trispen
- Madmen, departed, in toasters: Throckmorton

Topics are enhanced in the index: 'Ice, octogenarians under the: Wivenhoe' refers to the definition, 'The cry of alacrity with which a sprightly eighty-year-old breaks the ice on the lake when going for a swim on Christmas Eve'; and 'Number, wrong, so she claims: Kurdistan' to, 'hard stare given by a husband to his wife when he notices a sharp increase in the number of times he answers the phone to be told, "Sorry, wrong number"'. There are cross-references in the text; a Wembley is 'the hideous moment of confirmation that the disaster presaged in the ely (q.v.) has actually struck'. Subheadings are used indeed; 26 under 'objects' ('heavy, with toes on: Clun') and 31 under 'noises' ('gushing and cooing: Oshkosh').

Reference direct to place-names lends a new fascination to the index. Rarely can simple page references be perplexing in conjunction with the index entry; but why should 'fish, tropical, stupid' lead to *Stoke Poges*? Why, 'pyjamas, muslim' to *Albuquerque*? We glimpse a new criterion for assessment of indexes; they should make the reader eager to turn to the text cited. Can readers send us other examples of indexes that achieve this?

—Bookseller, 30 July 1983

Our warm thanks to those contributing to this section: Patricia Alonso (Melbourne), Jane Angus (Crathie), Hazel Bell (Hatfield), V. M. A. Brownlow (Yiewsley), Anne Cope (Chadds Ford, Penn.), Mrs R. J. Dawe (London), Michael Dean (Mulbarton), John Field (Uppingham), John Gibson (Stourport-on-Severn), Cecilia Gordon (Hendon), Peter Greig (Ottawa), Brian Hunter (London), Oula Jones (Acton), Cherry Lavell (London), D. T. O'Rourke (Reading), Helga Perry (Westgate-on-Sea), Lucy Pollard (London), David Pygott (Ashefield), Mrs A. O. Simpson (London), Frederick Smyth (Harrow-on-the-Hill), Mrs. A. M. Thomas (London), Elizabeth Wallis (Kew).

Contributions of review extracts welcomed by Norman Hillyer, Hatherleigh Vicarage, Okehampton, Devon EX20 3JY. Closing dates 30 June and 30 November for the subsequent issues.

The index alluring

*The meaning of Liff* by Douglas Adams and John Lloyd (Pan in association with Faber, 1983, £1.95) lists place-names alphabetically, attributing to each a definition which is humorous and somehow appropriate—for example:

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H.K.B.