LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

L. M. Harrod
In 1947, as a raw young assistant at Dudley Public Libraries, I read a book called *Lending library methods* by a gentleman named L. M. Harrod. Little did I realize then that, several years later, I would meet this same Mr Harrod—he a lecturer at the then North-Western Polytechnic in London after a distinguished career as a librarian, I just starting as a part-time lecturer doing an evening class in ‘Bibliography and Book Selection’. It was even more unlikely that I would eventually enjoy working with him on the Society of Indexers Council and on a number of British Standards Institution committees. Like many other members of the Society, I learned a great deal from Monty Harrod and consider it a privilege to have known him. The Society will not seem the same without him.

Ken Bakewell
Vice-President of the Society of Indexers

Medals for Indexers
In reply to Paul Nash (The Indexer, 14 (1) 51) concerning short and concise indexes, the current Wheatley Medal Panel would like to say that its Medals are awarded for outstanding indexes. This usually means that works of scholarship and culture are offered for consideration, and these require fully comprehensive and detailed indexes to be of use.

Concise indexes are considered for a Medal in precisely the same manner as any other of those offered, but, sadly, many have to resort to strings of page numbers and lack cross-references.

We would prefer to support a campaign for greater recognition by Publishers of the value of good, adequate indexes to them and their publications, and ask that they give time for preparation, and reasonable space.

We are pleased to consider indexes of every kind for the Wheatley Medal, and we submit each one to the rigorous scrutiny demanded by the standard set for the Panel.

Doreen Blake
Chairman
Wheatley Medal Joint Selection Panel of the Library Association and the Society of Indexers

It’s Greek to me

In BS 1749: 1969, *Specification for alphabetical arrangement*, it is recommended on page 6 that ‘a-rays’ be alphabetized as ‘alpha-rays’. On page 129 of G. Norman Knight: *Indexing, the art of*, ‘α’ has been misread as ‘x’. This has rightly led the author to question why ‘x-rays’ are arranged under ‘alpha’ and not under ‘x’. May I suggest that BS 1749: 1969 adopts a different type face for this character. As the late Mr Knight was caught out, surely others may be also. Judith Butcher: *Copy-editing*, CUP 1981, has a very clear and unambiguous ‘α’ on page 245 which would serve.

Martyn W. Gilchrist
Bembridge, Isle of Wight

Law and order, alphabetical
I do not dispute the conclusions reached by Mr Michael Gordon (The Indexer 13 (4), 255, or Mr John Vickers (The Indexer 14 (1), 51-2).

A recent informal survey conducted on a very small statistical population (i.e. one person) has revealed that I certainly read word-by-word—if not phrase-by-phrase or even paragraph-by-paragraph—with letter-by-letter in reserve for unfamiliar words and special circumstances. However, the process by which I consult an index is only distantly related to ‘reading’. The fast scanning of the left-hand of a column, first for N, then for NO, NOR and so on, means that I like to find Northampton, North and South, North Pole, in that order. Only when that order is not observed do I stop the process and ‘read’ to seek alternatives (‘and’ ignored for alphabetization, all the ‘Norths’ together, etc.). Before we are all committed irrevocably to one system or another, could any of your readers tell us whether we do in fact know how users use indexes? Our personal preferences as index-compilers or computer-programmers are surely in the end irrelevant.

Judy Batchelor
London W7


Wifely indexing

... (the index) posed problems I hope I have solved, but I have never seen an index like it turned out to be! The author (my husband) demanded that the entries should not tell the story of what happened, but that it should include every single aspect of what did happen. So it was a comprehensively oblique index to a complete retelling of Greek myths. I sacrificed indexing principles to an ongoing happy marriage!

—from a letter from Valerie McLeish, indexer of *Children of the gods* by Kenneth McLeish (Longman, 1983).