Two further problems to keep the pot boiling:

1. Does anybody have any ideas about breaking up a long, long run-on entry such as one might get in a biography?

2. Spain, New 16–22
   Spain, population 35–8

This first is an inversion, the terms properly separated by a comma; the second a heading with subheading, and counsel of perfection would advocate replacing the comma with a colon. But is this perfection? It seems to have two drawbacks. Firstly, in an indented index, the second reference would appear as

Spain
   population 35–8

Do these considerations justify the punctuation of a heading with subheading as if it were an inversion?

Your suggestions and opinions, please, as well as further problems you would like considered, to: Geoffrey Dixon, BA,ALA, 93 Carcluie Crescent, Ayr, KA7 4ZS.

---

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Pointing the finger**

I was interested to read in *The Indexer* 4 (3) (p. 209) the extract from *Turtle diary* by Russell Hoban (Cape, 1975) in which the word ‘index’ was used to mean ‘an indication’, and not, as most frequently used nowadays, ‘a list’—to quote: ‘an index of the decline of Western man’. The *Concise dictionary of quotations* cites Wordsworth in ‘The Prelude’ referring to the statue of Newton as:

The marble index of a mind forever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

It may be that, over the years, it has been due to the issue of the Roman Catholic *Index librorum prohibitorum*, the growing proliferation of printed matter, and the everyday use of numerical lists such as *The Financial Times Index*, that the word ‘index’ has come to mean almost exclusively ‘a list’, but there are fashions in words as well as clothes, and I have the impression that I have seen its original meaning being used more often recently. The only reference that I have kept is from *The Times* of 2 February 1985 in which Roy Strong, the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum writes, under the title ‘Tables that speak volumes’:

Like the invitations on the mantleshelf or the magazines laid out on the stool before the country house fire, the common denominator of these books provides a fascinating index as to the make-up and preoccupations of the establishment classes.

It would be interesting to know whether members of the Society have come across other recent occasions when the word has been seen to be used in this way.

Hilda Pearson
Cambridge

---

**Over-courteous indexing**

In the course of research for my book on Samuel Johnson’s religion—for which I shall make my own index—I came across the following amusing paragraph in Boswell’s *Life* (Hill-Powell edition, Vol. IV, p. 325). Boswell is here quoting George Steevens, who helped Johnson with his edition of Shakespeare and also with his *Lives of the Poets*:

He [Johnson] would sometimes found his dislikes on very slender circumstances. Happening one day to mention Mr. Flexman, a Dissenting minister, with some compliment to his exact memory in chronological matters, the Doctor replied, ‘Let me hear no more of him, Sir. That is the fellow who made the Index to my Ramblers and set down the name of Milton thus: Milton, Mr. John.’

Flexman was one of the compilers of the Index to the *Journals of the House of Commons*. The editor of the *Life* adds in a footnote that this entry was still to be found in the index to the tenth edition of the Rambler essays (1784) and gives a few more examples from it:

Shakspeare, Mr. William, his eminent success in tragi-comedy
Spencer, Mr. Edmund, some imitations of his diction censured
Cowley, Mr. Abraham, a passage in his writing illustrated

N. Tomkinson
Chorley, Lancs