AT THE SEA-SIDE.
Large numbers of periodicals for children came into existence in the Victorian and Edwardian period, appealing to all ages and classes. They present bibliographical problems because of their ephemeral nature, title changing and poor physical condition. Access to their contents is harder because of the deficiency of their indexes. Most only provided tables of contents, and indexes, where they existed, often were merely lists of titles rather than author or subject indexes.

During the Victorian and Edwardian period large numbers of magazines for children came into existence, flourished and died. A rough estimate would put the number at well over five hundred different titles catering for all ages, tastes and characters.

The greatest change in juvenile publishing came in the 1860s. Prior to that most juvenile periodicals were religious in tone with a distinctly didactic flavour. The 1860s saw a departure from the purely instructional function to one of giving their readers amusement as well. From 1866 when Aunt Judy’s Magazine, Boys of England and Chatterbox were founded, magazines were also intended for entertainment, and large numbers of new titles appeared.

Juvenile periodicals fall into distinct categories, related largely to different types of readers. Many were very general in character and appropriate for young people of either sex from the age of about ten upwards. The greatest proportion was directed specifically at boys of all social classes. Of these, some were deemed respectable, and others were not. It is the more lurid and sensational ones, direct successors of the penny dreadfuls of the 1840s and 1850s, that attracted the most critical attention. Many of these magazines, of which the best known is Boys of England, emanated from a small group of publishers who operated on a shoestring from a sort of gentleman’s club. Numerous cheap, feeble, sensational and superficial papers were produced and avidly read by clerks, messenger boys, factory workers and schoolboys. These penny papers survived into the 1880s but died in the face of the challenge from Harmsworth’s halfpenny dreadfuls which effectively drove them off the news-stalls. In reality, despite his sanctimonious assertions to the contrary, the product offered by Harmsworth differed little in content, style and quality from its predecessors.

To counteract the pernicious influence of the sensational weeklies, the Religious Tract Society issued the Boy’s Own Paper in 1879 and in 1880 introduced the sister volume, Girl’s Own Paper, for girl readers. Both were immediately successful because they won the approval of young people as well as their parents. The formula was simple: stories by well established and popular authors of the day, like Ballantyne, Henty, and W. H. G. Kingston, and informative and practical features on sport, hobbies and pastimes, and good quality illustrations. For girls, the Girl’s Own Paper was even more successful, as it filled a very real gap. Until then, apart from a diet of wholesome and religious magazines like the Monthly Packet edited by Charlotte Yonge, girls had to depend on general magazines intended for family reading like Sunday at Home or Good Words. Even the Girl’s Own Paper was never entirely sure of the age of its readers so it concentrated more on aspects of homemaking and seemed, like most girls’ periodicals, to be directed to middle-class young women in their late teens.

There were also some periodicals for very young children. Some, like the Infant’s Delight, contained coloured illustrations and simple stories in large print, and most were attractively produced. There were a few good-quality general periodicals for children, of which the best example is Good Words for the Young edited by George Macdonald, but they tended not to be economically viable and were short-lived.

Religion played an important part in the lives of many Victorian children, and this is clearly reflected in the fact that over a third of all juvenile periodicals were religious in character. Many were cheaply produced with a dreary format. The stories were often strictly moral, with sinners gaining their just retribution. It is true that not all such periodicals were unattractive, and many were presented as Sunday School prizes and have survived into the twentieth century.
Bibliographical problems

Tracing what periodicals existed presents problems to the bibliographer. Magazines, particularly for boys, retailing at one penny a copy in the 1870s, were shoddily produced and ephemeral. Both factors have mitigated against their preservation. Nicknamed penny dreadfuls, many were considered vicious, evil and liable to corrupt the minds of the young, and would have been more likely to have been burnt than stored for posterity. Nonetheless, a large number of single issues and odd bound volumes have survived and it is possible to find sample copies of most titles. Nowadays they are much sought after as collector's items.

A more serious problem is that many were very short-lived. Between 1870 and 1914 nearly a third of all periodicals lasted less than a year. Some only appeared for one or two issues before failing to reappear, and this often means that there are no copies extant.

The next problem is the poor physical condition of many of the survivors, especially for titles after 1870 when the quality of newsprint deteriorated. The highly acid paper is further damaged by handling and by central heating so it is more than likely that some of the titles available now will no longer be so in five years time. Although they are unique items their lack of literary merit is unlikely to make them likely candidates for microfilming.

Title changes

Amalgamations and title changes are a significant feature of the history of periodicals and a major complication of serials bibliography. In the late-nineteenth century some 23 children's periodicals were merged with other titles. Among these was the Boy's Illustrated News which was merged with the Boy's Newspaper which became Youth. Just as products nowadays constantly have to have a new and improved flavour, so Victorian and Edwardian magazine publishers liked to boost sales of a flagging concern by adding the word 'new' to the title. Thus the Boy's World became the New Boy's World in 1906.

Some publishers unashamedly employed the device of frequent title changing to promote sales of unsuccessful titles. Between 1870 and 1914 over a quarter of all titles changed at least once, and this practice was just as common with the religious publishers as with those of the more lurid and sensational titles. For instance, Sabbath School Messenger became the Children's Messenger in 1874; For His Sake became the Children's Herald in 1909 and the Boy's Jubilee Journal the Young Briton's Journal in 1888. Sometimes, the old title was incorporated in the sub-title of the new, as shown by the Boy's Popular Weekly which turned into Boys of the Isles: Guy Rayner's Popular Weekly in 1889.

What often happened was that a few weeks before its demise a paper carried an advertisement for a new journal without any indication that it would be a replacement, until the very last issue. Thus, in Comrades for 20th October 1895 readers were informed, 'for continuation of these stories buy PALS ready next week'.

All this means that the bibliographer needs additional information to compile accurate records which reflect the true relationship of one title to another. It is absolutely essential to peruse bound volumes looking for announcements of title changes, as well as reading the memoirs of those associated with producing magazines, and where they exist, publishers' records in the hope of gleaning extra information.

Another problem that can trap the unwary is the ruse that unscrupulous publishers adopted of selecting a title similar to one already in existence in the hope of causing confusion to the purchasers. This practice was widespread in the nineteenth century and evoked the righteous wrath of indignant editors. As early as 1830 the editor of the Juvenile Forget Me Not complained:

It gives me pain to allude to the fact that the success of the Juvenile Forget Me Not has given rise to a similar publication under a title so nearly similar that it is more than probable the one will be mistaken for the other. Fair and honorable competition is at all times beneficial—and if the work to which I allude had received any other name I should have been the last to complain—but I cannot consider it either fair or honorable to take advantage of that popularity for which the publishers of the Juvenile Forget Me Not had anxiously and successfully laboured during a period of two years.1

Rivalry between Edwin J. Brett and George Emmett reached such intensity in 1868 that they were bringing out new journals with almost identical titles. Emmett's Young Men of Great Britain was followed almost immediately by Brett's Young Gentlemen of Great Britain and in 1872 Brett's Rovers of the Sea appeared on the same day as Emmett's Rover's Log. So incensed was the editor of the Boy's Own Paper in August 1881 that he wrote,

There are now several boys' papers, that by closely copying our title and other disreputable means, try to deceive boys that they are in some way connected with us.2

More understandable was the practice of using the same title for completely different publications. Our Boys was used for at least three different magazines and Champion was another name that was attached to several short-lived ventures. Justifying a name change, the editorial of Guy Rayner's Comrades declared:

This being a journal with an individuality of character and tone we were urged by a reader to give it a dist-
inctive title as there have already been three un-
successful journals styled the Champion. 3

It is, of course, problems such as these that make the lot
of the bibliographer such an interesting one and they
underline the importance of examining copies for inter-
nal evidence before embarking upon any listing.

Access to their contents

So far my concern has been with locating titles of
periodicals. Much more challenging is exploiting their
contents. As we have already seen, there were marked
differences in childrens' periodicals, ranging from the
cheap and shoddy penny dreadfuls to the glossily pro-
duced annual volumes designed as keepsakes. The most
cursory glance demonstrates this difference in quality,
and, not surprisingly, this is reflected in the way in
which readers gained access to the contents.

What is encouraging is the way in which so many
journals contained an index of some kind, or at least a
detailed table of contents. True, the publishers had little
concept of the meaning of the terms index and table of
contents, which were used interchangeably, and seemed
to bear little resemblance to the quality of the product.

I started from the premise that whereas journals that
came from the respectable publishing houses producing
the quality journals would provide an index, the cheap
and nasty sensational weeklies from Brett, Rayner,
Shurey and Fox would not. This was based on the fact
that bound volumes in libraries of the penny dreadfuls
never contained an index, apart from Brett's Boys of
England which had a title index towards the end of its
life. Certainly most periodicals from Emmett, Rayner,
Shurey and Brett lacked indexes, and those from
Harmsworth never contained one. Although external
evidence from surviving bound volumes indicates that
indexes were not supplied, evidence from some corres-
pondence columns suggests otherwise. I discovered
several cases where readers were informed that one
existed. For instance, in the third volume of Boy's
Friend, 'a subscriber from the first' was reassured that
'an index will be given with the number for December'. 4
Likewise, a reader to the Boys of England was told, 'the
index you ask for is quite ready and can be had of your
newsagent'. 5 Stranger was the response to a reader of
Boy's Graphic claiming 'the index and title page are now
ready, as you can see by a reference to the announce-
ment column'. 6 In fact no such announcement indicated
this was so. In the light of the extravagant and spurious
claims made in other respects by these journals it is
perhaps not uncharitable to assume that the indexes
were mere figments of the editor's imagination.

Title indexes

Essentially most indexes in nineteenth-century child-
ren's periodicals were little more than alphabetical lists
of titles. Many that called themselves an index were little
more than a table of contents in alphabetical order. There
is no doubt that it is possible to gain an
impression of the flavour of the magazine from these,
even if it is hard to locate specific articles. The contrast
between the content of Boys of England and the Boys
Own Paper emerges strongly:

The 1893 volume of the Boys Own Paper contains
titles like:

Chinese waters, in
Architecture, styles of

whereas Brett's Boys of England favoured such titles as

Detected by his mother in law
A desperate encounter
She didn't dare do it
He didn't want her to marry into oil 9

Similarly, the religious Little Gleaner carried tales with
titles like:

The all important question
Anxious to be prepared to die
Dr Watt's death bed
I am not afraid to die
Pathetic story, A
Princess and the coster, The 9

Indexes were frequently haphazard and inconsistent.

A volume of the Juvenile Instructor reveals this clearly:

Abstaining, Reasons for
Boys and Girls may live nobly, How
Manners at Home, Good
Rural scene, A 10

In some cases the strange method of indexing could
actually lose the subject matter entirely. An issue of
Children's Friend in 1897 contained an article entitled
'Charles Dickens and his cat'. This is indexed as 'Cat,
Charles Dickens and his' and there is no cross-reference
under Dickens.

Subject Indexes

Subject indexing was comparatively unusual, but
some periodicals attempted to group material under
various headings. Children's Friend had headings for
Poetry, Music and Pictures. More ambitious was the
approach by Early Days which had headings for
Illustrated articles, Natural history and Youthful
Biography in the 1870 volume. Often regular features
were indexed, like Our pets column and Five minutes
with the famous in Chums or Stamp collector in the
Captain, Atalanta, a quality magazine for girls, grouped
articles on the same topic under one heading; thus, series
of articles on careers were listed under Employment for
girls. One of the most detailed indexes appeared in
Cassell's Little Folks which had various subheadings
including:

Amusements and Recreations
Riddles, puzzles and their answers
Stories about birds, beasts and fairies
Fanciful rhymes, stories
While it was relatively common to provide title indexes, very few provided indexes of authors. Even the Boy's Own Paper and the Girl's Own Paper only listed the principal authors and illustrators. This is particularly tragic as so many leading authors of the days contributed regularly to periodicals for the young. Examples are Jules Verne for the Boy's Own Paper, Mrs. Oliphant for Atalanta and Robert Louis Stevenson for Young Folks. In addition there were numerous established authors for young people like Henty, Ballantyne and Ascott Hope for boys, and L. T. Meade, E. Everett Green and ALOE for girls, who in their time were prolific and important writers. The paucity of author indexes in the magazines means that bibliographers trying to record their literary output have to rely on stylistic and external evidence.

Rare examples of journals that did attribute authorship to titles listed are quality magazines like Aunt Judy's Magazine and Sampson Low's Boys, Atalanta, the Captain, Girl's Empire, Every Girl's Annual and the Children's Friend. A sample volume of Aunt Judy's Magazine for 1885 reveals stories by Mrs Walton, Horatia Gatty and Christabel Coleridge. Even some of the early magazines that included a contents list also indicated authorship. For instance the Juvenile Forget Me Not for 1830 contained stories by Miss Mitford and Mrs Hofland, as well as a poem by the Ettrick Shepherd. Such lists reinforce the view that children's periodicals were considered a respectable medium for authors and their contents were often of the highest quality.

It is true to say that one of the greatest deficiencies is the lack of author indexes. Admittedly, it was only in the 1870s that it became normal for authors to sign their contributions, and there were still many exceptions to this rule. Strangely enough although most of the stories in the early issues of Boys of England (1866–68) were signed, later on the practice seems to have been abandoned, so that by 1883 an issue appeared with every contribution anonymous. It was common for the more respectable journals to have leading stories and articles signed and for the lesser ones not to be.

Anonymity was a convenient means for the proprietors of lesser journals to disguise the fact that the whole issue was probably written by one person. Guy Rayner, proprietor of some 22 short-lived periodicals for boys, was particularly adept at this. A volume of the Boy's Graphic covering the years 1890–1 cited only two names other than his own. It is significant that names of authors used in other of Rayner's periodicals have proved tantalizingly elusive to trace, and it is not inconceivable that Commodore Fleming and Edwin S. Hope may have been Rayner's own pseudonyms. In reality, Rayner was S. Dacre Clarke, and he interchanged these names freely in journals like the Young Briton's Journal. One of the most versatile users of the pseudonym was one Alf Burrage who regularly contributed to the lower-quality journals. He wrote under the name of Cyril Hathaway in the Boys of England, Comrades, Every Boy's Journal, and Boy's World; as Alf Sherrington, Philander Jackson and H. U. A. (Hard Up Author) in a variety of magazines for boys, including Every Boy's Journal.

The use of initials was very popular in the nineteenth century. One of the most successful writers for girls was A.L.O.E. (A Lady of England) who was really Charlotte Maria Tucker. There are numerous instances of authors using initials in the periodicals. Among these were H.E.R. in the Children's Friend for 1895; A.K.S. in the Captain for 1905–6 and N.E.G., C.H.S. and D.H. in Aunt Judy's Magazine for 1885. Others preferred to adopt witty names: 'a medical man', 'acanthus', or 'an old fag'. Aunts and Uncles proliferated in titles for the very young, and it was common for the editor to assume an avuncular title; for example, the Children's Own Paper was edited by Uncle Gilbert.

Indexes of Illustrators

It is also extremely helpful to have information on
illustrators. Many important illustrators of the nineteenth century worked for children's magazines. Work by artists of the eminence of Arthur Rackham, Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway can be found in quality children’s periodicals like *Atalanta* and *Good Words for the Young*, and other artists like Gordon Browne, Harold Millar, Tom Browne and Louis Wain established their reputations through regular work in children’s magazines.

Again there is no hard and fast rule about what was indexed and what was not. A few exemplary titles list illustrations by their title and the illustrator, but most do not. It was a feature of the *Boy's Own Paper* to give presentation colour plates with the monthly issue, and these were indexed in its annual volume. The most detailed index to plates appears in the monthly journal *Chatterbox*. In the bound volume for 1880 some 160 illustrations are listed by title: unfortunately the illustrators’ names are not supplied. Needless to say, the titles alone are not very helpful, although they do make amusing reading. Two examples I found particularly so were ‘Dave, does you want me to wallop you’ and ‘Salamander asleep in the Squire’s wide awake’. A glance down the list of illustrations can set the tone of the periodical most effectively. A strictly religious periodical, the *Little Gleaner*, aptly demonstrates this point in the volume for 1892 with such titles as: ‘The tomb of a noted unbeliever’, ‘Tell me why you took that orange’ and ‘A lie will burn in the memory’.

There is no doubt that Victorian and Edwardian children's magazines can be used as examples of how not to construct an index, as they are inadequate, inconsistent and idiosyncratic. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that so many periodicals did try to provide access to their contents in some way, and that there does seem to be some correlation between the quality of the journal and the quality of its index.

**References**

1. *Juvenile Forget Me Not* 3, 1830, iv.

Diana Dixon is Lecturer in Library and Information Studies, Loughborough University of Technology.

---

**Lies, damned lies, and scholarship**

Roy Porter

For most historians, the phrase ‘being on the index’ conjures up the image of a poor, persecuted intellectual living in Spain or Italy a couple of centuries back, hounded by the Inquisition, his books consigned to the flames. But every so often ‘being on the index’ means something very different, or rather depicts a very different form of persecution.

It means being blockaded in one’s study in the early hours of the morning, encircled by empty coffee cups, terrorized by publishers’ impossible deadlines. By the left hand, a set of increasingly dog-eared proofs, the pages now, by definition, out of order; by the right, a home-made card index, imperfectly alphabetized, its contents cascading out of the shoe-box. In the midst, the edgy author desperately trying to distil the essence of years of research and hundreds of pages of text into the compass of an index which in ten or twenty pages must provide a finding-guide that meets every reader’s needs to a T.

It’s a game which, try as he might, the scholar can’t win. He can hear his cost-conscious publisher demanding: prune! prune! (‘won’t just a name index do?’). But he knows how vexed he himself gets when he finds a book with a skimped index—the kind with entries that run: Gladstone, W. E., 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, ... 570 (often ending, to cap it all, ‘et passim’). Rather than lazy indexes, it’s almost preferable to find an author going the whole hog and producing that enormity: the book with no index at all. And yet there can be something equally frustrating about finding the other extreme, the index of the over-elaborate variety which, like an Elizabethan codpiece, promises more than it can perform. How often

---

Reprinted from *History today* (Sept. 1985) by permission.