INDEXES REVIEWED
edited by Norman Hillyer

These extracts from reviews do not pretend to represent a complete survey of all reviews in journals and newspapers. We offer only a selection from quotations that members have sent in.

Our reproduction of comments is not a stamp of approval from the Society of Indexers upon the reviewer's assessment of an index.

Extracts are arranged alphabetically under the names of publishers, within the sections: Indexes praised; Two cheers! Indexes censured; Indexes omitted; Obiter dicta.

Indexes praised


'A good index is essential for this type of text and the eight pages given are entirely compatible with the high quality of this book. The diagrams are superbly clear. The publishers, the authors and the proofreaders deserve commendation for their close attention to the professional reader's requirements.'


'... and the very full index is a model of its kind.'


'A clear and well-planned single (not multiple) index completes a work faultless in scholarship.'


'... meticulously indexed.'


'There are also four appendices and an index, plus 101 diagrams and photographs. These are excellent and I would have liked even more to assist me with identifying defects and to compare with my defective pots. However, for identification there is a carefully detailed and cross-referenced index.'


'Scanning the book may deter some readers for pharmacokineticists use words, symbols, and mathematical equations to express and predict drug behaviour, but these are fortunately contained in boxes and the text itself is easy to read—and there is now an index.'


'The whole makes a readable, well-referenced and well-indexed book ...'


'Anyway he [Mabey] passes with an extreme rapidity that ultimate test of good literary biography. He leaves the reader desperate to get back to the original; and the newly-published Journals, less worked over than the History, are the closest to the basic Gilbert White one can approach. They are excellently edited and indexed, and to a generation so much inclined to wallow in Edwardian Gentlewoman's Garden reminiscence, Gilbert White's observations are startling in their purity.'


'Well written, well produced, and well indexed.'


'The style is conversational and readable, the text well printed, the reading list poor and unrevised, and the index excellent.'


'With admirably concise Notes on Sources and an Index of Authors, return visits are easy to plan.'

'For the serious searcher, however, the usefulness of a catalogue is largely dependent on the quality of the indices [sic]. Here, fortunately, Brit-line shows its most dramatic improvements. In this issue, indexes [sic] take up three times as many pages as before. With the pages now using three-column instead of single-column setting, the actual indexing is probably around 24 times as full. There are separate indexes of database producers, hosts, addresses and entries, with a cross-index to tie them all together. You sometimes have to thread your way through several look-ups to find all you need, but what you need is usually there.'


'One of the most laudable and valuable attributes of the work, particularly to the uninitiated, is the excellent indexing. I tested this by passing the book to three individuals not connected with industrial painting in any way and asking them to look up the address of a colleague of mine, who had not read the book, to ask questions of the three on day to day topics which might face anyone involved in the protection of steel-work. To my mind this is about as objective a test of an index as one can have. I put the book's index to this test because most of the available books are very poorly indexed and their value to the non-expert is thereby much diminished, as anyone who has struggled through CP2008, BS5943, etc. will agree. My test of the index in Corrosion Protection of Steel Structures proved its value.' (index by Paul Nash, Registered Indexer)


'This is quite a specialised book, well indexed, and with a wealth of bibliographical material.'


'A very useful, extensive index completes the book.'

Inner London Education Authority: Educational opportunities for all? The report of the committee reviewing provision to meet special educational needs, chaired by J. Fish (1985, 299 pp.). Rev. in European Journal of Special Needs Education 1, 1986.

'The clear layout and index make it easy to refer to particular sections and trace areas of interest through the report.'


'There are also helpful chapter summaries, practical exercises, and useful appendices on sermon evaluation, with a good index and bibliography.'


'A feature of the book is its concluding indexes in French and German.'


'The indices (sic) at the end—7 pages of small print of bibliography, general and Bible reference indexes—are very valuable.'


'The extensive documentation to each chapter, largely from archival sources, two extended appendices, and 38 pages of bibliography and index are valuable additions to this important work.'


'There is a comprehensive index listing street names, rural localities, railway stations, post offices, police stations, churches and town halls.'


'The bibliography is extensive, not being confined simply to works mentioned in the text, and there is a full index. These last two factors mean that the book is not simply an authoritative work on non-book media, but also a useful reference source on the topic.'


'The index has been improved as the main page reference is put in bold type instead of there being just a string of page numbers.'


'By careful use of the index in this volume it is possible to gain some idea of the importance of settlements on commons and of the growth in non-conformity, but nowhere are such topics discussed in the context of the whole region.' (interesting example of the index leading to further scholarly deductions?)


'Particular details are hard to locate, although a full index (37 pages) is some compensation here.'


'When the foreword to a guide book includes a mistake over a page number, you begin to worry over the rest of it. But [the book] is otherwise exemplary and the index ensured finding the right page for reference in any case.'

At the end of the opus, there are two “concordances” to help readers bring together the canons of the old and new Code; there is also a well-structured analytical index referring to both topics and canons.


‘The index is an important part of reference books. It is divided, in the Diaries, listing firstly RAF units and airfields, then three-and-a-half columns of personnel followed by place names within specified countries. A small general index sweeps up the remainder.’


‘... clear maps and plans, architectural elevations, a glossary of architectural terms and a thorough index assist the reader at every stage.’


‘The style permits leisure reading and the comprehensive index means it can also be used as a reference work.’


‘There is a good bibliography and index, in which, oddly enough, the translation is more accurate than it is in the main text.’


‘A complete cross-referenced index and a contents outline on the first page of every chapter make this volume especially easy to use.’


‘It is well presented, has a useful index, and will be of value as a reference for a considerable time.’


‘I think it would have been better had there been a few more pages: I felt that the facts were too tightly packed together at times. Bless her though, she included an index!’


‘Although there is no bibliography, the notes are full (if sometimes confusing), the index is excellent, and the printing and binding are good.’


‘This is a volume that is not only an essential reference tool with a comprehensive index, but also serves as a source of unceasing pleasure ...’


‘Then there is an author index and a heading index (the latter printed separately in five languages and covering all three volumes).’


‘Appendices give concordances of Egyptian words and hieroglyphic transcriptions; and there are ten figures and numerous indexes.’


‘There is an excellent author index as well as a subject index.’


‘Each chapter concludes with a list of references and there is a comprehensive index.’


‘The illustrations are numerous and clear, and the index is superb.’

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Two cheers!


‘The script is accurate and grammatically acceptable, and the book is printed in elegant type. Perhaps the index is a little inadequate, but this is not a work of reference and the reader has the opportunity to pursue other publications, for the reference list is comprehensive.’ [We have heard of indexes being published separately, but not before in 'other publications'.]

'There is a very good subject index.'
'The index is adequate, but an author index would have been a good addition.'

'Each chapter is well referenced and there is a small index which could have been extended to include the various tables.'

'The 19 pages of index do justice to almost 1000 pages of text, but I noted several subsections not listed.'

'A chronology of the artist's life and works appears in the front matter and an extensive bibliography of published and unpublished sources precedes a moderately helpful index.'

'Curiously, although there are very full indexes of places and people, and a general index, there is no index of biblical references. I should have expected such an index in a work of this nature issued by this publishing house.'

'There is a short, adequate bibliography and a place-name index. Although a subject index would have been useful, the book is an excellent contribution to the collection La Question régionale ...'

'The index, so vital to research workers, is excellent, as it needed to be, given the difficulty papal scribes seem to have had trying to master Scottish personal names and places, judging from the variables given. It is to be hoped that future volumes will add a subject index, which is almost indispensable in volumes of this nature.' (the 'almost' is kind)

'Ten appendices summarise and extend the coverage; the index might have been rather fuller.'

'There are no footnotes nor index of passages cited, but the general index is useful and detailed.'

'There is a double index, one classified as signs and anatomical areas, and the other as diagnosis and investigations. While in concept this is a good idea, in practice the distinction is less clear and I often found it necessary to consult both indexes.'

Index entries censured

'There is what is called a "select", i.e. very incomplete, index—not, to my mind, a satisfactory way round the admittedly tedious chore of indexing.'

'The crammed one-page index at the end is minutely set in 6-point type. (practice for peering at ancient coins?)

'But I have a major reservation about the publishers, who have not served him well at all. Such a book, at such a price, deserves and demands a full bibliography and a full and thorough index; the former is non-existent, though there are relatively complete footnotes, and the latter is a woeful travesty and an insult to Professor Wilson's achievements.' (and the book took him ten years to write)

'Even the index is unreliable: for example, the choragic Monument at Alton Towers is cross-referenced in the text but has no page reference in the index, and Thomas Hope is indexed as appearing on page 118, but is actually on page 119. Such small slips diminish trust in larger issues.'

'The design of the book—by Bridget Morley—is admirable. I cannot say, however, that Dr Buczacki is always well served by his publishers. This is, after all, a serious book, the fruit of a lifetime's thought and study and deserves better than to have so many careless mistakes in it. I do not mean on the part of Dr Buczacki... No, these mistakes are in spelling—e.g., mollination instead of pollination; in page references in the text; in the legends below maps and plans. The index it would be kinder not to mention at all. I rang the publishers to find how this had been allowed to happen. Their spokeswoman murmured something about "deadlines" and went on to say that surely it did not affect the book. But of course it does and it must be heartbreaking for the author. Let us hope that it goes into a second and trouble-free edition.'

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'The index is woefully incomplete.'


'The author notes that "the indexes were constructed (in remarkably short time) using Macrex software". Computer-generated indexing can save considerable time, but it does not remove the need for careful choice of terms, concepts, techniques, etc. to be indexed. The professional indexer, on the evidence of this computerized index, still has a long working life ahead.'


'The index is by product category (e.g. "front ends—large", "word processors and microcomputers"). To get to the supplier who has just the system you want takes some effort because the index categories are very broad, so that you have to check through over 100 companies listed under the heading "Disc readers/writers" to discover that Optic Photosetting has an Altertext and Saxon Printing an Intermedia multidisc reader... Perhaps the index could be improved in future editions.'


'Be warned, too, about the labyrinthine footnoting and alarmingly inadequate indexing of this important book.'


'It could also be used by students of librarianship as a textbook on public libraries, though perhaps with some difficulty, because the book is unfortunately marred by an index of quite remarkable incompetence.'

**Indexes omitted**


‘Not every reader of Yeats will subscribe to all of Dr Raine’s theories, but there is much to be grateful for in this rich and learned collection. It is a pity, therefore, that so lavish a volume and one so copiously documented should lack that Ariadne’s thread to the labyrinth of scholarship, a detailed index.’


‘The author provides an extensive and varied bibliography, but the volume suffers from the lack of an index.’


‘The book is a clear and well informed study of present-day biomedical ethics, well documented and researched. An index would have been a most useful addition.’ [ha’p’orth of tar department?]


‘And surely a publication of this type requires an index.’


‘The book has many illustrations and maps, but no index.'


‘Each book has a short but useful bibliography; but no index, which in my opinion they deserve.'


‘This is a book for thinkers. An index would make it a book for scholars too.'


‘This has no index or even an expanded table of contents at the front; maybe the publishers are unaware of the existence of professional indexers whose fees are not exorbitant.’


‘The book also suffers from the lack of an index.’


‘In his introduction the author says that the question of an index was settled for him by the consensus of opinion of booksellers and librarians who were consulted and who considered the subdivision into nineteen sections sufficient for purpose of reference. This reviewer disagrees with that decision—a busy bookseller wants to find the relevant entry in the shortest possible time, not after a decision as to which section of the book is relevant. An entry might be missed because the wrong section has been consulted.’


‘It is a fascinating book, though I regret no index.’
Donald, John: *The northern and western isles of the Viking world*, ed. by Alexander Fenton and H. Palsson (347 pp., £20). Rev. by Ian Keillar, *Popular Archaeology*, Feb 1985. ‘Nineteen distinguished contributors, 347 pages, but no Index; this is another blockbuster of a book from John Donald.’ [perhaps the Index was blown up, too?]


Eerdmans/Paternoster Press: *The apostolic church*, by Everett F. Harrison (1985, 251 pp., £12.95). Rev. by Colin Hemer, *Themelios* 12(2), Jan 1987. ‘Alltogether, it is perhaps more a book for reference than for rapid reading. That makes me regret the more the lack of an index. There is a good table of contents, but that is not analytical enough to supply the place of a detailed subject index. An index of authors discussed would also be very helpful.’

Fortress Press: *Reconciliation, law, and righteousness: essays in biblical theology*, by Peter Stuhlmacher (1986, 200 pp). Rev. by David Hill, *Expository Times* 98(5), Feb 1987. ‘It is a pity that there is virtually no mention of British and American scholars, and the volume would have benefited from the index which was included in the German original.’

Geo Books: *Locality and rurality: economy and society in rural regions*, ed. by T. Bradley and P. Lowe (1985, £16). Rev. by Stephen Young, *Town & Country Planning*, Feb 1986. ‘This book will appeal to students, researchers and teachers from different disciplines, and help the process of integrating them. Although there is no index, it has a good range of references, and amounts to a snapshot of contemporary rural research. (and how many students, researchers and teachers will appreciate having no index in a book from a study group, and one with something over 255 pages, according to the same review?)


Harrap: *Kim’s story: a fight for life*, by Scarlett MccGwire (1986, £8.95). Rev. by Harvey Lee, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 August 1986. ‘In my early days in journalism, a canny editor instructed me to cram into a story as many local names as possible, because names sold papers. By this token, Harrap should have insisted on an index for the author’s media pals, who will now have to wade through all the bits about Mr Sabido’s resurrection.’


Karger, Bascl: *Extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy*, 2nd rev. edn by Ch. Chaussery (1986, 164 pp., £32.20). Rev. by Clifford Hawkins, *British Medical Journal*, 21 March 1987. ‘Both the physics and the practical details are illustrated by numerous line drawings, and other pictures and references have been brought up to date. But please could there be an index in the next edition?’


Macmillan: *The caring person’s guide to handling the severely multiply handicapped*, by Rachel Golding and Liz Goldsmith (71 pp., £3.95). Rev. by Barbara Brosnan, *Nursing Times*, 25 March 1987. ‘The essential factor is a genuine effort on the user’s part to apply each section to those patients in her care, working steadily through each part. This would enable her to care successfully, and greatly enhance the quality of life of the residents. There is no index, but one is unnecessary.’ (because no reader will ever have to refer to the book again?)

Mann, Berlin: *Antikensammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Herbert Beck et al. (1981, 378 pp.). Rev. by Gunter Schweikhart, *Literature, Music, Fine Arts* 17(2), 1984. ‘It should be noted in passing that this volume, technically excellent though it is, regrettably contains no general index.’


'A useful filmography is appended, but scant footnotes and no index or bibliography.'

'I think that it has turned out that the meagre material in the book would have been more convenient to use if it had been organized in a series of themes with an index to link the terms to the text. As it is, a topic such as colour is dealt with under 12 different entries ranging from "additive colour" to "value". It is really advisable to read all the entries because, although there is a lot of duplication of the information under these entries, there is no complete description of the way colour is dealt with in computer graphics nor is there an index to lead you to all the entries . . . In my opinion the book is not good value and it would be better to consult a good book on computer graphics with an adequate index.'

'In one or two places, I felt that important links were not sufficiently brought out. For example, there is a complete section on the links between word processing and typesetting, with no mention of the coding which will normally be required to achieve output, although there is another section on "electronic mark-up" which addresses this problem very sensibly. There is no index, and one would have been useful.'

'The book contains a very detailed list of contents, but an index has been omitted.'

'A glossary of acronyms and technical terms used is included, but there is no index.'

'There is no index, so essential for any guide as this is meant to be.'

'In the last third of the book, the cast of geologists becomes somewhat overpowering as the author tries to do justice to all the dramatis personae. It would have been easier going had there been an index to the book.'


'Among the limitations of this book some will find [are] a bare minimum of footnotes, legal and medical references to largely British literature, and the lack of an index.'

'Despite many misprints (including one on the spine) and the lack of an index, this work could be recommended to anyone working in the field of convection.'

'Unfortunately, there is no index.'

'His fascinating book, beautifully produced and illustrated (but without an index, alas!) describes more than one hundred Chinese "firsts" in agriculture, engineering, medicine, transport, and many other areas.'

'The Causes of War has no index, which might be annoying for the book reviewer in a hurry, but it is irritating for those who read books as well.'

'Professor O'Grady also calls for the continued suppression of the papers for a further period of 50 years beyond 1991. His argument appears to rest on his contention that to allow the publication of Joyce's comments on his own work and on the work of other modernist masters, particularly Eliot and Pound, would deal literary scholarship a blow from which it would be a long time recovering. This is a tendentious argument, and the standard of Professor O'Grady's own scholarship falls well below mediocrity. His text is by no means free of error (Chapelizod, for example, is not in County Wicklow), the bibliography is grossly inadequate and there is no index. The whole production is shoddily printed and bound. The publication date—the Monday after this issue of The Economist is published—seems entirely appropriate.'

'An index, it has to be said, would not have come amiss.'
Obiter dicta


"I was unable to find a single typographical error (except for "floras" in the index!)."


"Infections can easily be found in the index..."


"First look at the index: a bad general principle for a critic, no doubt, but here offering unusual rewards." (unfortunately nothing in the review indicates what those rewards were; but it is pleasant to know that the index was helpful!)


"As in most Wilson books, comedy abounds, not all intended. The present volume is enlivened by many misprints, some noted by Ferdinand Mount elsewhere. The index lists "D'Oyly Carte, Bridget (later Dame Dridget)", thus baffling foreigners and happily recalling for us the entry of, say, Arthur Askey in resplendent drag as Dame Dridget, on foot in a sedan-chair with no floor."

"Christopher Andrew, in his "review" of my book Shootdown: the verdict on KAL 007 (October 4)... also makes great play with his claim that "Significantly, the Shootdown index contains numerous references to the CIA but not one for the KGB." This is quite untrue. The index details a number of references to the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, which, it explains both there and in the list of acronyms at the front of the book, abbreviates to KGB. I am not sure what significance Mr Andrew attaches to that."

—R. W. Johnson, in a letter to The Times, 13 Oct 1986

Darwinism, and other essays by John Fiske was published in 1893 by Houghton, Mifflin and Company of Boston and New York, with 370 pages. Fiske had been a librarian at Harvard, so perhaps compiled the 4-page index himself. (The final essay is about librarianship and cataloguing, yet there is no reference to the former in the index.)

We append some entries from this curious work.

* * *

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Beaks and feet of pigeons, 17.
Birds and reptiles, 22.
Blue-eyed tomcats, 17.
Bogomiles, 248.
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Candour of Mr Darwin, 34.
Chaos and order, 104.
Codfish, multiplication of, 13.
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Dramatic tendencies in nature, 98-103.
Electric girls, 129.

Fasting girls, 130.
Frogs, shower of, 128.

Gorillas and Parthenons, 49.

Hair and teeth of dogs, 17.

Heredity in book-making, 350; Mr Buckle's loose talk about heredity, 159

Imperfections in geological record, 29.

Intellectual and moral progress, 151-180.

Lions and antelopes, 15.

Louis XIV., his injurious influence on science and literature, 193.

Newtonian theory slowly received, 2.

Peruvian sense of smell, 163.

Positivists and their droll ecclesiastical tone, 60, 77.

"Spherical intelligence," 82.

Teeth and hair of dogs, 17.

Teeth in embryonic birds, 25, 28.

Test of truth, 88.

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Universe, how little we know of it, 96.

Virtue and pleasure, 37.

Wallace, A.R., on causes of man's intellectual supremacy, 38, 46; his surprising credulity as to spiritualism, 127.

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[Entries which do not appear in this index, which our readers might expect to find there, include: cats, children, dogs, geology, girls, intelligence, leopards, morals, Parthenons, pigeons, pleasure, reptiles, tomcats, truth.]