indexing, he is able to produce work which everyone can respect and try to emulate. Fortunately, there are several such people in the ranks of Registered Indexers—and very valuable they are as assessors.

Another group of candidates comprises those who produce 'mechanical' indexes. Such an index will quite probably be produced by a student who has recently completed a training course, and has meticulously employed the techniques learned therein. What is lacking here is imagination—an insight into the mind of the likely user of the index—and discrimination as to choice of terms, use of cross-references, and the exclusion of unhelpful mentions in the text; spotting, perhaps, two similar headings that could be combined; assembling a long sequence of subheadings and sub-subheadings so as to represent clearly the divisions of the main heading and their relation to it; finding the right word to encompass an abstract concept; and covering synonyms with cross-references. All these things should be in the mind of the indexer at the editing stage—when all the information has been assembled but has yet to be organized systematically. Too many candidates seem to think that the job is done before this stage is completed.

Success!

We all know that there is no such thing as the 'perfect' index. At the same time, we can all recognize a good index when we see one. When the assessors see a good index they rejoice, and recommend Council to admit the indexer to the Register.

The indexer then finds that it is his turn to rejoice, as he will find it easier to obtain work in his new status of Registered Indexer. He would also do well to remember the amount of effort that has been exerted for his benefit since he began to study indexing. He may perhaps feel that it is his turn to do something useful on behalf of the society. The Society of Indexers would not exist were it not for people willing to serve as officers, Council members, or in some other useful capacity, and there is always a wide variety of work to be done which a willing member can undertake.

The task of assessment

The task of the assessor, however, is reserved (for obvious reasons) to Registered Indexers. Any R.I. may be asked to serve in this capacity, and each will be selected with an eye to his personal experience and probably his knowledge of a specialized subject. If he agrees to undertake the assessment of a particular index, and can guarantee to spend a couple of hours on the work in the near future, the relevant documents will be sent to him. These include the index, the text, and a form for him to fill in which indicates the points to be examined in the course of the assessment. What he does not receive is an indication of the identity of the applicant.

Most assessors, in addition to completing the form with a series of marks, make a useful series of personal comments forming a basis of constructive criticism (or praise) which, if properly appreciated by the candidate, can be very valuable to him. The assessor receives a token honorarium, and postal expenses are refunded.

The candidate will receive notification of his success or failure as quickly as can be arranged, but as the work of assessment is done by busy indexers, and as strict anonymity must be preserved at all stages, the final message has to wait for much traffic through the post.

The assessors would far rather pass candidates than fail them. We hope that future candidates may have a better chance of success through knowing something of how their work will be studied, and that the number of competent Registered Indexers will be increased; also that the eternal concern of our society with establishing and promoting high standards of indexing continues to be demonstrated by the work of our assessors.

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