Reference books for indexers

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Details are given of nearly 200 reference books which may be of use to indexers. It is accepted that the list is essentially a personal one and that some omissions are inevitable. Comments are invited.

Introduction

In the Autumn 1971 issue of *The Indexer* Bruce S. C. Harling contributed a list of indexers' reference books based on titles sent to the editor by readers. When the editor invited me to write an updated version of this, I accepted the invitation with some trepidation since it was obvious that my list would be a personal one and that there would be omissions as well as some inclusions which others might regard as strange. Perhaps readers will be moved to comment and these comments might form the basis of a later article.

Unlike Bruce Harling, I have not included prices in my list since these are subject to frequent fluctuation. With luck, current prices can be found in *British books in print* and its American equivalent *Books in print*. I say 'with luck' because my experience shows that these works are far from perfect; I remember finding an earlier edition of a major reference work listed in *British books in print* than the one I found later on the Polytechnic library shelves, and when I searched in *Books in print* for the ISBN of a book reviewed in this issue I was able to find only the previous edition.

The list is not restricted to reference books which the indexer might purchase but includes expensive works which can be consulted in libraries. It is, however, appreciated that not all indexers have access to good libraries and that the British public library system is by no means faultless. Items which all indexers might consider purchasing are marked with an asterisk.

The British Standards Institution's glossary of documentation terms defines a reference book as 'a work designed primarily to facilitate the location of specific information within the range of its contents'. Most of the items listed here fall within this definition but some textbooks and monographs designed for continuous reading, particularly on indexing, have been included.

The list is arranged under headings which it is hoped will be helpful to readers, though it is appreciated that these headings are not mutually exclusive and some items could be listed under more than one heading.

Bibliographies and other guides to sources

The basic British and American guides to reference books are *Walford's guide to reference material* and *Guide to reference books* edited by Eugene Sheehy, and these really ought to be available in every public reference library. There is also a condensed edition of Walford's excellent work, but even this is likely to be too expensive for the average indexer to purchase for his or her own collection (£25 or £20 to Library Association members).

*Printed reference material* is a useful compilation, which I have drawn upon heavily for this article. It contains contributions by two former Society of Indexers chairmen (myself and David Lee) and an excellent index by Society Council member Jill Ford. Although it is primarily a handbook for reference librarians and students of librarianship, it may well be worth an indexer's while to spend £12.50 on the paperback edition (or £10 if s/he is a member of the Library Association).

Robert Walker's *First clue: the A–Z of finding out* is an alphabetically arranged guide to books and organizations which was favourably reviewed by Elizabeth Wallis in this journal. Books costing less than £4 are marked with one asterisk, those costing £4–£12 with two asterisks and those costing more than £12 with three asterisks.

Ann Hoffmann's *Research for writers* aims to serve as a definitive guide to ways and means of unearthing any information that writers and journalists may need. It is, according to a review in this journal, biased towards the humanities.

Guides to sources in specific subject fields abound. They range from the handy, brief and inexpensive guide to education sources, *Where to look things up* compiled by Elizabeth Wallis for the Advisory Centre for Education, to the massive *Encyclopedia of business information sources*, which contains 25,000 entries. Another major reference work from the Gale Research Company is *Statistics sources*. William H. Webb's *Sources of information in the social sciences* is based on Carl H. White's excellent original work. Medical indexers may find *Searching the medical literature* by J. Welch and T. A. King useful.

Butterworths publish a series of guides to information sources, all of which are useful but expensive. They include *Information sources in science and technology*, *Information sources in law*, *Information sources in economics*, *Information sources in engineering*, and *Information sources in medicine*. These works contain comprehensive lists of books and periodicals arranged under subject headings which are also used in *British books in print*.
Information sources in physics\textsuperscript{20} and Information sources in management and business.\textsuperscript{21}

It is useful for the indexer to know what bibliographical sources are now available online, and the Aslib publication Online bibliographic databases\textsuperscript{22} is helpful here. It lists 179 databases which provide access to nearly 80 million references.

All indexers should have access via their public libraries to the weekly list of new British books, The British national bibliography,\textsuperscript{23} as well as to British books in print\textsuperscript{2} and Books in print.\textsuperscript{3} The catalogue of the British Library\textsuperscript{24} and the American National union catalog\textsuperscript{25} can be consulted for details of older books, though these—particularly the latter—are likely to be available only in larger libraries.

Textbooks etc. on indexing

Experienced indexers should know the important textbooks on indexing, but newcomers may need some guidance. Norman Knight’s Indexing, the art of,\textsuperscript{26} the final contribution to indexing by the founder of the Society of Indexers, should be in every indexer’s personal library; it is a first class comprehensive guide with an exemplary index compiled by the author and Anthony Raven, and a foreword by the late Harold Macmillan, first Earl of Stockton, which is also well worth reading. Margaret Anderson packs a great deal of excellent advice into the 31 pages of her Book indexing,\textsuperscript{27} which replaces the equally useful Making an index by Gordon Carey,\textsuperscript{28} now out of print but worth borrowing from a library. Robert Collison’s two guides\textsuperscript{29-30} are now rather dated, though still valuable, and Hunnisett’s Indexing for editors\textsuperscript{31} contains good chapters on terminology, places, persons, filing and presentation.

Information filing and finding by Pat F. Booth and M. L. South\textsuperscript{32} is mainly concerned with indexing for library and information management but also includes a short and very useful chapter on book indexing.

Those indexers who wish to get to grips with the British Library’s rather formidable Preserved Context Index System (PRECIS) will find a study of PRECIS: a manual of concept analysis and subject indexing\textsuperscript{33} rewarding; the second edition is a vast improvement on the first edition in spite of some unfortunate omissions.

The Society of Indexers published A select reading list on indexing,\textsuperscript{34} containing details of 98 books, to mark its 21st anniversary in 1978. At the other extreme are Hans H. Wellisch’s extensive bibliographies of books and articles on indexing and abstracting.\textsuperscript{35-36} This very comprehensive work is kept up to date by regular supplements in The Indexer.

Standards

Indexers should be very familiar with two British standards: BS 3700, on the preparation of indexes to books, periodicals and other publications (a revised edition of which should be available in 1987),\textsuperscript{37} and BS 1749, on alphabetical arrangement and the filing order of numerals and symbols.\textsuperscript{38} There are, however, many other standards which are relevant to indexing but may not be so well known, most notably BS 6529, on examining documents, determining their subjects and selecting indexing terms.\textsuperscript{39} This standard places particular emphasis on user-satisfaction and includes a very useful flowchart of the indexing operation using a thesaurus. Other relevant British standards include 1629 (bibliographical references),\textsuperscript{40} 5261 and 5261C (copy preparation and proof correction),\textsuperscript{61-62} 5408 (documentation terms),\textsuperscript{4} 5605 (citing publications by bibliographical references),\textsuperscript{42} 5723 (establishment and development of monolingual thesauri)\textsuperscript{44} and 6371 (citation of unpublished documents).\textsuperscript{45}

Standards organizations of other countries have published their equivalent of BS 3700: indexers of American books should, for example, be familiar with ANSI standard Z39.4-46. Work is also proceeding on a revised edition of the International Organization for Standardization’s indexing standard, ISO 999.\textsuperscript{47}

Nor is it only official standards organizations which publish standards to be used by indexers. There are references in BS 3700, for example, to the Anglo-American cataloguing rules (AACR2)\textsuperscript{48} and the IFLA guide to the formation of personal names and their preferred entry in indexes.\textsuperscript{49} The British Library publishes a microfiche file containing authoritative AACR2 forms of names and associated references.\textsuperscript{50}

Thesauri

Although the indexer should always prefer the terms used in a book to those listed in a thesaurus, provided those terms are used consistently, s/he may need to consult a thesaurus in case of doubt and particularly when indexing composite works for which different contributors may have chosen different terms. Thesauri are also useful guides to the construction of see and see also references. There are very many published thesauri, covering a wide range of subjects, and most of them are available in the library of Aslib (the Association for Information Management) (Information House, 26-7 Boswell Street, London WC1N 3JZ). General thesauri include the British Standards Institution’s ROOT thesaurus,\textsuperscript{51} which is biased towards engineering and technology; BBC Data’s thesaurus;\textsuperscript{52} the PRECIS vocabulary fiche;\textsuperscript{53} and the EUDISED multilingual thesaurus,\textsuperscript{54} which is published in English and French editions and contains equivalents in these two languages as well as German, Spanish and Dutch.

Indexers who wish to compile their own thesauri may find Elizabeth Orna’s brief guide, written for museum curators, helpful, though the author writes “The main principle for thesaurus construction can be expressed as
"Don't do it unless you have to, but if you must do it, make sure you do it well." 59

Following the expert advice of Jean Aitchison and Alan Gilchrist will help to ensure doing it well, though the second edition of their excellent book is expensive. Also relevant is BS 5723. 44

More detailed information about thesauri is given in Pat Booth's article, 'Thesauri—their uses for indexers', in this issue.

Indexing with microcomputers

There are no books on indexing with microcomputers and the best advice is to read the Society of Indexers' excellent newsletter, MicroIndexer, regularly. The librarian's guide to microcomputers for information management by Paul Burton and Howard Petrie, 87 a revision of Introducing microcomputers: a guide for librarians, includes a little — a very little — about indexing. The British Library (Library Association Library) published a helpful reading list on microcomputers in libraries in January 1983 and a supplementary list in March 1984; copies of these lists, both of which were compiled by Paul F. Burton, may be obtained from the Library at 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE. They are regularly updated in Library microformation news, published by the Library Technology Centre at the Polytechnic of Central London in Regent Street.

Indexing programs are reviewed in MicroIndexer and occasionally in The Indexer. A few—a very few—indexing programs are listed in A directory of library and information retrieval software for microcomputers compiled by Hilary Gates. 58

The Data Protection Act

Although Society of Indexers member A. Sandison has established that indexers who use personal data only for the preparation of indexes to books and periodicals do not need to register under the Data Protection Act, 59 it behoves all indexers to know something about the Act. There are many published guides, including those by Davies 60 and Elbra 61, and various free pamphlets are available from the Data Protection Registrar (Springfield House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AX). 62

The world of publishing

The indexer is very much a part of the world of publishing and should therefore have some knowledge of this world. The Booksellers' Association's Trade reference book 63 is a comprehensive guide to the book trade and there are two major 'style manuals': the long-established Hart's rules for compositors and readers at the University Press, Oxford, 64 first published in 1893, now provides guidance for all writers, publishers and printers on such matters as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italicization, abbreviations, setting of foreign languages, treatment of footnotes, and machine-readable codes; the much more detailed Chicago manual of style 65 (758 pages compared with Hart's 188) includes a section on indexing which was described by Margaret Anderson in her review in the April 1983 issue of The Indexer as "a wise and helpful introduction to the subject, full of good advice and useful information", though it gives minimal attention to the impact of new technology on indexing.

Publisher's practical dictionary in 20 languages edited by Imre Móra 66 is intended to provide a balanced selection of terms from all facets of the publishing trade 'with the object of promoting the efficiency of business contacts between the publishers of the countries . . . united in the Berne Convention and the Universal Copyright Convention.'

Press guides

In his talk to the Society of Indexers on 4 December 1986 Councillor Peter Arnold emphasized the importance of sending out press releases if indexers are to market themselves satisfactorily, and this means knowing where to send them. Benn's media directory, 67 formerly The newspaper press directory and Benn's press directory, is a standard guide to the world's media including newspapers, periodicals, directories and broadcasting. Volume 1 (United Kingdom) covers newspapers, periodicals, directories and broadcasting services, while volume 2 (Overseas countries) covers overseas and international media with more than 28,000 titles in 195 countries including details of UK contacts. Willing's press guide 68 is another useful source, while IMS Ayer directory of publications is the standard American guide. Peter Arnold particularly recommended Brad: British rate and data. 70

Directories of periodicals

Ulrich's international periodicals directory 71 is a reliable guide, while British periodicals are listed in Current British journals. 72 Walford's guide to current British periodicals in the humanities and social sciences 73 covers a wide range of subjects and it is planned to follow this with a volume covering scientific and technical periodicals. An example of a periodicals list covering a specific subject field is Religious periodicals directory. 74

Periodical titles are frequently referred to by their abbreviations, and Periodical title abbreviations is a useful guide here.

General reference works

'Always try Whitaker's almanack first' might well be the slogan of any librarian, since Whitaker's is an invaluable guide to so many subjects with an outstanding index compiled by Society of Indexers stalwart Elizabeth Wallis. Equally valuable is the American equivalent, The world almanac and book of facts. 77 Europa yearbook and The statesman's year book contain a wealth of information about all countries of the world. Britain: an
official handbook is an annual compendium of facts and figures about our own country. Keesing's contemporary archives and its American counterpart Facts on file are loose-leaf digests of current world news.

Guides to government and other official publications

The main sources of information on government publications are the catalogues published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 49 High Holborn, London WC1V 6HB (callers only) or PO Box 569, London SE1 9NH (trade and London mail orders) and the US Government Printing Office, North Capitol and H Streets NW, Washington, DC 20401. By no means all British official publications are published by HMSO: Catalogue of British official publications not published by HMSO is a useful source of such publications, while Directory of British official publications: a guide to sources lists about 1300 organizations which issue publications themselves rather than through HMSO with details of types of publication, availability, etc. Business and government: a monthly survey of official and semi-official publications for business and industry lists and describes UK official publications of interest to industry and commerce. The exact titles of government reports which are referred to mainly by the name of their chairman can be traced via British government publications: an index to chairmen and authors.

Guides to organizations

It can often be helpful to know whether there is a learned society or trade/professional association which can provide information on a subject. Useful guides to such bodies include Directory of British associations and associations in Ireland; Encyclopedia of associations (for American organizations); The world of learning (also useful for details of educational institutions throughout the world); Councils, committees and Boards; Directory of employers' associations, trade unions, joint organisations, etc.; and Trade associations and professional bodies in the United Kingdom.

Dictionaries and encyclopaedias

How is it spelt? What does it really mean? All indexers have their own favourite dictionaries and encyclopaedias, and regular readers of this journal will have seen Philip Bradley's detailed review of a number of dictionaries. The Oxford English dictionary, originally published between 1884 and 1928 as A new English dictionary on historical principles and known by the name of its principal editor, Sir James Murray, remains the major English work with Webster's new international dictionary of the English language, based on current usage rather than historic principles, pre-eminent in the United States although with several rivals. Shorter dictionaries include the Shorter Oxford dictionary, Concise Oxford dictionary, Chambers' twentieth century dictionary and Webster's new collegiate dictionary, the principal abridgment of Webster's new international dictionary. Indexers may also need access to bilingual dictionaries, which are too numerous to list here; details of such dictionaries can be found in Walford and Sheehy.

Gowers' Complete plain words, Partridge's Usage and abuse and Fowler's Modern English usage are guides to the correct use of words. Dictionaries of specialist aspects of the language include Partridge's Dictionary of slang and unconventional English; Green's Newspeak: a dictionary of jargon; Everyman's dictionary of abbreviations; Viney's Dictionary of toponyms, which lists and describes more than 400 place names which have become part of the English language; and three guides to acronyms: Acronyms and abbreviations in library and information work; Pugh's dictionary of acronyms and abbreviations, and the American Acronyms, initialisms & abbreviations dictionary. Brewer's dictionary of phrase and fable is a well known and respected encyclopaedic dictionary of general, literary and historic information, copies of which can be obtained at bargain prices from many bookshops.

There are several dictionaries of quotations, Stevenson's Home book of quotations being a useful general guide.

Well known major encyclopaedias include Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Americana, Chambers' encyclopaedia, Collier's encyclopedia and Everyman's encyclopaedia. Every indexer will have his or her favourite single-volume encyclopaedia: my own is The new Columbia encyclopedia.

Details of subject dictionaries and encyclopaedias may be obtained from Walford, Sheehy and Higgins. Some examples are: Peter Walne's Dictionary of archival terminology, which not only gives definitions of 600 terms but also includes equivalent terms in French, Dutch, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish; Encyclopaedia of world art; The interpreter's dictionary of the Bible; Kingzett's chemical encyclopaedia; Hipgrave's Computing terms and acronyms; A glossary of computing terms; the British Standard Glossary of documentation terms; Gilpin's Dictionary of economics and financial markets; The Oxford companion to English literature; Fitzhugh's Dictionary of genealogy; Dudley Stamp's Glossary of geographical terms; The dictionary of human geography; Encyclopaedia Judaica; Harrod's librarians' glossary and reference book of terms used in librarianship, documentation and the bookcrafts; French and Saward's Dictionary of management; The Oxford companion to music; The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians; Encyclopaedia of occupational health and safety; The encyclopedia of
philosophy;126 The encyclopedic dictionary of psychology;126 Hastings' Encyclopaedia of religion and ethics;137 Chambers’ dictionary of science and technology;138 McGraw-Hill encyclopedia of science and technology;139 Van Nostrand's scientific encyclopedia;140 and International encyclopedia of the social sciences.141

Biographical works

Dictionary of national biography142 and Dictionary of American biography, together with their supplements, are the outstanding sources for deceased persons and both have their concise editions.1449 Who's who146 and Who's who in America147 list those living persons who are deemed worthy of inclusion and who wish to be included; after their death they are transferred to Who was who148 and Who was who in America.149 Other countries have their own 'who’s who's' and there are also local ‘who’s who's' covering specific regions of Britain and the United States.

Single-volume dictionaries containing short biographies include Chambers' biographical dictionary150 and Webster's biographical dictionary.151

There are indexes to the obituaries in The Times152 and The New York Times,153 while each volume of The annual obituary154 contains more than 400 illustrated and evaluative obituaries for internationally renowned persons who have died during the year in question.

Guides to the British peerage and aristocracy include Burke's genealogical and heraldic history of the peerage, baronetage and knighthage,155 Debrett's peerage and baronetage156 and Debrett's handbook.157

There are many specialist biographical dictionaries, including Who's who in art,158 Who's who in American art,159 Contemporary authors,160 Contemporary novelists,161 Crockford's clerical directory,162 The medical directory,163 Dod's parliamentary companion,164 Dictionary of scientific biography,165 American men and women of science166 and Who's who in science in Europe.167

Gazetteers

The largest gazetteer, containing something like 345,000 entries, is The Times index-gazetteer of the world.168 Columbia Lippincott gazetteer of the world169 contains some 130,000 entries, while Webster's new geographical dictionary170 has fewer than 50,000 entries. The standard gazetteer of Britain is Bartholomew gazetteer of Britain,171 which has about 40,000 entries compared with the 90,000 entries in the same publisher's earlier Gazetteer of the British Isles.172 The English Place-Name Society publishes separate volumes on the place names of each English county.

Newspaper and periodical indexes

Indexes to newspapers and periodicals are useful guides to current terminology as well as to the latest information on a particular subject. The indexes to The Times,173 New York Times174 and Financial Times175 are also useful sources for obituaries, dates of world events, etc. The Guardian index has been published since January 1986 (reviewed in this issue).176

There are cumulative indexes to The Times Literary Supplement covering the period 1902–1985.177

The Library Association publishes a range of periodical indexes including British humanities index,178 formerly Subject index to periodicals; Current technology index (CTI),179 formerly British technology index; and Library and information science abstracts,180 perhaps better known as LISA. A useful adjunct to Current technology index is Catchword and trade name index (CATNI),181 which indexes the articles covered in CTI under catchwords, product names, names of commercial firms and other organizations and geographical names. In January 1986 a new title was introduced—ASSIA (Applied social sciences index & abstracts).182 This fills a gap but was not introduced at the best time: in times of economic constraint many libraries are only able to add new periodical titles if they can withdraw titles costing the same amount as the new service—in this case £350 for the full service or £294 for the annual cumulation only. ASSIA is reviewed in this issue.

In the United States the H. W. Wilson Company are prolific publishers of periodical indexes including the long-established Readers' guide to periodical literature.183 Specialist titles from this stable include Humanities index,184 Social sciences index,185 Applied science and technology index,186 Art index,187 Biography index,188 Business periodicals index,189 Education index190 and Library literature.191

Guides to libraries and information centres

Most of the above titles ought to be available in public libraries, though not necessarily in your local branch library. As stated in the third paragraph of this article, however, not all public libraries are perfect and public expenditure cuts are exacerbating what has for some time been a difficult situation.

The Library Association publishes an annual list of libraries in the United Kingdom.192 It includes all public, university and polytechnic libraries but is very selective with regard to other kinds of libraries; a review of the 1986 edition in Library and information news, May 1986, stated 'It is better known for its omissions than its inclusions and badly needs a shake up. The section on Ireland is disgraceful and to mention it on the cover must get close to [contravening?] the Trades Descriptions Act.'

Much more useful, though also much more expensive, is the Aslib directory of information sources in the UK,193 the two volumes of which list some 3,000

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organizations able to make information available either freely, on subscription, by consultation or through libraries. There is also a Shorter Aslib directory.104

The fifth edition of Scottish library and information resources was published in 1984.198

Specialist lists of libraries include Directory of law libraries in the British Isles106 and Directory of medical and health care libraries.107

References

*Recommended for purchase

50. Name authority list on microfiche. London: British Library Bibliographic Services Division, monthly.
53. PRECIS vocabulary fiche and Subject authority fiche. London: British Library Bibliographic Services Division, annual.
70. Brad: British rate and data. 76 Oxford Street, London WIN 9FD, monthly.
133. Sadic, Stanley (ed.). The new Grove dictionary of music
160. Contemporary authors. Detroit: Gale Research, irregular.
164. Dod’s parliamentary companion. London: Dod’s, annual.
193. Codlin, Ellen M. (ed.). Aslib directory of information
The index as moral and technical norm

The preparation of an adequate index to a scholarly book was for [George Sarton] a sacred trust. So it was that, in his reviews, he would severely rebuke the negligent authors of books that lacked an index or sported one that was perfunctory and therefore largely functionless. Such authors were guilty of the moral dereliction of requiring serious readers who wanted to make limited, specific use of those books to engage in a drawn-out search through its pages and of requiring readers who vaguely remembered a salient passage in a book read some time before to reread much of the book in order to locate that passage. An index was for Sarton the instrumental expression of a technical norm and the symbolic expression of a moral norm, with the second supporting the first.

Along with the exercise of moral suasion and public sanctions, Sarton provided a prototype of indexing in unexampled detail. The first volume of his Introduction,* running to almost 800 pages of text, has an index of 52 double-columned pages. The second volume of 1,138 pages of text has an index of 110 pages, supplemented by a 'meager' Greek index of three pages. But it is the third volume (in two parts), with its almost 2,000 pages of text devoted to 'science and learning in the fourteenth century,' which engaged Sarton's indexing energies to the full: the 'General Index' in English, prefaced by 'Introductory Remarks' on the compiling of the index, runs to 173 double-columned pages; the Greek index to another 8 pages; the 'Chinese Index and Glossary to Volumes 1, 2, and 3' (prepared with the aid principally of J. R. Ware) requires another 40 pages and, finally, the Japanese index (aided by his Harvard colleagues, Serge Elisséeff and E. O. Reischauer) runs to 14 pages more. Altogether, an assemblage of indexes comprising 235 pages. (We who know of Sarton's deep interest in Muslim contributions to science and learning might be tempted to ask: 'But where is the index of Muslim [Arabic] names?' An apt question with a ready answer: those names were faithfully transliterated and incorporated in the General Index.)

At that time I had been at Columbia University for some years and so knew nothing at first hand of Sarton's vast labors on this array of indexes. However, a letter from him, dated 4710.04 [4 October 1947] reported with great relief and a tinge of pride, that 'I had to work here the whole summer, without let-up, to organize the index to my vol. 3. My secretary is typing it now, 1,000 pages!' That note to me is evidently condensed from an entry in his journal on his sixty-third birthday:

4708.31 [31 August 1947]

This birthday ended the hardest summer of my life—hard labor on the index to Vol. III. I began the preparation of the main index on 4707.07 and ended 4708.15. Greek Index 4707.12-18; Chinese Index 4708.15-26; Japanese Index 4707.27-29. The main index was ended and the Chinese one begun on The Assumption—the most memorable Assumption of my life next to the one in 1925 when Mabel, May and I were in Lourdes, in the Pyrenees.

[He then sums up his deep-seated feelings about the intrinsic and symbolic meanings of an authentic index.] Hard as it was, the work was bearable because I thought of its usefulness, and because I realized that this was the last large (gigantic) index of my life. An index is the nearest approach in the world of scholarship to charity in common life.


*Introduction to the history of science; 5 vols