THE CAREY AWARD

William Sebastian Heckscher becomes the fourth recipient

Of competitive literary prizes there is an abundance. Few of them are for indexing: three only, that I wot of. Born 1962, the (UK) Library Association's Wheatley Medal was the first on the scene. The American equivalent, the H.W. Wilson Company Indexing Award, made its debut in 1978. Australia, with its charmingly named AusSI Award, completed the trio in 1986.

Each of these annual prizes is for a single index of outstanding quality, first published in a particular country within the time-limit of specified dates. Although the indexer receives the award, it is an index which wins it.

What, though, of those indexers whose work is never first past the post in the yearly race for recognition? There are many whose work, often over many years, is of a consistently high standard, serving the cause of good indexing and related subjects. And it is not by indexing alone that the cause is served. What of those who devote time to training the less experienced, often at the expense of their own output? Some write books, articles, lectures for correspondence-courses, for which the payment (if any!) usually falls far short of indexing fees.

Think of the underpaid work—most of it voluntary—that goes into the production of each issue of The Indexer. Imagine if you can the uncounted hours devoted by indexers to the administration of SI and the affiliated Societies. Who, do you think, does the lion's share of the other services to indexing, and to the considerable yet by no means quantifiable influence they exert on the quality of indexing? We recalled how Gordon Carey, esteemed by indexers to the administration of SI and the affiliated Societies. Who, do you think, does the lion's share of the preparation and revision of those vitally important Standards—both British and International—on Indexing and related subjects? Who are the pioneers of the application of word processors and home computers to the special requirements of indexing?

It was in the mid-seventies that SI began to give serious thought to the immensity and variety of these and other services to indexing, and to the considerable yet by no means quantifiable influence they exert on the quality of indexing. We recalled how Gordon Carey, esteemed beyond as well as within the Society as 'the prince of indexers', had so assiduously advanced the art and the profession, in ways that far exceeded the compilation of excellent indexes. As a tribute to him, it was determined that not only meritorious indexes but devoted indexers should be accorded the honour and respect they so well deserve. Thus was born, in 1977, the idea of a Carey Award.

So numerous are those who have served indexing well, to honour all of them would have the same effect as an unlimited licence to print money: it would depreciate the currency. It was therefore specified that a Carey Award should be an occasional honour, awarded for outstanding services to indexing. In a decade, there have been but three recipients: Norman Knight in 1977, Monty Harrod in 1982, Margaret Anderson in 1983. (For their 'citations', see The Indexer 10 (4) Oct. 1977, 161–3; 13 (2) Oct. 1982, 76–8; 13 (4) Oct. 1983, 220–1.) As the second decade begins, a fourth recipient is added to this illustrious trio: William S. Heckscher, the most internationally distinguished of our members of high repute.

Indexers seem to have an even more colourless public image than librarians (who remain for ever embalmed in Raymond Chandler's throw-away line 'It was the rimless spectacles that gave her that librarian's look.'). Yet the more indexers one gets to know, the clearer it becomes that they are by no means ordinary people. When the norm is to be exceptional, there must inevitably be some who stand out as exceptionally exceptional; and amongst these, W.S.H. may well be regarded, I think, as primus inter pares. In his own specialist field as an art historian, he is held in the highest respect both in Western Europe and in North America, and has been showered with honours and awards; and it is the qualities which make him such an outstanding figure in this field that have inspired his unique contribution to indexing.

W.S.H., more than anyone, has explored and exemplified and championed the view that indexing is not merely an increasingly accurate and sophisticated 'means of entry' to particular information, but also an art form. It can, where appropriate, go beyond utility to creativity; it can expand, illustrate, provoke, inspire; it can spark off such responses, both intellectual and emotional, as any other work of art has the power to evoke.

Fortunately for us all, W.S.H.'s major contributions to the art of indexing are enshrined in the pages of The Indexer, where generations of indexers may explore with him the unexpected possibilities which are within their grasp. Less happily, the supreme demonstration of the form which W.S.H. modestly refers to as 'the unconventional index' is not easily accessible. It is a lengthy essay with commentaries and notes and index, contained in a 'Festschrift' on Johann Camerarius which was reviewed in this journal (The Indexer 13 (1) Apr. 1982, 58–9), but demands a full reading if the remarkable qualities of its index are to be appreciated. It is, to the best of my knowledge, the only example in print of the Heckscher Unconventional Index.

W.S.H.'s exploration of uncharted areas of indexing technique is but one of the many reasons for his Carey Award. Since 30 March 1957, when he was the only founder-member from outside the UK, his zealous loyalty to the Society which he helped to inaugurate has
As a tribute to the memory of
GORDON V. CAREY
the Society's first President and the 'Prince of Indexers'

THE CAREY AWARD
for outstanding services to indexing

presented by the Society of Indexers
to

WILLIAM SEBASTIAN HECKSCHER
art historian, polyglot, polymath

our only founder member from outside the UK
explorer of the frontiers of indexing as an art form
creator of the theory of the unconventional index
and its first successful practitioner
nourisher of THE INDEXER'S status and authority
as an international journal
and of the Society's world-wide influence
inspiring leader, dedicated colleague, unfailing friend

3rd May 1987

Janet Shuter
Chair of the Society

Robert L. Collison
President of the Society
been unflagging. Never resident in these islands, and all too rarely a visitor, he maintains old relationships and creates new ones by his genius for correspondence. His letters are an unceasing flow of ideas, an irresistible blend of impish humour and learned observations. Fortunate are those UK members who at any time during three decades have shared—or still share—in these inspiring epistolary relationships.

This citation could become a catalogue. It is best, therefore, to call a halt and to invite readers to seek out the honoured name, 'Heckscher, W.S.', in this journal's volume-indexes. Thus may they find much interesting reading both by and about the fourth recipient of the Society's highest honour.

John A. Gordon

Index makers

Barbara Pym's editorial colleague, friend, and literary executrix, Hazel Holt, contributes the second instalment of our series featuring the personalities and careers of individual indexers.

NO THANKLESS TASK: BARBARA PYM AS INDEXER

She would sit crouched (a favourite word) over a battered, wooden four-drawer card index of antique design, like Miss Clothier,' 'moving the cards here and there with her fingers, as if she were coaxing music from some delicate instrument'. Occasionally, as I sat opposite, our desks facing each other in that small room, I would catch a murmur, like the recital of some litany: 'Abortion, administration, age-sets, agriculture, amulets, ancestors, animal husbandry...'. Barbara was making another index.

For over twenty-five years Barbara Pym was in charge of the International African Institute's publications. In any one year she would edit and see through the press four full-length monographs, two volumes of seminar papers, two or three volumes of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa and one volume of the Linguistic Survey (linguists are notoriously more difficult to get anything out of), not to mention four issues of the journal Africa, whose Assistant Editor she was. I was her only assistant. In addition to the general editorial work we divided between us the other Thankless Tasks.* I compiled the bibliographies and Barbara made the indexes.

She loved the mystique of certain aspects of her job, such as being in charge of the Institute's collection of maps, or arranging with agencies the advertisements for Africa, but, best of all, she enjoyed the art of indexing. She liked making lists, particularly alphabetical ones. Indeed, her favourite way of getting to sleep was to list as many African tribes as possible beginning with one letter—Teke, Tio, Toro, Tswana, Tutsi... Authors of monographs usually made their own indexes (or their wives or girl-friends and once, gloriously, the author's mother), but those for the Ethnographic Survey and the Seminar volumes were done by Barbara herself. These were rather uniform and boring to do, requiring a quick professional job, but nothing to linger over with pleasure. No, the great on-going indexes, offering so much more scope, were the cumulative, annual indexes for Africa. The General Index was extensive but straightforward; the real challenge was the Index of Tribes and Languages. Variations of tribal names

*The original title of No fond return of love, in which Dulcie Mainwaring asks, 'Do we all correct proofs, make bibliographies and indexes, and do all the rather humdrum thankless tasks for people more brilliant than ourselves?'; reflects, 'A book can be made or marred by its index... remembering the wives and others who undertook what was often acknowledged to be a thankless task'; and refers to acknowledgements 'about your having undertaken the arduous or thankless—though I hope it won't be that—task of compiling the index'.