Indexing ancient history

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The works of ancient Greek and Roman historians require especially complete indexing because these texts provide scholars with virtually the only means of understanding the period. Russel M. Geer, in the prefaces to his indexes to the Loeb editions of Diodorus and Livy, outlines principles and guidelines which are summarized with illustrative examples of entries.

The indexing of ancient Greek and Roman historical works presents special requirements in comparison to the indexing of works of modern historians. The importance of completeness concerning the ancient historians arises from the fact that these writers provide virtually the only literary evidence of the period, in contrast to modern historians who utilize archives, newspapers, journals, and memoirs as well. Scholars of antiquity depend upon an exact knowledge of the ancient texts in order to understand the period. The standardization of editions and consistent numbering of passages in the texts has been the work of centuries. Attention to complete indexing has not received the prominence it deserves. The aim of this article is to draw attention to some of the special considerations involved in indexing classical historical works.

Principles of and guidelines to indexing the ancient historians have been outlined by Russel M. Geer in the prefaces to his indexes to Diodorus Siculus and Livy in the Loeb Classical Library editions. Geer is named on the title-pages of the final volumes of the works in the felicitous phrase: 'with a general index to ... by Russel M. Geer'. These indexes are paragons of scholarship, labours of love usually not acknowledged in standard bibliographies and reference tools. The index for Diodorus runs to 249 pages, while the index for Livy has 230 pages. It may be noted that these two historians, writing in Greek and Latin respectively, provide the longest extant histories of antiquity—and therefore rank among the most important—and that the Loeb editions offer definitive texts and translations.

The principles for construction and organization of the indexes can be summarized thus, from the preface to Geer's index to Livy:

1. All occurrences of personal and geographic (i.e. place and physical feature) names are recorded, including references that do not explicitly name the person (e.g. 'the consul') or the place (e.g. 'the province').
2. Entries for country, city, and people are combined into a single entry (or 'article', as Geer calls it) when the author uses the names interchangeably. In the case of Diodorus, who uses Athens strictly for the city and Athenians for the human actors, the related entries are left separate. People not associated with a state (e.g. Numidians) are entered as named.
3. Names of Roman citizens are entered in their fullest form: nomina, cognomina, praenomina, the entries being alphabetized by cognomina or gens, with appropriate cross-references from popular forms. This practice resolves the problem of ancient authors using variant forms of name of the same person, and also facilitates use of the work in comparison with other editions or with secondary and reference sources, especially in other languages. If the full names of two individuals are identical, they are arranged chronologically.
4. Geographic names are those used in the translation. If more than one form of name for the same place or geographic feature is used in the translation, the Latin form is preferred in the index to the Greek or English.
5. Names of political, social, military or religious antiquities are transliterations, not translations. Although the indexes to Livy and Diodorus are virtual concordances in personal and geographic names, coverage of antiquities is not intended to be exhaustive.

Entry under cognomen may result in forms of name not familiar to the average reader, but it is an accurate and scholarly practice. Thus Julius Caesar is not entered under Caesar but under the cognomen Julius. Pompey the Great, already known popularly by cognomen, is entered under Pompeius. And the famous Scipios are entered as Cornelius Scipio.

Furthermore, Geer's index to Livy adds identifying dates to personal names and their subdivisions, and in many cases titles of political office for Roman citizens. Both titles of office and common nomina are abbreviated, with lists of abbreviations prefacing the index. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Abbreviation</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>cos.</td>
<td>consul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dict.</td>
<td>dictator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leg.</td>
<td>legate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu.</td>
<td>quaestor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Gaius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cn.</td>
<td>Gnaeus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>Marcus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.</td>
<td>Publius</td>
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</tbody>
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Thus the complete entries in the Livy index for the names listed above are:

- Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, P., cos. 147, 134
- Cornelius Scipio Africanus, P., cos. 205, 194
- Julius Caesar, C., dict. 48-44
- Pompeius Magnus, Cn., cos. 70, 55, 52

Non-Roman names are identified with a useful phrase such as:

- Alco, of Saguntum
- Edesco, a Spaniard
- Hannibal, son of Hamilcar
- Indibilis, chief of Ilergetes
- Viriathus, Spanish chief

Place names are also identified with a useful phrase:

- Cordova, in Spain
- Gades, Spanish port
- New Carthage, in Spain
- Osca, in Spain
- Tarraco, Spanish port

The place names listed above appear in their original form in the index, though Cordova seems to be an oversight—of the translator—since its original form is Corduba. New Carthage is entered in English because here again Carthago Nova is not the original Latin name of this city, being of Carthaginian origin.

Geographical names for non-cities are treated similarly:

- Baetis riv., in Spain
- Balearic (Baliaric) is.
- Ebro (Hiberus) riv., in Spain
- Hiberus riv.: see Ebro riv.
- Pityusa, is. off Spain

Finally, there are names of tribes or peoples:

- Carpetani, Spanish tribe
- Suessetani, in Spain
- Turdetani (Turduli), in Nearer Spain
- Vettones, Spanish tribe

Here the identifying phrases do not seem to be consistent in form, but they are certainly useful in such a lengthy and often complicated index.

The usefulness of collocating like-named peoples and places when used interchangeably can be seen in the entry: Carthage, Carthaginians, Phoenicians, Punic. Geer handles Africa imaginatively, separating the headings Africa (chiefly Carthage or its empire in Africa) and Africa (chiefly non-Punic).

In retaining the original form of Latin words, the entry ballistae is supplemented by the cross-reference 'catapults: see ballista'.

The chronological (rather than alphabetical) order of subdivisions, often accompanied by date, is a notable characteristic of these indexes and many other indexes to ancient histories, a feature which is clearer and more useful than the purely topical approach of non-historical works and their indexes. This feature and the overall structure of Geer's indexing principles are embodied in scholarly secondary sources, beginning with the Cambridge ancient history. Of course, popular translations of ancient historians or less familiar authors, as well as less intensive monographs and surveys of antiquity, are suitably indexed without the strict forms of names or helpful identifying phrases employed by Geer. But Geer's indexes demonstrate that scholarship and sound indexing principles meeting the demands of the document are an indispensable tool in the organization of knowledge.

References

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Batty idea?

A cricket archivist has just embarked on one of the most gruelling tasks a cricket nut has ever undertaken. Gordon Phillips is compiling a complete index to every article ever published in every magazine in the cricketing world. He has just started with The Cricketer (launched in 1921), and after the first two numbers he has started 500 index cards. He has also to consider Wisden cricket monthly, a babe of six years, and Cricket, published from 1882 to 1913. Then he will move overseas. The MCC has given moral support but has no cash to spare. Phillips is now on the hunt for some kind of commercial sponsorship. He reckons it would be five years' full-time work. At his current rate, he estimates completion would be 'several lifetimes of spare time'.