few months, and has implications for all indexers. Computer-generated indexing is now taking over from manual indexing at an exponential rate. These are but two developments.

You have to be methodical in your business approach and to have a pleasant and co-operative manner towards all your contacts. As most of these will be by letter or phone, the likelihood is that you will never meet any of those you do business with. There are, of course, exceptions. The rapport, for example, between author Bernard Levin and indexer Oula Jones has been remarkably constant, and there are few authors with such high regard for indexing and understanding of the intricacies of the art. But at all times you will have to be the sort of person that it is a pleasure to talk to, however unreasonable you may think the requests that are sometimes made of you.

Finally—you will never become rich by indexing alone. You will be an occasionally much appreciated facilitator for those seeking information and knowledge.

All the above recommendations are a counsel of perfection, of course. None of us is a Jehovah, and publishers as well as indexers may make mistakes in any aspect of their work. Just try, try, try not to!

Joining the Society of Indexers will link you to others like yourself who will help, support and inform you and stand by you in time of difficulties. Your solidarity with the Society will be much appreciated and help towards the goal of rising standards and an increase in the status of indexers.

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From Abantiades to Zygophyllum

Guaranteed to strike dread into any indexer's heart was an article that began 'Cotyledon anatomy has been investigated in approximately 900 species representing all the major tribes of the Leguminosae...'. 'Just the authors having a little joke,' I thought, 'they cannot be serious, they won't mention them all', but they were . . . . and they did! That particular index ran to 24 pages, by far the longest Linnean Journal index that I have prepared in seven years of indexing, mostly Zoological Journals with some Botanical Journals in recent months.

Of course, after seven years I see the articles in the Journals in a rather different light from most people, who simply read them for their scientific content. I can glance through a volume and know whether it is going to be a doddle or a slog, or to put it into English, a quickie or a long job. It really depends on what sort of articles are present, invertebrate or vertebrate, dealing with higher taxa or genera, straight morphological descriptions or reviews. The articles most designed to promote the perusal of the higher taxa. Not only are these articles freely sprinkled with a bewildering assortment of taxa from species to phylum and all ranks in between, but the terms are almost always anglicized—just to make life more difficult for the poor indexer it often seems. So please, dear workers in invertebrate taxonomy, somewhere in your article, just once that's all I ask, put in the correct Latin version of your names so that I do not have to go and look them up. And you can be more sure that they are indexed correctly! These articles are always long ones, with complex introductions and lengthy discussions. Sometimes it seems like every taxon in the whole of the reptiles, fish, birds or mammals (sorry, that should read Reptilia, Pisces, Aves or Mammalia) has been included in the article—and the pile of index cards at the end would appear to confirm this impression.

By contrast, complex taxonomic articles by invertebrate zoologists are usually confined to a single family or order; the majority of entries are for genera and their (seemingly numerous) species. Most of the article is taken up with a review of the genera or species and the discussion is short. However (there is always a 'however'), where vertebrate zoologists cannot agree on what is the sister-group to what (or whether this is the correct way to describe a relationship), invertebrate zoologists cannot even agree on a name. So the lists of synonomies get longer ... and longer ... and longer. If every time I index an article I index six new comb. novs., then by the year 2000 it will take me (or my computer substitute) twice as many pages to produce my index. The index will be longer than the article! So please, dear workers in invertebrate taxonomy, leave them where they are now. (Oh well, I do realise it's just a pipe dream, accurate taxonomy must come before indexing.)

Entomologists seem to be obsessed with certain letters of the alphabet—most of their generic names appear to begin with A, C, L, M or P. It is probably an optical illusion or a figment of my imagination but when two or three related genera are being discussed they always seem

who compiled a concordance to an historical work, articles and fewer reviews. Indexing was simpler in clearer to the readers than it is to the indexer. Sometimes the air turns blue as I flick pages backwards and forwards trying to work out which genus that entry belongs to; if it was last referred to three pages back it could be buried under quite a large pile of index cards by now. Entomologists—sorry Lepidopterists—are even bigger offenders—they have been known to leave out the genus initial altogether and simply refer to the organism in question just by its species name. Sometimes I am actually reduced to reading the article to work out which genus is being referred to—this is particularly likely to happen when synonomies are being discussed. In this case, of course, the species names are often the same. Much gnashing of teeth and tearing of hair! I hope it is clearer to the readers than it is to the indexer.

It seems to me that when I started indexing the Zoological Journal there were more straight morphological articles and fewer reviews. Indexing was simpler in those halcyon bygone days. In recent years a few rather more ecological articles have been appearing. As a biologist I find these more interesting than the straight morphological ones, but to an indexer they present a practical problem—that of an enormous number of index cards in use at the same time. A recent article on 'Aphytophagy in butterflies and its relationship to myrmecophily' is a case in point—I had three separate card systems going simultaneously, one on plants, one on butterflies and a third on ants.

I have not been indexing the Botanical Journal for long enough to identify trends or patterns, only long enough to learn the problems! The botanical indexes seem to be longer than the zoological ones, for many botanists appear to consider an article incomplete without a three-page table or an even longer appendix listing every species (sometimes with varieties or cultivars) examined during the research. Hence the 900 species with which we began. Each botanical entry takes longer too, for the botanists consider the author name or names essential even in an index, whereas author names are not included in the zoological index. And some of those authors have awfully long names. Welcome is the plant which has not been renamed since Linnaeus' time!

While on the subject of names, it seems to me that genus and species names are getting longer. The fashion today seems to be to add an extra bit to an already existing genus when erecting a new one or to amalgamate two characters of the organism. So we have seen the erection of Galapogocythere, Anonychocheirus, Pseudocharaciopsis and Craspedodromophyllum and new species names parvibulatus, parapraecipua, distinctipennis and austroafricanum. I suppose such a trend is inevitable, the number of possible short names is finite after all, but as an indexer I would swap a Thrixanthocereus blossfeldiorum (Werderm.) Briton & Rose for a *Vicia faba* L. any time!

**Pamela Forey**

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**Indexing as cruel and unusual punishment?**

Abraham Trommius (1633-1719), a Dutch lawyer who compiled a concordance to an historical work, seems to have considered the task of an indexer equal to the most severe punishment. He put his thoughts into verse, written in the Dutch of his time, and here rendered into English (minus the rhymes):

> If a judge ever wishes to pronounce a harsh sentence
> By which he may punish a criminal most severely,
> Let him not send him to the dismal gaol,
> Nor make him toil day in, day out in a deep mine,
> But set him the task of making word indexes,
> Then he will taste all kinds of punishment all at once.

The translation was made by a Dutch friend of mine who drew my attention to this amusing piece. (For our members outside the US: the caption refers to Article VIII of the Amendments to the US Constitution (better known as the Bill of Rights) which states that '... cruel and unusual punishment [shall not be] inflicted'.

**Hans H. Wellisch**

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**More about standards**

The British Standards Institution has launched a new monthly information brochure—*BITS newsletter*—from BSI Information Technology Services. *BITS newsletter* contains information on the latest standards developments, including ISO projects, new and revised draft standards, decisions and demonstrations, together with details of all BITS publications. The newsletter, A4 and normally of six pages, is available on yearly subscription only: £195 to BSI members and £325 to non-members.

**Offline index**

Europe Data, based in the Netherlands, has laid off seventeen of its twenty-five staff and closed its online database called EC-Index. The index was modelled on Congressional Information Service Inc in the US. However, owing to the number of languages involved, costs were higher and, in addition, it seems that Europeans are not willing to pay for official information.