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


‘Nowhere else will you find a more thought provoking and stimulating book on the subject of health and healing. It is a well written and indexed book . . .’ (index by Richard & Hilary Bird)


‘Full marks for the index . . .’


‘The book has a very thorough, single sequence index of authors, titles and subjects. On the whole, it is a safe guide through the maze of Brazilian compound names . . .’


‘The index is very well written and reflects the enormous amount of work that has gone into the writing of this book.’ (index by the Author)


‘The book is well illustrated, well indexed, well done.’


‘She provides a good index, and the very exhaustiveness which makes her book so difficult to read and review will probably enhance its usefulness for reference.’


‘There is a nice feature called alternate title index as well as an author index.’


‘Four pages are then given to the holy land today, followed by four pages of time charts and a very detailed, useful index.’


‘. . . and the index of persons (315–56), which includes biographical sketches as well as appropriate references, is particularly helpful.’


‘And not the least valuable thing about Volume III is its index, beautifully executed, a long-awaited key to the whole set.’ (index by Peter J. Carlton, Patricia A. Welsch and Gwyneth Hatton, under the supervision of Irvin Ehrenpreis)


‘Nothing is explained twice: for those who miss a point the first time, there’s a good index.’


‘There is a 65-page index by corrodent. So, the user, knowing the environment of interest, can easily find the producer-published data on corrosion resistance in that environment. The preparation of this excellent index was a major accomplishment, and it alone is worth the full $125 cost of the volume.’ (Well, there’s appreciation for you!)


‘The index is one of the most comprehensive seen in a publication of this size. The indexing is excellent, containing entries not only for sections or topics within the various papers but also for some of the entries in the bibliography.’ (index by Professor Weinberg)
Evans) . . ." menon, with considerable importance as a work of reference.

The book thus becomes an invaluable guide to the whole phenomenon, with considerable importance as a work of reference.


'This index is exemplary and enable its material to be approached from half a dozen different directions.' Rev. by Philip Walker, Tools & Trades 2, 1984.

'In addition to the biographies there [sic] . . . a truly magnificent apparatus of keys and indexes . . . The index system must be described in detail. There is a Key to Christian names . . . a Key to Occupations . . . a 30-page Topographical Index, followed by an 11-page index grouping works by county and country . . . There is a 13-page index by type of building: Abbeys, Bridges, Castles, Churches, Colleges, Libraries, Mills, Hospital, Kitchens, etc. There is then the General Index, which seems to be a distinguished example of a most difficult craft.' [indexes by L. S. Colchester]


'Numerous references in the comprehensive index . . .'


'The 98-page index, prepared by Bella Hass Weinberg, combines a name and subject guide with an index to all the words and phrases of the many Jewish languages which appear in the text. A virtuoso accomplishment, it unfailingly located any word or topic I wanted to track down.'
"Although there is an excellent index, the lack of clinical correlates and separation of text and examples make it unsuitable for immediate help when faced with a difficult situation.'


'The volume ends with a moderate index.' [definition, please?]


'The book has its eccentricities: some excellent discussions of genre, for example, are presented in footnotes, but there is no entry for "genre" in the index.'


'. . . and there is an index of selected biblical references (unfortunately, not of names and subjects).'

### Indexes censured


'Likewise some topics are well presented for those seeking design information, but it is not as easy as it might be to seek out this [sic] data. Furthermore, the index is not unduly detailed with only one reference to design despite at least half the papers having significant design content and application.'


'The book is important and good. It would be twice as useful with a good index. The indexes are voluminous and disastrous. The most important need, an index of texts discussed, is not met. What use are 44 page-references for a writer like Apollinaris, one reading "126-224"? Subjects are indexed in five separate language indexes with paltry cross-references. Keywords are followed by huge unarticulated strings of page numbers or ridiculous subdivisions (look under "Analogie"). Space for improvements could come from eliminating useless entries: most of the 41 references to Lietzmann are to mere paginations where his edition of Apollinaris is cited, and many of the Greek entries are not significant. That most books are inadequately or badly indexed is no excuse. Why are writers and publishers so determined to prevent us consulting their books efficiently?'


'I must offer one reservation. The book is divided into six lengthy chapters without subheadings, and the reader interested in a specific detail cannot easily find whether, and where, it is discussed. A detailed list of contents would have been most helpful. The index does not always offer much assistance either, because the subjects are generally indexed under authors and not independently. Also the manner in which the index is printed is in itself confusing; thus he who is interested in Ibn Ezra's fragmentary introduction will have difficulty in finding Simon's detailed annotation to it.'


'Anglo-Saxonists may, however, view with frustration the inadequate indexes in this volume. The omissions and errors in all three, especially the third—for which, I understand, the editors were not responsible—stand in flagrant contrast to the high standards of accuracy and learning displayed by the scholarly contributors. They deserved better from their publisher, for this otherwise admirable Festschrift is a useful repository of some of the best research now being done into the subject of England before the Norman Conquest.'


'An index exists, but it proved nearly useless in a quick check: key words such as waves, tides, convection, diffusion and upwelling were not to be found.'


'As a reference book, however, it is infuriating. Its indexing system is crazy. It offers no index of authors, which means that although I now, while writing this piece, can remember coming across several of those unmemorable Djuna Barnes Lesbians, I have absolutely no way of finding them short of reading the entire volume through again. There is an index of proper names but it is useless unless one already knows who the "original" is. It was by sheer chance that I happened upon a character strayed out of my own works . . .'


'To cover such an extensive subject in one small book means that explanations must be brief. Unfortunately, its indexing does not help as it fails to refer the reader to all inclusions on each subject.'


'The index is not useful. Under "A" there is just one entry: "Alpha heavy-chain disease". No mention of amylloid, agammaglobulinemia, antigenic stimulation, antibody specificity of paraproteins . . . I found all these plums in the text of
the book, but then I read it from cover to cover and I got it free. Will other readers bother?'


'... a book which satisfies the first demand of a short biography: one wants to know more. The index is unfortunately inadequate.'


'Many with an interest in the ancient world will have cause to refer repeatedly to this volume. In any new edition, however, I would enter a plea for an expanded index with more ample reference to the topics subsumed under the principal entries.'


'Professor Terrien makes considerable play of "canonical dynamics". It is not entirely clear what he means by this, and the inadequate index gives only one reference, and that to a page where the precise phrase does not occur (it apparently points to: "The dynamics of scriptural authority will urge, stimulate, motivate, inform, and restrain but not shake a modern interpretation of sexuality in our time.").'


'There is an author index and a brief subject index in which all but seven entries are names of states. This serious deficiency of the subject index and the lack of annotations are partially corrected by introductions to each chapter which indicate the major focus of many of the entries.'


'Perhaps a good index could have overcome some of these difficulties. Unfortunately, this bibliography does not provide one. The index is by author only, and, since authors can have multiple entries, it can mean wading through many entries in different parts of the book before getting to the one you want. The only guides are a subject classification letter and an entry number. This is not likely to help the casual reader since the meaning of the classificatory code has not been included in the index . . . Just to add to the confusion, the index does contain some page numbers, but these are only for references to Chubin's introductory essay! An index is peculiarly important for a bibliography, and this is one of the least helpful I have come across.'


'The single index is a disaster. It lists proper names, but no subjects, lumps Swift scholars, Swift's contemporaries, and others indiscriminately together, and under the scholars lists original work, reviewing, and casual references in one unbroken sequence. Several scholars are listed twice, and two different David Hamiltons are conflated. Treatment of the nobility is inconsistent and inaccurate, and when the Earl of Orrery is listed correctly he turns out to be the wrong Earl. Oxford is listed as Harley with no cross-reference to his title, and St John as Bolingbroke with none to his family name. A simple list of the errors in the index would exceed the space available for this review.'


'Users will soon note two shortcomings: the index does not adequately display the material on women in the bibliography, and ERIC documents are missing. With no index entry or reference under "Women", the numerous articles on individual women and women's associations are lost to those not already familiar with them.'


'One criticism is that for a work that is destined exclusively for use as a reference book the indexing is not as helpful as it might be: it one wants to know what language they speak in Djibouti, one finds Djibouti in the Countries index, but the only information given is that Djibouti is in the African section. One turns to the contents, but the chapter heading is merely "Countries and their languages". So one has to search through the alphabetical lists. A more helpful index would have given the page number immediately.'


'The book concludes with a poor index.'


'A final word about—of course—the index, which unfortunately complements the volume in kind. Although a section of the introduction treats abstracting and indexing historically, no heading can be found in the index under History of indexes; Indexing, History of; or Abstracting, History of. Instead, these references are camouflaged under such headings as "Classical Greek abstracting," "Early book indexes," "Medieval indexes and abstracts," and "Seventeenth-century abstracts." ("Cuneiform documents," another index access point to the historical section of the text, actually points to the wrong page: 92 instead of 12.) Normal word order is used even when no one would possibly look under the initial word, e.g. "Basic intellectual problem of indexes," "Internal guidance," "Signature of abstractor." Other entries are impossibly vague: "Concepts," "Errors," "Headings".


'Apart from its feeble index, this is an excellent book.'

'I could have done with a bigger index—important for a textbook where so often you want to re-find things. But that is a small complaint.' (*small*? *important*? which?)


'More importantly, the book advertises itself as resolutely populist, being addressed to that fine old trooper, General Reader . . . Contributors are scrupulous about explaining technicalities *ad loc.*, but if the General's memory lets him down, he will be floundering to relocate definitions. The poor Index does not help. The consequence of all this is that some fine scholarly writing is easily accessible only to Generals who have served time with the Classical Light Infantry.'


'My only complaint is with the parsimonious index, which occupies only six pages and excludes many subjects mentioned in the text. For example, carbamazepine is mentioned many times, and merits a whole chapter from Post and Uhde, but is not listed in the index. This is unfortunate because this book deserves a place in psychiatric and neurological libraries as a valuable source of reference from a truly multi-disciplinary team.'


'The index would have benefited from the inclusion of subjects, for example, Benedictines, Cistercians, royal castles.'


'The index is poor and appears to have been prepared by someone insufficiently familiar with the book's contents. There are some outright errors—e.g., the pages indicated for "chronic psychoses" actually discuss acute psychoses. Many times the index refers to an unimportant location of a word in the text. Greater selectivity and highlighting of indexed words in the text would increase the value of the index. As it is, the complete table of contents is much more useful for looking up topics than is the index.'


'It is a struggle to make good use of the index. Although both shock lung and ARDS are used in the chapter headings, they are not found in the index. Respiratory distress syndrome is indexed but there is no mention there of complement, although the damage due to complement is discussed in the text.'


'Written from an American background of growing need, the 74 chapters do not provide a standard clinical reference text. This creates difficulties because the index is inadequate. Furthermore, the presumably late insertion of two large tables in chapter 10 of volume 2 has produced an incorrect page listing affecting the last 22 chapters, and this makes usage even more difficult.'

A subsequent issue of British Medical Journal (14 Dec 1985) carried a response from the publishers:

'In his review . . . Dr Brian Livesley quite rightly mentioned the inadequate index that was published initially. When the problems with the index were brought to our attention early this year, we immediately prepared an improved revised index. The revised index is now available to all purchasers of the textbook. Barbara M. Goldman'


'The index is unreliable (two errors in the first seven entries).'  


'Wider questions also arise. Who is going to use information of this kind? What is more, who will find it? Only someone seeking topographical information, it seems, unless the inquirer is prepared to plough through the whole volume, for the indexing of buildings is lamentably deficient. Under "architecture" nineteen kinds of building and two general themes are listed as having separate entries, but there is nothing to lead the reader to such remarkable or contentious buildings as Kenningtions or Harlowbury Chapel. Houses as such are not mentioned. "Protestant nonconformity" refers the reader to eighteen tons or Harlowbury Chapel. Houses as such are not mentioned. A detailed subject-index is essential; and neither heraldry nor snooker appear. But even without it the present way of proceeding would be inadequate.'


'My only criticisms of the book are firstly that much more work should have gone into the composition of the index. In a highly referenced and well thought-out text such as this, a complete index is almost as valuable as the work itself. My suspicion is that the index was composed by patchworking together suggested entries from individual authors. Whether this is the case or not, it certainly could have been much more extensive and hence more valuable. Also I think a separate author index would have been valuable.'


'A two-and-a-half page index terminates the book, but it is both eclectic and very incomplete.'
'There is only one serious criticism. The book lacks an index. It is not intended simply to be read as a matter of interest — though it certainly can be so read. It is a work of reference and as such should provide the reader with a quick and reliable guide to its contents. Compiling an index is a tedious and wholly uninteresting task (this is a comment from one who has done it several times), but it does need to be done. Someone — author, publisher or professional indexer — should have done it in this case.' (wholly uninteresting task? then leave it to the professional indexer!)


'An index would have added greatly to the usefulness of the work.' (And how many times have BA Reports earned this same rebuke from reviewers?)


'The absence of any author or subject index is irritating since it makes it exceedingly difficult to locate the discussion of items listed in the bibliography in the actual text — but as this seems to be characteristic of the series, it would be unfair to criticise the authors.' Rev. by David Ellis again, in Inform 83, 1986.

'There is no index of either subjects or authors treated. The lack of the former is partly ameliorated by the reasonably full two and a half page contents list and the overall structure which together serve as a half or quarter substitute for a detailed subject index. The absence of an author index is a real nuisance. It is immensely time-consuming to attempt to locate a reference in the text from the list of references. This is likely to prove particularly irritating for someone who is relatively familiar with most of the material treated and who perhaps may wish to look up only a few of the more interesting, unusual or unknown references in the main body of the text. For a work published by the British Library, and for the price, an index is not too much to ask.' (Surely good indexes are prime examples of the book's title?)


'Only a lack of scriptural and topical indices [sic] keeps these books from being models of their kind.'


'This small book is competently put together, written in a clear style and is factually accurate. Unfortunately, I find it tries to do too much in its 112 pages, and there is no proper index which means that some of the information is not easy to find without scanning whole chapters.'


'References are sensibly collected together at the end of each volume, but unfortunately there is no index.'


'The absence of bibliographies and indexes reduces the effectiveness of this series of "Guides [to Biblical Scholarship]".'


'The organisation is broadly thematic; maddeningly, there's no index and few dates . . . (the Author) isn't always as sweet as this, of course, and the showing-off involves a good deal of deliberate objectionableness, mostly of the marzipan pig variety. So, under "Women" in the non-existent index, see "so exquisite in Malaya that little need for aphrodisiacs," "if attractive, to be regarded as something to eat," "silly feminists behaving as though language were a masculine invention," "chic speakers" on French telly, "doctrinaire verbiage of women's liberation," "lady reviewers" not liking Kingsley Amis, and so on, in a jovial bulldozing strain which it's hard to be seriously provoked by.'


'And why no index? Perhaps the publishers did not care to celebrate the fact that room was not found in the book for some of my favourite places: Queenstown and the Remarkables and Lyttelton and the Haast Pass.'


'We might also have had an index.'

'The translation is by Professor Walter D. Morris of Iowa State University. It is strewn with such infelicities as "unbriddledly" and "humanitarianly", and with horrible modern slang. No doubt Professor Morris would argue that the prose of Mann's original is ugly, but he can have no excuse for the complete abandonment of his duty of proper editing. There is no index or bibliography, individuals and books are left unidentified, quotations are unattributed, there is no attempt to set the book in its historical context other than a wholly inadequate introduction, crucial allusions are unexplained, and there is no recognition of the need to elucidate the nature of long-forgotten movements, philosophies and causes. For such a book to be put forth in such a condition can be characterized by no milder word than disgraceful.'


'Norwich includes much interesting and amusing writing, but his authors seem privileged to him alone. He includes verse from Chaucer to Noel Coward by way of Flecker, Kipling and Belloc, and some sailormen like Joshua Slocum. His favourites are Lady Mary Wortley Montague (who surprisingly discusses her stays with the regulars in a turkish bath), Waugh, Leigh-Fermor, Peter Fleming, Freya Stark, C. M. Doughty and E. M. Forster. A repetitious bibliography is provided but there is no index. This is a great bore.'


'Another [limitation] is the absence of an analytical subject-index to direct one to any particular type of building or aspect of domestic architecture. Without it the labour of turning over a thousand pages in search of some specific topic is daunting.'


'It would be ungracious to look into the mouth of such a valuable gift-horse, but this reviewer cannot suppress a wish that the publisher might have added at least one index, that of proper names. The titles of the individual works, as listed in the table of contents, scarcely hint at the wealth of references to related authors and subjects contained in almost every work. (indexes sell books . . .)


'This volume, like far too many current archaeological works, is without an index, that necessary tool for any work of scholarship.'


'The book is generously illustrated but, infuriatingly, lacks an index. When you want to go back over the friendship with John F. Kennedy and the way it was soured by Sinatra's supposed but never proven Mafia connections, you have to fan through the pages until you come to JFK's picture . . .'

‘Hofstadter’s Hobby-Horse is Kurt Godel’s mathematical Incompleteness Theorem, which translated into English says that no system is complete within itself but every system must ultimately and inevitably draw upon some outside element. The theorem supposedly applies to mathematical, logical, philosophical and all other systems. Does Hofstadter ride his Hobby-Horse beyond cool reason and fair discretion?’

So one might conclude from consulting the carefully wrought index to *Metamagical Themas*, where the browser finds 7 entries beginning with “Godel” and no less of 38 entries commencing with “self-” which refer to discussions of reflexivity appearing throughout the book. The impression is reinforced by significant omissions. There is a one-line entry for “entropy” and another for “Dumpy, H.” (whose disintegration proved irreversible, remember?), but none at all for Narcissus, Echo, or Santayana.’


‘And perhaps, in this volume, an element of accuracy also is missing: the Emma Cockburn referred to in the index and described in the text as “a dusky, silent beauty . . . Emma Rothschild . . . married Alexander Cockburn,” can be vouched for as untrue, as the present reviewer had the signal honour of participating in the above-mentioned ceremony. Reader, I married him; “dusky, silent beauty” did not.’


‘Christopher Reid, writing in the *Times Lit Supp*, was by no means totally pleased, but he was in less of a taking than Miss Lee. “Barbera and McBrien have clearly been diligent in their researches,” he told his readers, “but their handling of the material is not always subtle or as adroit as one might wish. Their book gets off to a wobbly start with a coy account of the jumble-sale hat worn by Smith [calling Stevie “Smith1,1 am sure described in the text as “a dusky, silent beauty . . . Emma Collins/Harvill: The letters of Ann Fleming, ed. by Mark

appearing throughout the book. The impression is reinforced by other noteworthy events, in addition to Stevie’s prize for perfect school attendance . . . Edward VII died, and George V became king’.”

Our warm thanks to those who contributed to this section: Ken Bakewell (Liverpool), Hazel Bell (Hatfield), David Bowron (Elton), Philip Bradley (Dundee), Martha Cornog (Philadelphia), Valerie Curtis (Liverpool), David Edwards (Wingerworth), Jill Ford (Brighton), John Gibson (Wichenford), Martyn Gilchrist (New Milton), Sue Goodman (London), Peter Greig (Ottawa), Brenda Hall (Elle, Fife), Brian Hunter (London), Cherry Lavel (London), Tom Norton (Farnborough), Alexandra Orley (Croydon), James Pargiter (Winsham), Helga Perry (Gloucester), Mrs. A. Surrey (Wimbledon), Richard Wright (London).

Macmillan were not pleased to read the above. They have kindly sent *The Indexer* a copy of their letter addressed to the Editor of *Soviet Studies*:

‘Please may I add my strong but friendly protest to that already expressed by Archie Brown at James E. Mace’s criticism of us in *Soviet Studies* for omitting an index when the book does, in fact, have a substantial index. If the reviewer was working from proofs, he should have checked the point with us. If he received a defective copy (and this would surprise me) then he should have spotted the reference to the index in the contents and realised his copy was defective. Anyway, we expect an apology in the next issue of *Soviet Studies*.’


‘Books which come fitted out with an elaborate index used to be one of my sure-fire tests as a child for things between covers best not gone into, of roughly the same order of aversion as food too insistently alleged to be good for you. But even in that undeveloped, far-off land of cane-stung palms and sitting up straight with arms folded behind the back, there were sneaky publishers who tried to get a lump of wodge under your clenched knuckles.’

‘The index can thwart a reader and waste much time, particularly if it consists of a list of useless entries—just the word itself mentioned on the page: for example, pniktalgiogram 17, 25, 91, 125, 149, 201, 289 . . . My record is 47 different page numbers. The reader chooses and the last is usually the one that contains the information. This method should be banned and all entries given subtitles; if not, then bold print for the important entries or else ranked in order of merit. Other frustrations are finding that the page number is wrong or not knowing whether the subject is listed under its own or pathological condition: rheumatoid see arthritis and vice versa.

Indexing is usually done by professionals and courses for indexers are held, so the lack of standardisation is surprising; so is the occasional indifference of authors and editors to the trouble caused to readers.’—Clifford Hawkins (*British Medical Journal* 289, 27 Oct 1984), in a preambule to a collection of reviews.

—Quentin Oates in *The Bookseller*, 7 Dec 1985


‘The book’s most serious shortcomings may be laid at the publisher’s door. Nor only are the nearly fourteen hundred source references crammed into the back of the book, there is neither an index nor a bibliography, making it quite an arduous task to find either complete references to works cited or specific points in the narrative. This is inexcusable, for it shortchanges both the reader and the author of this outstanding work.’

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