Local newspaper indexing projects and products

Geraldine Beare

Surveys local newspaper indexing projects of recent years and their published results, particularly *The Glasgow Herald Index*, *The Scotsman Index*, *The Meadley Index to the Hull Advertiser*, and three Irish indexes.

Over the past five years, much has been written about the different newspaper indexing projects which have come to light all over Great Britain. Successful seminars have been set up and a pooling of knowledge and information has taken place on a large scale. However, for various reasons, all has remained quiet for the last eighteen months. The initial burst of enthusiasm has waned, and it is perhaps time to sit back and look at some of the indexing projects that have proceeded during the past few years.

I should mention that the published indexes to which I shall refer range from a few stapled pages to a full cloth-bound volume. All are selective either in content, number of years covered, or both. The indexes are:

- *The Glasgow Herald Index* 1971–2
- *The Scotsman Index* January 1987 and August 1987
- *The Mourne Observer* 1949–80
- *The County Down Spectator* 1904–64
- *The Northern Herald* 28th Sep 1833–16th Jan 1836
- *The Meadley Index to the Hull Advertiser* 2 vols 1826–57
- *Indexer's Manual to the Aberdeen Free Press* 1853–60

*The Glasgow Herald Index*

*The Glasgow Herald Index*, the largest and probably the most comprehensive of these indexes, has a long and venerable history. From 1906 until 1968, annual volumes were produced, thus making it an invaluable source of information for the years leading up to the First World War, the General Strike and Depression, the Second World War and the rise of Scottish Nationalism. It is important as a counterbalance to *The Times Index* as it gives a Scottish perspective on events as well as, of course, much local information.

From 1968 to 1984, for reasons undisclosed, but probably based on time and finance, the annual indexes were abandoned in favour of an extensive news cutting service. In April 1984 this decision was reversed. The editorial department of *The Glasgow Herald* approached the Department of Information Science at the University of Strathclyde with a view to obtaining funding and expertise to index the newspaper for the gap that had arisen from 1969–1984.

*The Glasgow Herald Index Project* was inaugurated in November 1984 and by mid-1987 had attracted funds in excess of £500,000 from three funding sources: The University of Strathclyde Scientific Equipment Fund; George Outram & Co. Ltd (publishers of *The Glasgow Herald*); and the Department of Manpower Services Commission (MSC), the last contributing by far the largest amount.

It was decided early on that the work would be done on IBM hardware and, after several abortive trials with existing software programs, using programs written by the Project Manager. Although the programs are *Herald* specific, they could easily be adapted to meet the needs of other indexing ventures. It is as well to bear in mind that when indexing newspapers the number of entries can be prodigious. For *The Glasgow Herald*, some 60,000 to 70,000 index entries occur for each year; that, coupled with the necessary references, can amount to 16 megabytes per year.

To help with the indexing itself, a manual was produced entitled *How to index The Glasgow Herald*. I have not seen it but am told that it is written in the style of a do-it-yourself manual with various sections on how to deal with problems as they occur. Guidance by example and by recurring principle is the order of the day—essential when dealing with a team perhaps lacking in indexing experience.

In addition to this, each indexer on the team was given a copy of *The Glasgow Herald*’s list of subject headings, which is an amalgamation of the old list of subject headings used prior to 1968 and *The Times* list of subject headings. The list was the indexer’s authority for assigning subject heading/s to an item. Each item indexed may have up to three access points, and the headline to the story—with perhaps explanatory words in brackets to clarify the meaning (not uncommon in newspaper indexes)—provides the level of specificity required. The citation also includes date, page and column (again quite usual) and an indication (by initials) of accompanying material such as maps, illustrations, photographs, etc.

The index is printed in three columns, using the same typeface throughout: upper-case for main headings,
LOCAL NEWSPAPER INDEXING PROJECTS AND PRODUCTS

THE GLASGOW HERALD INDEX 1971

saved from fire aboard tanker

Betthorn, Nov 10,4d.

Security Measures:

Nations arms raids by SA security

men, Oct 25,9e.

Sedico International:

Big rig [contract with Ranger]

Oct 7,1d.

Society:

Contrasting look at life in South

Africa [by former Moderator],

Nov 20,13f.

South-West Africa, relations w.

Vorster rejects ruling [from W.C.]

Court], Jun 22,11c.

Suspension of Communist Act:

Further reminder for dean [Communist

frenche Beytagh], May 29,10f.

for South Africans, Dec 3,1l.

Television:

South Africa to have television

arms, 11b.

Tennis:

South Africa to be included in

Davis Cup draw, Jan 5,5a.

Trade in:

Trade with Africa, dean tells Court,

Sep 18,9b.

Tourism:

Travel Talk - Finding gold at

6000 feet, Dec 25,9a,9b.

UK, trade with:

S. African frigates to be built

in Spain, Oct 4,3g.

Lost orders.

Arms, 11b.

Arms, 11b.

Arms to Africa, 11b.

Arms, 11b.

Arms, 11b.

Arms, 11b.

Arms, 11b.

Arms, 11b.

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Arms, 11b.
lower-case elsewhere. There are no gaps between headings or subheadings, which are run-on and indented one space, but each new letter of the alphabet begins on a new page, regardless of how much space is left under the previous letter. There is also no indication at the start of each section as to which letter is being used. This does not make for easy finding of references, as the example shows (figure 1). In passing, under South Africa, sub-heading Passports & visas, there is a reference to Robert Sobukwe mentioning that exit is barred. Under Sobukwe, Robert, there is an added reference stating no exit for South Africans. I could not find this reference under the other possible subheadings for South Africa such as Political prisoners or Race relations.

At the beginning of the volume there is a page on how to use the index, covering subject headings, geographic and personal names, foreign countries, societies and institutions, cross-references and date, page and column references: all in order and understandable. The cross-references seem to be sensibly used in the volume, particularly as regards the names of institutions which are entered directly: e.g., J. & A. Ferguson Ltd. with a cross-reference from Ferguson, J. & A. Ltd. There are also two pages listing the subject headings used, which is useful, but does not include any alternative headings that a user may try to find. As is usual with this type of index, headings are alphabetical, as are subheadings, with all references chronological.

The Scotsman Index

Moving on to The Scotsman Index, the most immediate difference (apart from a larger format), is the print; although much smaller than that of The Glasgow Herald Index, I found it much easier to read. Once again, computers were used—this time Sirius twin-disk-drive units, and the software was an adaptation of the Infostar suite of programs. In 1986 the Project acquired a desktop publishing system consisting of an Apple Macintosh computer, laser printer and Page-maker software. The layout has benefited enormously from this—space between headings, three-space indentation for subheadings, a more recognizable upper/lower case typeface, and a set-out layout (though run-on would be just as readable). Each new letter of the alphabet is clearly shown with minimum acceptable space between letters—in other words, no wasted space anywhere.

I liked too the explanatory notes in brackets after people, places and institutions. These seem to have been used with common sense—only there when necessary: e.g., Kennedy, Charles (MP); Kirby, Michael (judge) (Australia); Olympic Games 1988 (S. Korea). Unlike The Glasgow Herald Index, The Scotsman Index states in words whether there is a photo or other items—it does not use abbreviations to the same extent. This is not a criticism of either system; both work.

The immediate history of the MSC-funded Scotsman Index began in January 1987 when a new project editor was appointed. The main aim was to produce monthly indexes with a cumulative annual index to all 1987 issues of the paper, including the final edition of The Scotsman, The Weekend Scotsman, The Scotsman Magazine and supplements as they appeared. Abbreviations are used in the index to indicate which publication is referred to.

At the start, virtually all news items and articles in the paper were indexed, only advertisements and routine financial and farm market reports being ignored. Inevitably, over-indexing took place, aggravated by the fact that up to five separate subheadings could be used. After the index to January 1987 was published, the team were able to analyse the results and agree that for most purposes one subheading was sufficient (see the examples for children taken from the January and August issues; figure 2).

According to Stewart Buchanan, a participant in the project, one indexing problem that exercised all their minds was how to decide which of a selection of possible subject headings to use. The example he quotes concerns Chernobyl. ‘During any month in 1987 there appear several references under Radiation and Radioactivity. A number of these may appear under a variety of subheadings: e.g., different locations (Wales, Orkney, E. Lothian, etc.), Sheep, Agriculture, Accidents; but all clearly refer to results and repercussions of post-Chernobyl fallout. The result of this is that, instead of all Chernobyl-related references being collected together under a single subheading in chronological order, they are scattered to all intents and purposes at random under the main headings.’ Nor is there any heading for Chernobyl in the indexes for January and August; this surely would have helped to solve the scattering of references which is a common fault with any index.

Like The Glasgow Herald Index, The Scotsman Index has a list of subject headings at the beginning of each index to guide the user (and the compiler). In the main they are similar, though I preferred the latter because it used see and see also references, and overall this confirmed my view that it was a nicer index to use.

The Hull Advertiser

The Meadley Index to The Hull Advertiser Vols 1 and 2 (1826–45, 1846–57) does not pretend to be a professional index, based as it is on work done initially in the 1950s by an adult education group under the late Ken McMahon. The first index they produced covered the years 1794–1825 and was published in a limited typescript edition. Subsequently, the historian John Meadley took over the considerable manuscript material left which consisted of various forms, slips, sheets and books, and produced an index to the years 1826–1929. This material was difficult to use for a variety of reasons—indecipherable handwriting, and a subject classification that was by no means consistent or compatible, were the main ones.
CHILDREN & Young People:

Articles - "Baby M threatens surrogate motherhood industry", Jan. 19, 6a

Assault:

Edinburgh - man assaults nine month old boy, Jan. 10, 5g

Aviation:

Articles - "Family flying's trying"; illus. (M), Jan. 9, 20a

Babies - holiday baby lacks birth certificate, Jan. 19, 3a

manufacturer recalls chairs, Jan. 19, 3a

trust fund is set up for baby born to brain-damaged mother, Jan. 22, 5d

Breast-feeding:

Articles - "Breast is best" campaign begins to dry up; photo, Jan. 6, 10a

Theft:

woman charged, Jan. 27, 9c

Care, Custody & Control - White Paper on child care law published, Jan. 14, 4g

Child Abuse -

PM rejects call for child abuse cases cash, Jan. 9, 10g

Crue1ty & Neglect - nurse holds abandoned baby; photo, Jan. 13, 3d

couple sentenced, Jan. 17, 4d

Strathclyde -
council told of increase in child-abuse cases, Jan. 28, 7g

Disabled People:

Lennox Castle Hospital School - council to close school, Jan. 23, 5a

Drink -

retail trade criticised for selling drink to, Jan. 20, 8d

Families:

Articles - "Need for positive thinking on the family", Jan. 12, 10c

Health:

"When Do I Need to Call the Doctor?" -

review of guide, Jan. 29, 8g

Housing:

Glasgow - provost opens homeless project; photo, Jan. 22, 6c

Illegitimacy:

Andes - "finding the mother and father of family row"; photo, Jan. 26, 2c

Law:

Articles - "Ending the mother and father of family rows"; photo, Jan. 25, 5g

Lomian Health Board:

Doctors -

Scottish Office sets up review of child care law, Aug. 26, 2c

Sexual Offences -

inquiry told of treatment of parents, Aug. 12, 1g

dr. rules children can give evidence against parents, Aug. 28, 2h

Articles - "Directing abuse victims to sources of help", Aug. 13, 12c

"Suffer the little children no more", Aug. 13, 12a

Cleveland County Council -

MP calls for disclosure of number of wrong diagnoses, Aug. 3, 3f

health authority gives vote of confidence to Dr. Dr. 4, 1f

father hopes for favourable High Court ruling, Aug. 5, 3a

nurses submit complaints against paediatricians, Aug. 6, 3f

inquiry continues, Aug. 13. 3g

inquiry continues, Aug. 14, 3d

dr. rules children can give evidence against parents, Aug. 19, 3g

Edinburgh -

Clerk calls for report on child abuse, Aug. 20, 2h

Highland Regional Council -

official comments on new report, Aug. 14, 3f

Scotland:

Correspondence -

Aug. 7, 10c

Violence:

Articles - "Fear in the playground", Aug. 18, 14a

Investment:

Correspondence -

Aug. 21, 18g

Law -

Scottish Office sets up review of child care law, Aug. 26, 2c

Sexual Offences -

inquiry told of treatment of parents, Aug. 12, 1g

dr. rules children can give evidence against parents, Aug. 28, 2h

Articles - "Directing abuse victims to sources of help", Aug. 13, 12c

"Suffer the little children no more", Aug. 13, 12a

Cleveland County Council -

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health authority gives vote of confidence to Dr. Dr. 4, 1f

father hopes for favourable High Court ruling, Aug. 5, 3a

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dr. rules children can give evidence against parents, Aug. 19, 3g

Edinburgh -

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official comments on new report, Aug. 14, 3f

Scotland:

Correspondence -

Aug. 7, 10c

Violence:

Articles - "Fear in the playground", Aug. 18, 14a

It was decided, therefore, that the manuscript indexes should be edited and published, and work on the project began in October 1986. After consultation and examination of other newspaper indexing projects, a proposed format and subject classification were designed. Inevitably, the subject headings were based largely on those
used by MacMahon and Meadley, with some additions and alterations taking into account the needs of potential users. See and see also references are included. Humber-side College of Further Education helped with the project by allowing the college’s mainframe NORD computer to be used along with an editor called NOTIs-ped. Entries were coded for main subject and given up to three hierarchical levels of subject description, and the date in full.

This index is selective rather than comprehensive, items having been chosen on personal assessment of their value as local historical information. As the introduction states, ‘To produce a complete index of every name and event recorded in the paper would have required many volumes much larger than these’. (Perhaps if the layout had been otherwise, this could have been done. For example, figure 3 shows the complete text appearing on one 30-cm. deep page. The preceding page, shown at figure 4, has 10-5 cm. blank at the foot.)

The Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette was a most important and influential provincial weekly newspaper. The Hull Advertiser, in particular, was an important voice for Radical political and municipal reform, and in addition contains much material on maritime, agri-

SMUGGLING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seizure from Hamburg</td>
<td>1849 MAY 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seizure of arms in</td>
<td>1855 MAY 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandy</td>
<td>1846 DEC 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridlington</td>
<td>1856 FEB 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female smugglers</td>
<td>1846 OCT 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive cases,</td>
<td>1852 JUL 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hedon carrier involved</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hull ships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fines</td>
<td>1851 MAY 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayton,Thomas fined</td>
<td>1847 MAR 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£100 for smuggling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search of premises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints,Tally Ho</td>
<td>1847 SEP 10L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inn</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tide Surveyors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gleadow,James,Head</td>
<td>1847 JAN 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tide Waiter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleged frauds,case,</td>
<td>1849 JUL 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquittal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In league with</td>
<td>1847 AUG 6,6L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smugglers,denial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt to avoid duty</td>
<td>1856 OCT 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>1848 APR 21JUL 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850 APR 26</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11 lbs.on Ramsgate</td>
<td>1855 JUL 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 lbs.&quot;Rob Roy&quot;</td>
<td>1847 APR 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen,James,charged</td>
<td>1846 AUG 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>1855 MAR 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign seamen,187</td>
<td>1846 SEP 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lbs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign seamen,38</td>
<td>1846 OCT 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lbs.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grimsby,5,096 lbs.</td>
<td>1846 SEP 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grimsby,extensive,</td>
<td>1853 JUN 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disguise as potatoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One ton,buried near</td>
<td>1847 APR 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilberfoss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prussian sailors,226</td>
<td>1847 AUG 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lbs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seamen charged</td>
<td>1848 AUG 11,18 SEP 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloop&quot;Coronation&quot;,</td>
<td>1847 JAN 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boarded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplying from Hull</td>
<td>1850 MAY 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Leeds,case</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacconists charged</td>
<td>1848 AUG 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitby,vessel boarded</td>
<td>1853 MAY 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. A page from The Meadley Index to the Hull Advertiser, Vol. 2, 1846–57 (reduced in size).
SLAVERY

Report of the House of Commons Select Committee
Chairman, Wm. HUTT M.P.

Details ............................................ 1848 JUL 28

Figure 4. Full text of a page from The Meadley Index to the Hull Advertiser, Vol. 2, 1846–57.

Cultural, commercial and social life of the region during the nineteenth century.

Main subject headings are listed at the front. Each heading covers as many pages as necessary, with subheadings alphabetically arranged and the information, as usual, chronologically. Each new heading begins on a separate page, which does lead to wasted space, particularly if there is only one reference; as in the case of slavery in Volume 2 (figure 4).

One cannot quarrel with the information, which is fascinating and easy to find, but a more conventional layout might have taken one volume instead of two.

Irish indexes

The three Irish indexes—The County Down Spectator 1904–64, The Mourne Observer 1949–80 and References to Items of County Down Interest (including the Lisburn area) in the Northern Herald 28th Sep 1833–16 Jan 1836, are very selective. The first was originally launched as an 8-page provincial paper, covering a wide variety of topics of a local nature. It is an unrivalled source for the history of Bangor and North Down, showing its growth as a major tourist area and, in more modern times, as a dormitory town. The Mourne Observer was originally designed as a voice for the Mourne Country, its coverage in effect stretching from Carryduff in the North to Carlingford Lough, and from Banbridge to Ardglass. The third index is to the short-lived first Roman Catholic newspaper published in Belfast.

All three are laid out chronologically, with no headings or subheadings, but at the back of each are two coloured sections: the first, a subject/place index, the second, a names index. All the chronological entries are numbered, and these numbers are used as references in the coloured sections. Although simple in layout and conception, it is perfectly adequate, and my only criticism is that better use might be made of the space. This, though, would necessitate a complete rejigging of the information into a proper index form, and the only reason for doing it would be for good indexing practice! (See figure 5.)

Also produced by Jack McCoy of the Irish and Local Studies Section South Eastern Education and Library Service is a list of References to Brick and Lime Works, Quarries, and Mining in County Down, chiefly from Newspapers. The items are listed chronologically under the three headings, and cover the years from the mid-nineteenth century to 1986. The layout is the same as that of the three Irish indexes (but without the coloured sections in the back).

Guidance manual

Finally, an indexers' manual was produced in the course of a newspaper-indexing project funded by MSC and sponsored by Aberdeen City Libraries. The aim of the project was to produce a detailed index to the Aberdeen Free Press, a local newspaper founded in 1853 that continued until 1922 when it was amalgamated with The Aberdeen Journal.

Indexing began in May 1985 and covered the years 1853–60. The items occurring in the Authority File largely reflect the thoughts, movements and enthusiasms of the North East of the mid-nineteenth century.

The manual is in three parts—Index—Structure and Scope; Personal name entries; and Subject entries. There are also two appendices—a list of preferred terms and the Authority File.

The first section explains how to deal with advertisements, agents, auctioneers, book reviews, subscription lists, cross-references and so on. The second covers all aspects of names for people, places and institutions, abbreviations, pseudonyms, etc. The third section covers basic rules, subheadings, layout and punctuation, and particular problems relating to, for instance, elections, letters to the editor, ships, etc.

By far the largest section is the Authority File which is really the main headings to be used with guidance on subheadings and see/see also references. The amount of wasted space in this section is enormous, but may be to allow for additions to be made to the headings as necessary.

Conclusions

Taken overall, this small sample shows how necessary it is for national guidelines to be produced, standard layouts to be implemented. The main difficulties seem to arise over what headings and level of subheadings to use. Although broad guidelines would be useful, it must be remembered that local newspapers have local interests, and any manual produced must be flexible to meet the different needs of the user.
LOCAL NEWSPAPER INDEXING PROJECTS AND PRODUCTS

1936

412. A super cinema. (Impending erection of Tonic.)
   4 Jan 36 p. 3

413. Old Donaghadee. Some old Donaghadee buildings. (By 'Lighthouse').
   4 Jan 36 p. 10

414. Wrecked at Donaghadee (William Bell).
   11 Jan 36 p. 10

   11 Jan 36 p. 9

416. The first Unemployment Fund of Newtownards. Quaint rules of Society formed 100 years ago.
   11 Jan 36 p. 2

417. Old Donaghadee. Some old sailing ships of bygone days.
   (By 'Lighthouse').
   11 Jan 36 p. 10

418. The first Ards library. Comber Society for Acquiring Knowledge.
   18 Jan 36 p. 5

419. Donaghadee shipwrecks. (Eldorado; Minnehaha; Eclipse; James Stonard; Jeanneta; Zephyr; Kitty Clyde; Beetlewood; Virgina; Trial.) (By John Moore).
   18 Jan 36 p. 7

Figure 5. Part of a page from An Index to The County Down Spectator.

FOOTNOTE: Even as I put the finishing words to this review, the writing has appeared on the wall for newspaper indexes as we know them. An article in The Times (4 June 1989) comments on the usefulness of optical discs as a means of storing both text and images. The growth of a historical information business worth $2 billion world-wide has led to many mergers and acquisitions. Researchers of all types want information to be available, not on a selective basis, but in toto. They want the facility to be able to call up any story, article, or image from a variety of sources, perhaps at the same time. Selling information is profitable for many newspapers and magazines, and access to this information can be as easy as using British Telecom's Dialcom service.

Obviously, this will only be available for current newsprint in the foreseeable future, so the need for indexes to historical newspapers and periodicals will continue for some time to come. Let us hope that funding will be available for these indexes and that they will not get left behind in the rush for new technology. Or maybe someone will invest in the new technology and apply it historically?

Geraldine Beare is a freelance indexer, author of Index to the Strand magazine, and Information Officer of the Society of Indexers.

'The great Arabic dictionary produced by Ibn Manzur (13-14th century), Lisan al'Arab, now has an index. The Egyptian publisher Dar al-Ma'arif has issued the first of a multi-volume index to the dictionary. The editors have set out to index all of the Prophet's hadiths (sayings) and to present an index to personal names, as well as finding aids for the poetry quoted in the work.'

—from IAOL Bulletin 30-31 (1987) [International Association of Orientalist Librarians].