AWARDS FOR INDEXERS

Wheatley Medal

The selection of an outstanding index published in the UK to receive The Library Association Wheatley Medal is made by a panel of representatives of The Library Association (LA) Cataloguing and Indexing Group and the Society of Indexers. The 1985 award was made at a reception at the LA on 6 November 1986, immediately preceding the Society of Indexers’ Annual General Meeting.

Doreen Blake, Chairman of the Panel, announced that, from a number of nominated indexes of high standard, the panel had selected the index to Brain’s diseases of the nervous system, 9th edition; by Sir John Walton (Oxford University Press). The indexer responsible is Dr John Gibson, a Doctor of Medicine and a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and the author of several text books for nurses. Since retiring from practice ten years ago he has been engaged in indexing, and is now a freelance indexer of medical and other scientific books and journals. His Medicine international: index to the first series 1981-3 was highly commended by the Panel for 1984 (see The Indexer 15(1) April 1986, 38). A long-standing member of the Society of Indexers, he is a regular attender of its meetings and conferences.

Doreen Blake described the winning index as ‘intricate and detailed, and a fine example of how a medical text-book should be indexed. It has innovation, is cleverly cross-referenced and accurate. A very worthy winner.’

The award was presented to Dr Gibson by Jean Plaister, Vice-President of The Library Association and Director of LASER.

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Indexes are notable also among the LA’s Mccolvin Medal awards for outstanding reference books. Commended for this is Picture sources UK, edited by Rosemary Eakins (Macdonald), a directory of collections of visual material. Its 407 text pages are complemented by a 14-page Index of Collections and 52-page Subject Index—66 pages of triple-column indexes, attributed on the copyright page to David Lee and Alice Mackrell.

H. W. Wilson Award

The 1986 H. W. Wilson Company Award for Excellence in Indexing was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Indexers, held in Washington on 3 May 1986. It was awarded to Marjorie Hyslop for her index to the Metals handbook, Desk edition (American Society of Metals, 1985).

Marjorie Hyslop served as a professional staff member of the American Society of Metals for forty years, editing many of their publications. She has been national secretary of the American Society for Information Science, and a Trustee of the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services. She has written many papers and articles on information science and metallurgical information. In 1973 she was awarded the Professional Award of the Special Libraries Association, and she is also an Honorary Fellow of NFAIS.

Metals handbook has 1,376 pages including 1,200 tables and 2,200 illustrations; the index makes 61 pages, four columns to a page, with an introduction, and many scope notes and cross-references. Page locations give both section and page number within the section, and information within figures or tables is denoted by ‘F’ or ‘T’. The index was produced without the aid of computers, and is described in the ASI Newsletter as ‘a monumental task, and elegantly done’.

Trina King, on behalf of the H. W. Wilson Company, donor of the award, presented Marjorie Hyslop with a cash prize and a citation; the American Society of Metals, publisher of the winning index, also received a citation.

☐ The heart sinks on discovering any errors in one’s indexes, but Phyllis Pearsall, founder of the Geographers’ A-Z Map Company, was subjected to a peculiarly chilling such horror—fortunately a false alarm:

‘Very early on—and I had been responsible for the index—a doctor wrote saying that one of his patients had died because of a mistake in our London A-Z. I hadn’t the courage to look it up for 10 days. When I did, I found it was his error, not mine. There were several streets with the same name and different postal districts. We make it clear to everyone who works in the company that lives depend on us.’

(Reported in the Sunday Telegraph, 14 Sept. 1986.)

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