LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sub-sub-entries

I was surprised by the opinion attributed to one or more of the Society's assessors (The Indexer 15 (2) October 1986, p. 88), that sub-subheadings 'cannot be accommodated in run-on paragraph form'. They can, in fact, be accommodated quite easily, as long as they are distinguished typographically. For example, one can bracket each sub-sub-entry:

Heading, . . . ; subheading, . . . ; subheading, . . . ;
(sub-subheading, . . . ); (sub-subheading, . . . );
subheading, . . .

Anthony Raven
West Wickham, Kent

Training for indexing

While I was interested in the comments made by Geoffrey Dixon in 'Technical forum' (The Indexer 15 (1) April 1986, 45), I am not in a position to comment directly on the two problems he raises—those of punctuation in index entries and of the placement of see also references. However, they point to a general problem, that of providing an introduction to any index to tell the user what to expect, in what order items are arranged and what the abbreviations used, and typographical and layout devices, mean.

This brings me to a more general question. For an indexer to have the broad perspective needed to plan a job and see it through to the finished product, and to engage in consultancy with those commissioning indexing work, the indexer requires a broader education and training in the art and science of this profession than is generally available now.

Some of us in Australia believe that this profession has sufficient substance on which to base tertiary-level courses in their own right. Dietrich Borchardt's address reported on page 41 of the April 1986 Indexer, and my own presidential address of 1983 reported in the Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter 7 (2) May 1983, 21–2, cover some of the arguments.

We have perused the list of courses published by ASI and are compiling a list for Australia; but all are elements in other courses—mostly librarianship. Do you know of any moves in Britain or elsewhere to establish a tertiary qualification in indexing in its own right?

John E. Simkin
President, AusSI
Windsor, Victoria

The study of indexing in schools of librarianship

Olwen Terris reports (The Indexer 15 (2), 89–90) that 14 schools of librarianship replying to an inquiry claimed to teach 'codes regulating the choice of name and subject headings: AACR2, ISBD, LCSH, Sears, the relevant British Standards, etc.'! Let not anyone, without adequate further evidence, suppose that students in all these schools nowadays study AACR2 in such a way as to learn how to apply it, as their precursors, or some of them, at least, used to do, in learning cataloguing according to CRATE (Cataloguing rules: author and title entries) (1908).

As the range of activities performed by librarians widened so far that no one could be reasonably expected to be capable of performing them all well or of learning how to perform them all, the Library Association modified its professional examinations to enable students to specialize, but has not coped with the resulting diversity of skills learned by recording on certificates what subjects a member had successfully studied. Moreover, it accepted for exemption from its own examinations qualifications derived from a curriculum and syllabuses less pertinent to librarianship than those of its own examinations. In particular, the study of cataloguing became greatly reduced, and codes for descriptive and author/title cataloguing became especially neglected, since students were thought likely to object to studying these even more than to learning about subject cataloguing and classification, which are less artificial and more related to the structure of knowledge. For instance, at Loughborough, about 1972, students on the two-year course who chose to study practical cataloguing, and all graduate students, made a catalogue: they chose a kind of catalogue (or set of catalogues), a subject, and a classification scheme; then they chose and catalogued publications, presenting their work in individual tutorials; finally they completed a catalogue complemented by authority files, recording decisions, and wrote a report stating what they had learned and possibly proposing amendments to the classification scheme applied. All this thorough study of cataloguing was swept away, for graduate students at least, when they began to obtain a qualification awarded by Loughborough University of Technology. Symptomatic of the change was their no longer being required to own a copy of AACR.

In how many schools of librarianship was the study of cataloguing so reduced that students learned little more than that codes of cataloguing rules existed? I have the impression that in some schools students still studied

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cataloguing thoroughly, while in others they learned nothing of the contents of codes—though their fellow students who chose to study cataloguing might still learn how to make catalogues and of the principles pertinent to effective indexing. The consequences of letting people become chartered librarians without adequate knowledge of cataloguing, and placing them in charge of special libraries, may be seen in catalogues that show no awareness of the contents of cataloguing codes. Moreover, lack of understanding of cataloguing is widely evident in catalogues that include references leading away from used headings, or depart inordinately from the principle of one entity per heading, one heading per entity.

Perhaps cataloguing is again duly valued and thoroughly taught in the 14 schools of librarianship that replied to the SL survey. Before becoming confident that all is so well, we should inquire further: how much is learned by all students on certain courses; how much is learned by students who choose to specialize in indexing; the degree of study of AACR2, on a scale ranging from merely learning that it exists to applying it in making a catalogue. Those controlling schools of librarianship may decide not to impose on all students thorough study of subjects that many find difficult and for which eminent librarians occasionally express contempt. If, however, they do not provide for students wishing to study certain subjects thorough education in these, they should plainly state their intention and indicate what subjects each former student has studied. We might then all understand more precisely the state of education in indexing, while those appointing staff and considering thorough understanding of indexing requisite in them could more certainly find them without conducting examinations.

David W. Hope
Carlisle

Officers, designation of

To the Editor of The Indexer

Madam,
I am a woman, but had rather be thought a man than thought a piece of the furniture.

Respectfully yours,
Ann Edwards
Welwyn Garden City

The book: full circle

The following extract is taken from an article by Arthur T. Dolling, ‘Problems science has almost solved’, that appeared in Strand magazine in March 1907.

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At a recent Library Association meeting something of a sensation was caused by the reading of a paper calling for a radical reform, not in the contents, but in the shape and aspect of the modern book. ‘The book is the one feature of civilized life which in fifteen hundred years has undergone no change. There were big books at the beginning—there are big books now, folios and quartos, although fewer than then, but, big or little, they open in the same way, at the same side, stitched and covered the same, and are as cumbrous and unlovely as ever. Must the vehicles of the world’s literature ever remain in the stage-coach stage? Has human ingenuity said its all when the flat-paged, side-bound book was invented?’

Inspired by this, perhaps, a South African inventor, Mr. J. R. Cummings, has been at work upon a very novel and interesting form of literary vehicle (one hesitates about calling it a book), of which we give an illustration. It is more nearly akin to the ancient scrolls of papyrus, actuited by an internal spring, which moves the printed sheet backwards or forwards at a pace regulated by the reading ability or convenience of the owner. A striking feature of the device is the index arrangement, by which any passage of the work, by a simple pressure on the index letter, can be brought instantly under revision.

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