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.

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.

Extracts are arranged alphabetically under the names of publishers, within the sections: Indexes praised; Two cheers! Indexes censured; Indexes omitted; Obiter dicta.

Indexes praised

'The book has an index which commendably includes coordinates for places named.'

'It is an easy read in the first instance and well indexed.'

'The volume begins with a useful subject index of forty-two pages.'

'The index is very good.'

'This is another hefty tome, 587 pages, again double-columned, a platoon (or chapter) of contributors and, I'm glad to say, a properly helpful index.' (index by Hazel Bell)

'The volume is concluded by . . . a bibliography and a very thorough index.' (index by Hilda Pearson, our Information Officer)

'Maps, the chronological table, the index and the photographs are all helpful, and the annotation shows scholarship at its best.'

Catholic University of America: St John Chrysostom: on the incomprehensible nature of God, trans. by Paul W. Harkins (1984, 357 pp., $29.95). Rev. by Francis X. Murphy, Theological studies 46.1, March 85.
'With a taxative [sic; exhaustive? not so in OED] index, the volume is a tribute to the excellence of the series and an honor to the man who can surely say of his author what Chrysostom said of St Paul: "I have loved him as a brother".'

'The Consolidated Indexes are complementary to the indexes provided with each volume of A History of Technology. As Trevor I. Williams points out in his foreword: "However, many topics . . . are important over such long periods of time that recourse may be necessary to most or even all of the six original indexes. Equally, it is not always easy to predict in which volumes more specialized subjects are dealt with." The book is divided into four sections: List of Contents for Volumes I–VI; Index of Names; Index of Place-names; Index of Subjects. In addition, Richard Raper has supplied some useful "Hints to Users". Random testing of all these data has shown that it would be very difficult to fail to find a given topic. Moreover, when someone is interested in a certain subject, but is not sure exactly what he is looking for, the admirable cross-referencing system of the Indexes will identify the essential topics and probably lead him to new insights. It would have been difficult to imagine that anything could have enhanced the value of the other seven volumes, but the Consolidated Indexes have done just that.' (Richard Raper was Chairman of the Society of Indexers in 1979–80; see The Indexer 14.2, 118–19)

'The author has added an index, and all the scientific names of the creatures and plants mentioned can be found alongside the common names used in the text. It is, therefore, easy for anyone to follow his reading of the book by a fully detailed discussion of the particular item elsewhere.'
Concordia: *James, the apostle of faith*, by David P. Scaer (1983, 158 pp., £7.50). Rev. in *Expository times* 96.4, Jan 85.

'The author does the reader a great service by adding unusually fine foot-notes, a good bibliography and a comprehensive index.'


'The book is well written and clearly set out with lots of subheadings, cross-references and a good index.'


'The book has a good index.'


'With its various indexes, this is a most valuable work of reference.'


'In a book of some 600 pages it could have been difficult to locate relevant information quickly, but the extensive index enables the answers to particular questions to be located easily and, once found, they are simply and comprehensively explained.'


'An unusually helpful and elaborate index of some 60 pages allows the reader to look up entries by dates, places and occupations, and guides them to such entries as mention, among other matters, children's games, diet, courtship, emigration, education, boxing and choral societies. However, the omission of at least one line on Agriculture from the index appears to imply a close but spurious relationship between Adultery and a number of Agrarian activities ("and gleaning", "and harvest suppers") which immediately follow. An invaluable work of reference.' *index by the editors*


'A thorough system of indexing (general, places, occupations, education, chronological) makes it easy to use this indispensable volume.'


'Finally it is to be stressed that the volume is admirably produced, being furnished with 147 illustrations of good quality, a useful bibliography and excellent indexes.' *indexes by the author and Isabel Hariades, one of our members*

Heinemann: *In the rainforest*, by Catherine Caufield (304 pp., £10.95). Rev. by David Hall, *New scientist*, 4 April 85.

'*In the Rainforest* has an invaluable index, showing what is covered in the book—where the author has travelled, who has been interviewed, where all those marvellous plants, insects, fish, animals and people of the forest are to be found and observed, and who are the people and companies who control and live from exploiting the tropical forests.'


'All the usual information is supplied in a clear and concise format, and the well designed contents page makes it easy to get whatever snippet you are looking for. There's also a decent index—a feature noticeable by its absence on too many computer products.'


'The book is easy to read, is well laid out with useful appendices and index. I believe it will become a bible for the provision of short-term care in the future.'


'There is a comprehensive bibliography and good indexes.'


'It is well written, authoritative, well indexed and provides a comprehensive bibliography.'

Methuen: *Geography and soil properties*, by A. F. Pitty (287 pp., £5.50). Rev. in *Geological journal*, Dec 84.

'The index is good and the systematic organisation and extensive bibliography make it a useful source of reference for the student carrying out a soils-based project.'


'... and is rounded off with a full bibliography and excellent index.' *index by author*


'As is essential for a text like this, the index is comprehensive and easy to use.'


'... possesses an index, full without being over-fussy. There is nothing worse than indexes which list the person in whom you are interested as being mentioned a dozen times in the text, only for you to find that on all but one occasion your person appears only as part of a large roll-call. It also includes the subject of the biography as a separate entry, followed by an alphabetised breakdown of his life and times running to two and a half pages. This is something, mysteriously, not all indexes in biographies provide.'

Heinemann: *In the rainforest*, by Catherine Caufield (304 pp., £10.95). Rev. by David Hall, *New scientist*, 4 April 85.

'It is well indexed with a comprehensive glossary of terms and a list of valuable addresses of agencies dedicated to caring for old people.' (valueless addresses were, of course, not needed)


'The volume is well documented and has an excellent index.'


'My only two complaints are that it is not, despite the very good index, anything approaching a "handbook" (that, probably the most useful of all animal rights books, has yet to be published); and that several quite horrible, weepy poems are included, one of which is called quite rightly in my view, Bullocks.'


'There seems little doubt that this book is destined to become a basic text and resource for social scientists of many different persuasions and from many different disciplines. For those interested in the history of British society, the book holds a special relevance. For those with other interests (e.g. "women's studies", "urban studies", "under-development", etc), the book is a mine of information, made all the more valuable because of its excellent index and bibliography.'


'Subtitled "A dictionary of amoral advice", *The Cynic's Lexicon* offers an absorbing selection of jaundiced views of the world, sensibly indexed.'

Society of Genealogists: *Directory of British peerages from the earliest times to the present day*, compiled by Francis L. Leeson, assisted by Colin J. Parry (1984, £5). Rev. in *Family history* 13.102, Jan 85.

'Francis Leeson has drawn all these sources together in one useful and exceedingly helpfully arranged reference source index and directory to fuller information than can be extracted from the very many publications that are available on the subject of British peerages. This has obviously been a marathon composition for which the compiler and his assistant are to be congratulated.'


'The glossary is clear and concise, and the index particularly good.'


'Ready reference from a large index is helpful.'


'A major weakness of the first edition was the lack of a general index, but this has been remedied in the new edition. Inevitably in an enormous undertaking such as this, criticisms can be made and the occasional inaccuracy can creep in — such as the only English language small business research journal outside the United States being listed under a title it changed in October, 1983, a publisher's name which changed in November, 1982, and an address which changed in June, 1984.'


'The index is useful but has some errors.'


'Clear outline maps and a full index (which, I found, did not quite contain everything I wanted) complete this valuable book.'


'I found the index a bit limited.'


'Its one obvious fault is the confusion of glossary with index. It is hoped that these would be separated in any future edition.'


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Two cheers!
In general, the editing is of a very high standard (though there are slips here and there, and the index has one or two lapses).


'The index of names is correct so far as it goes, but I feel it would have been more useful if the names mentioned in the brief but generally well-selected bibliographies following the actual articles had been included.'


'There is no author index; the bibliography is really select (thin) and even so the English books are probably largely supplied by Professor Roberts of Princeton; there are no footnotes and very few references to sources in the body of the book, which makes it difficult to evaluate the views expressed; even the general index is rather "selective".'


'There is no subject index since this aspect is largely covered by the sub-divisions, but there is an index of names of individuals and organizations which, while substantial and useful, is not exhaustive.'


'Wisely an index has been compiled which does assist to some extent, but there are too few cross-references from one section to another for the report to work well.'

**Indexes censured**


'The index (three pages of key words) is pitifully brief and incomplete: it is clearly mainly intended for the convenience of the AAPG when it carries out its five-yearly compilation rather than the reader of this book.'


'The book has only two lacks: maps, which no military history can afford to be without, (extraordinary omission) an index entry for Lloyd George.'


‘The index is wastefully and unevenly laid out and constructed on irrational principles: for example, references to High Pavement are to be found under C for Chesterfield (sub-heading “Streets”) and also simply under H, while another street, Beaver Place appears under B and in the main Chesterfield section. Similar considerations apply to the indexing of entries on schools, chapels and organisations.'


'And to end with, one note of real criticism. The index is enormous but defective. Rather than “F. Spooner” and “the Tiv people”, one would like to have “hostages”, “equality of States”, “soft law” and “tribalism”; above all, one would wish the long list under “diplomacy” to include Dore’s brilliant passages on it on page 422.'


'The book is extensively annotated and has a substantial bibliography, but the index is a disgrace to both publisher and author.'


'... but the arrangement and indexing of these entries seems unsatisfactory ... the Subject Index has no entry for Islamic, although it does for Design—Islamic. It has an entry for Ornament, but no heading Islamic under this. In fact the subheadings under Ornament seem inadequate to cover the main publications even of a five-year period ... The Subject Index has no alphabetical page headings, and no indication when the first entry on a page is not a main entry but a subdivision of an entry on the previous page. The index contains 74 columns of entries, but it needs to be still more extensive, or to have a better system of subheadings and cross references, if luck is not to play too large a part in finding the entries you require.'


'The whole book is very well supported by references to the literature, but the index is rather short, and would have benefitted from the inclusion of an author index.'


'My main criticisms concern the quality of indexing and the occasional separation of text from corresponding figures, both of which impair the use of the book for reference purposes. As one example, “K-selection” appears on p. 162 but the first index reference is to p. 168, and finding the original definition of “K” involves a page-by-page search. However, one hopes this will be remedied at revision; this book is likely to become a standard text.'

Croom Helm: *Resource based learning for school governors,

'Finally, one comes to the index. To be charitable one can only assume that it was "farmed" out to some first year student recently enrolled on a communications and media course. Nothing else can explain its many peculiarities. This obsession with trivia (virtually every personal reference is about some meeting or other) finally trips up the unfortunate compiler when he/she solemnly indexes P. Clifford as if he were the deputy director of something when he is actually one of the characters in the TV programme that supports the materials.'


'For the rest he contents himself with two weird indexes, one of them entirely useless and the other largely so, together with an even weirder glossary, in which we are kindly told the meaning of rail, jades, pates ("heads"), scurril, cuckold, wight, bred in the bone ("ingrained"), buckler, galled, the nine muses, want, jars and last ("model of a foot used by cobblers"). But he has a touching reference, in the bibliography, to an earlier book of his own: " Fuller, but hideously expensive".'

Gollancz: Handel: the man and his music, by Jonathan Keates (1985). "... and is full of extremely penetrating, well-judged observations on both man and music. It betrays its origins only in being irritatingly under-indexed and under-documented."


'The index is unreliable. Names of towns (often indexed tout court with no further qualification) appear under both their Irish and their English forms; institutions appear under unlinked successive forms of their names; the same individual appears correctly, misspelled, or under an alternative version of his name. Cobb is printed as Cove in the text, but reaches the index as Cover (sic) and Queenstown; one unfortunate Primate of Armagh is fragmented in the index under Abp Robinson, Richard Robinson and Lord Rokeby. Page references are frequently incomplete or incorrect and there are such unhelpful entries as "Bunting, Mr" and "Tuam, Protestant Primate of Armagh". Finally, one comes to the index. To be charitable one can only assume that it was "farmed" out to some first year student recently enrolled on a communications and media course. Nothing else can explain its many peculiarities. This obsession with trivia (virtually every personal reference is about some meeting or other) finally trips up the unfortunate compiler when he/she solemnly indexes P. Clifford as if he were the deputy director of something when he is actually one of the characters in the TV programme that supports the materials.'

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'The quality of the purely nominal index can be judged by the fact that ... "Weybridge" (for Wadebridge, Cornwall) is absent while ... "Pantheon" (for Parthenon presumably?) is solemnly there.'


'The index is incomplete, and since it gives names but not subjects, its usefulness is limited.'


'It has had a great weight of critical attention; yet nearly all the reviewers (Geoffrey Hoskins in The Times Literary Supplement was a notable exception) failed to refer to one of the outstanding aspects of the biography: it picks out the centrality of the Christian faith in Solzhenitsyn's development. The index is idiosyncratic (no entry under "Religion": it comes under "Solzhenitsyn—religion—or even "Khrushchev—religion suppressed by").' (Did a reviewer do the index?)


'As the index is scanty, a section on first aid would improve the book.'


'Macmillan: Prescription for survival: health and safety in the health service, by Allan Kerr and Roger Poole (208 pp., £10, pbk £2.95). Rev. by Dorothy Radwanski, Nursing times, 20 Feb 85.

'The rapid publication of this volume is welcome, even if it has meant the now familiar inelegant camera-ready text, some illegible figures and a near-useless index.'


'And the text deserves a more comprehensive index.'


'The detail in these readings is most valuable and it is therefore a pity that the index is less than three inches long. Amongst important topics not mentioned in the index are: constructive notice (or any form of notice), posting (in the sense of property or exploration rights), saw-log test of navigability, water pollution. Other topics are listed in the index, but occurrences in the "readings" are not listed, e.g. the common enemy doctrine, and the concept of "discovery", because mineral rights in Federal land ("the public domain") depend on being the discoverer.'


'The rapid publication of this volume is welcome, even if it has meant the now familiar inelegant camera-ready text, some illegible figures and a near-useless index.' (*orogen = formation of mountains)

Temple Smith: The population of Cyprus: demographic trends...

'The bibliography is weak on general reading matter; quotations are given without precise references; the quality of the index is poor by any standards.'


'Mr. Munn's informative captions and measurements are notably helpful and only his index is poor.'


'If I may mention an unfortunate fault, the topical index is not really adequate for finding subjects that are in fact discussed, as I discovered when I went looking for Encratites, and the Assumption of John and of Mary. Volumes of this size need a very complete index.'


'There is an excellent bibliography and a rather thin index.'

Utah State Univ.: Aquatic resources management of the Colorado river ecosystem, ed. by V. Dean Adams and Vincent A. Lamarra (1983, 697 pp., £27.50). Rev. by R. C. Ward, Geographical journal 150.3, Nov 84.

'As with so many published proceedings of conferences and symposia, the retrospective reader may well regret the editorial indulgence (born of contemporary enthusiasm?) which leads almost inevitably to repetition, wide variations of style (both textual and geographical). . . However, it would be misleading to make too much of this point because the volume is well structured (into 10 defined parts) and has been indexed, although rather more superficially than one might have wished. Despite the index, however, this is a valuable reference volume on the management of aquatic resources in a major and familiar river basin.'


'The index is inadequate, omitting figures of importance in the text, like Florence Nightingale, but the illustrations are excellent and the book in general, though heavy going at times, is well thought out, makes some good points and is full of interesting information.'

First, the historical introduction is marred by numerous errors of fact; secondly, why no index? The omission greatly impairs the book's value for reference purposes.'


'By compiling this volume, M. has done a favour for many a teacher who has longed for such a book as well as for students . . . The book has no index.' (well, that rather limits the favour)


'There is no index or common set of references.'


'Curiously enough, there is no index.'

British Agricultural History Society: Horses in European economic prehistory, ed. by F. M. L. Thompson (206 pp., £6.50). Rev. by E. L. Jones, Economic history review 37, 84.

'An index would have helped one to track down themes.'


'Of course, you must have an index.' (and how many times reviewers have made the same complaint about this publisher; time something was done!)


'The only serious technical fault is the absence of an index. It should, in my opinion, be made a criminal offence to publish a non-fiction book without this vital appendage.'

Chatto: Trial by impotence, by Pierre Darmon (£10.95, pbk £4.95). Rev. by Alan Brien, New statesman, 19 April 85.

'The only thing it lacks is an index.'

Collection Latomus, Brussels: The wheel as a cult-symbol in the Roman world, by Miranda Green (408 pp., £2250). Rev. by M. Henig, Antiquity 58, 84.

'The absence of an index is a nuisance, as it is in other volumes of Collection Latomus. A change in editorial policy, especially with regard to encyclopaedic [sc. comprehensive] works such as this one, is needed.'


'There is just one glaring omission: the book has no index.'

Crossroad, New York: Art, creativity, and the sacred: an anthology in religion and art, ed. by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (1984, 340 pp., $15.95). Rev. by John Renard,
Theological studies 46.1, March 85.

'The book could also have been a first-rate teaching tool by itself if, in addition to its very good bibliographical section, it had been fitted with an index and perhaps a glossary of technical terms and artist-data.'


'Alas, there are no Indexes to this volume; it may be hoped that volume 2 will supply biblical and subject lists to enhance what will be an indispensable tool in our instrumenta studiorum.'

Doubleday, New York; Heresies: the image of Christ in the mirror of heresy and orthodoxy from the apostles to the present, by Harold O. J. Brown, Theological studies 46.1, March 85.

'There is an index of persons but, surprisingly, no subject index.'


'There is no index in which to check the matter, but in the 154 pages I do not detect mention of any philosopher or theologian outside the Roman communion. The book is published in Ireland. It will there have some readers.'


'It should be noted that these books do not have indexes, which cuts down somewhat on their effectiveness. This lack is not really made up for by the tables of contents, since they, and particularly the one in the volume on preaching, are not especially indicative.'


'Given all these attributes, it is perhaps carping to add a few more riders. First, why no subject index? This is a somewhat punitve feature for what is after all a reference book.'

Hutchinson: Green politics: the global promise, by Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak (£10.95).

Chatto & Windus: Fighting for hope, by Petra Kelly (£6.95); Verso NLB: From red to green, by Rudolph Bahro (£14, pbk £5.95). Rev. by Harford Thomas, Guardian, 7 Feb 85.

'[the three books] neglect the ordinary courtesy of providing an index, source references and bibliography, without which the reader is required to plough wearily on through page after page of leaden prose.'


'The conference in Cyprus was clearly eminently worthwhile, as was the publication of the papers read there. Taking into account to whom they were directed it would, perhaps, have been more useful re-formed as a manual, simplifying some of the more laboured sections, covering more fields relevant to the excavator and perhaps arranged alphabetically (there is not even an index in this volume). Many of the problems are not peculiar to the Mediterranean area so that such a manual, available in several languages, would be in universal demand.'


'A criticism might be that to have a blank back cover and nowhere any indication of what Special Publications 1-4 were is a lost opportunity, as is two blank pages at the back but no index.'


'And for someone who is sniffy about his contemporaries' prose style, Dr Rowse can offend himself: 'One thing—or rather another thing—that Russell and Ottoline had in common was that they were both ducal, family-wise.' Even C. S. Lewis would not have written that. And he would have thought an index essential: Dr Rowse evidently does not.'


'Still, once again it would have been even more enjoyable if the reader could have looked up the places, in anticipation or in retrospect, through an index.'

New English Library: Pieces and pontifications, by Michael Lennon et al. (£3.95). Rev. by Alan Brien, New statesman, 19 April 85.

'... consists of two collections under one cover, Mailer's essays and his interviews. The latter have been chosen by a Mailer friend, Michael Lennon. It is not clear who chose the former ... Neither section has an index.'


'Anyone seriously interested in Victorian fiction will value its originality and may wish, as I did, that it had an index.'


'Professor Wall writes as an American for Americans. The shooting for which the estate is renowned is therefore "hunting", whether of deer or coveys of grouse, and is oddly contrasted with hunting as known in England. His American readers might, however, have welcomed more guidance to the location of the Skibo estate than a mention of its being found when "driving along Scotland's Route 9A from the village of Bonar Bridge", and all could have done with a map, a genealogical table, a proof-reader and an index, which together might have made this droll little volume less unacceptable as
the product of a learned press.'


‘Bearing in mind the number of cases and statutory references, the absence of any kind of index is surprising and irritating.’


‘This is an “instant” book, timed to cash in on public interest in India in the wake of Mrs Gandhi’s assassination and the Bhopal tragedy. Unfortunately, it is also something of a rushed job—with the sloppiness, lack of clarity and padding one would expect. Needless to say, there is no index.’


‘There is no index.’


‘Some of the advice on self-preparation was rather trite, but a lot was useful. A table of contents or index would be helpful here for cross reference.’


‘The standard of editing of the four letter books included in this volume is high and represents a considerable achievement in view of the problems posed by the hasty copying, errors, and use of cyphers in the originals. All the more pity, then, that so much skilful and patient editorial labour has had its usefulness reduced by the omission of maps and, above all, an index (presumably on grounds of expense). The index of names, places and (possibly) subjects will come in the second volume, but we are warned that “there is bound to be a sizeable gap between publication of the two volumes”.’


‘There is no index.’ (so we remain in ‘an uncertain world’)


‘In Ageing for Beginners, an earlier book, Scott combined a personal testament of ageing and a practical guide to the middle-aged and old. The book had an excellent index. In contrast, Before I go . . . fails to be, what it might have been, a truly popular guide to feminism . . . She quotes from numerous books and articles but she is careless with her sources, gives no index, and, most regrettably of all, provides no bibliography.’


‘There are now two editions of this work in print. There is the Charles E. Tuttle edition, available locally, and the new edition under review today . . . Neither, however, have (sic) an index and both neglect to provide the map which graced the first edition.’


‘There is no index. Consequently, though the reader of this volume is provided with a wide spectrum of information about work completed or in progress (one is often uncertain which), anyone consulting it in the hope of finding an important article on a particular topic may well find himself chasing wild geese. This could be most frustrating . . .’

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**Obiter dicta**


‘The main concern, as always, is the Burney dynasty, which by now includes Barretts, Paynes, Phillipses, Rapers and others and centrally the one remaining d’Arblay, Fanny’s drifting son Alexander, now well into his twenties but unable to settle. The attempts of his mother to turn him into a proper Burney—sober, industrious, single-minded and upwardly mobile—furnish the drama of these years . . . What exactly was wrong with Alexander? His mother has a variety of semi-indulgent and question-begging terms of endeavour for him: “my Nondescript”, or simply “N.D.”, or “young Heedless”, and the like. What she felt about him can be reconstructed from the index entries, a thesaurus of anti-Burneyism: “absence of mind, indifference, apathy, lethargy, inertia, negligence, nonchalance, impudence, fecklessness (with respect to his own advantage), procrastination . . .” It is an attractive list in its way . . . You need, by the way, to know the Burney family tree before you can locate its members in the index: the arrangement is not alphabetical but genealogical, so that you must traverse many columns from Fanny’s own entry to that of her niece Fanny. But in this the masterful scholarship simply re-enacts the letter-writer’s own efforts to preserve the Burney line against all outside interference, and so it is as appropriate as all the rest of the massively informative apparatus.’


‘The index, sprinkled with alphabetic characters in variety, suggests initially that the three sizes of type-face employed for it confer degrees of importance upon names and subjects. What prompts an even tighter grip on one’s chair, however, is the apparently random text mix of at least two sizes each of three or more faces throughout, with changes of face and style occurring even in mid-sentence, which, with startling flights of space between lines, results in a whirligig of text amid the many
black, red and blue pictures—something which certainly keeps
the act of reading on edge. Whether restless or lively others
must decide. Guiltily, the latter view appeals.'

Horowitz/Seeker: The Kennedys, by Peter Collier. Rev. by
David Adamson, Sunday telegraph, 9 Dec 84.
'To judge by their virtual absence from these pages, the eight
other children of Robert and Ethel have grown up as clean-cut
citizens. Their eldest, Kathleen, does not even appear in the
other children of Robert and Ethel have grown up as clean-cut
citizens. Their eldest, Kathleen, does not even appear in the
index, although her birth is noted in an early chapter. Lucky,
indeed, the Kennedy without a published history.'

Sidgwick & Jackson: The 2024 report—a concise history of the
future, 1974-2024, by Norman Macrae (£9.95). Rev. by
R. S. Scorer, New humanist 100.1, Winter 85.
'The index is pretentious (and contains errors) in that the
book contains no real information.'

Weidenfeld: Men: a documentary, by Anna Ford (1985,
'But by far the most riveting part of Men is the index, which
runs from Albert (auditor, 33) to Winston (unemployed, 22).
WPC Plod [the reviewer's alias for the author] must have had
some serious worries about security here, and decided to
consult her superiors at M15, for in an earlier note she tells us:
"In order to allow these men to speak frankly without fear of
identification, all names and locations and in most cases the
surrounding circumstances have been changed in order to
preserve the anonymity of the interviewees." Hello, hello,
hello! WPC Plod has got up to a double bluff of John
le Carré. In addition to making Lord Weidenfeld eligible for
the KGB award for the most pointless index in the history of
British publishing, she's fooled us all. Is Arthur the 70-year-old
rural dean impersonating Sid a 19-year-old yobbo? Is Fred the
dustman a triple agent masquerading as Bill the electrician, Bill
the removal man and Bill the company manager? Are Denis
Thatcher, Sir Freddie Laker and the Archbishop of Canterbury
cruelly unmasked as the only three people who refused to be
interviewed) really in the book, disguised as Francis the
38-year-old rapist, Phil the pop singer and Arthur the under-
taker? Is Anna Ford, in fact, a closet body conservative? Could
this turgid tome turn out to be a devilish forgery?'

'If I were Commissar of Culture, I would withdraw the pro-
tection of copyright from all even moderately serious non-
fiction, also from some, particularly but not exclusively 19th-
century Russian novels, which did not append an index. I
understand, of course, one simple reason why an index is often
not supplied. In almost all contracts, its cost falls on the author
not the publisher. And authors are too poor, too mean, too
bemused or too ill-informed to accept that the index is worth
while. But isn't it time publishers realised, to cite only one of
many benefits, how much a good index can improve the critical
response to their book? Anyone who has ever reviewed will
recall the mounting panic, leading to resentment against the
work, produced by leafing vainly again and again through the
pages for that elusive key quotation. Admittedly, an index does
aid a hostile critic to gut the book —'Just one mention of . . .
only three references to . . . Apparently unaware of . . .' But
this is overwhelmingly counterbalanced by the number of
supportive pieces, studded with juicy quotations, that an index
is bound to encourage.'

—Alan Brien, New statesman, 19 April 1985

'After the publication of Juan in America, Eric turned back
to his book on Ben Jonson with renewed energy. The summer
was coming on, and he had finished his reading in the library at
Aberdeen University, so he went home to his mother's house in
Orkney to complete the work and the endless associated tasks
which he had not anticipated: the provision of suitable
illustrations, a bibliography and, worst of all, an index . . . He
was driven almost mad by the detailed work necessary in the
completion of the bibliographical apparatus and index for his
book. Playfully he asked Wren Howard: "God help us all, do
you mind if I invent a few authorities?" and later, on
delivering the index, said: 'I'd rather pick oakum than do
another.'

—Eric Linklater: a critical biography,
by Michael Parnell, pp. 116-17 (John Murray)

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THE INDEXER

Fantasies of a card-fancier

A deep, satisfying relish in consulting cards in filing
trays is gustily conveyed by Christopher Hitchens in the
Times Literary Supplement, 12 April 1985 ('American
notes'). Deploiring the planned replacement of the card
catalogue of the Library of Congress by computer, he
claims that 'the proposal to remove the wonderful tiers
of wooden indexing has aroused great passions', mani-
festing these indeed by reference to '... the magnificent
cupola of the main reading room ... the joy and gener-
osity of the arrangement ... of pulling out the smooth
drawers and going through the beautifully arranged
cards ... the pleasure lies in what you find while you are
looking ... There are also friendships to be struck up ...'.
It is quite alarming to find what deep emotions the tools
of our trade may stir up. A loving Luddite?

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