Rob Collison—scholar, distinguished librarian and indexer, writer, educator, bibliographer—died on 10 April 1989. He was a founder member, stalwart supporter and former President of the Society of Indexers. He was also, as his widow reminded me in a charming letter acknowledging messages of sympathy from the Society, Treasurer in the Society's early days. Mrs Collison wrote: 'My husband had been associated with the Society since its inception by Norman Knight many years ago, and how amused we were by his little battles to prevent Norman from being too prodigal with the Society's very slender resources—it has come a long way since then'.

I first met the name of Collison, like that of the late Monty Harrod, as a young library assistant trying hard to pass his professional examinations. Collison's excellent little book, Library assistance to readers, not only helped me to do this but also made me a better librarian than I would otherwise have been. Among his other contributions to the literature of librarianship and bibliography were Dictionary of dictionaries of English and foreign languages, An encyclopaedia of encyclopaedias, Abstracts and abstracting services and Bibliographies: subject and national. He contributed the article on encyclopaedias to Encyclopaedia Britannica. All indexers must be familiar with his two major books on indexing, Indexes and indexing and Indexing books: a manual of basic principles. These were standard texts for many years and remain useful reading even though they have been overtaken, to some extent, by the computer.

Although the name of Collison had been known to me for some years, I first met Rob at an Aslib lunch in 1962. I was then Librarian of the British Institute of Management and he was Librarian of the BBC Reference Library and a frequent user of my library by telephone. During our lunch-time conversation he suggested to me that I should join the Society of Indexers, and this is something for which I remain very grateful—an important first meeting from my point of view.

Before becoming Librarian of the BBC Reference Library, Rob had been Research Librarian at the United States Information Service and, from 1948 to 1958, Reference Librarian at Westminster Public Libraries. In 1968 he left the BBC to become a professor at the Graduate School of Library Service at the University of California, Los Angeles. The Society of Indexers benefited from his 'American' period, and many of us will remember his fascinating account of the indexing procedures of Foreign language index, a publication of the Public Affairs Information Service Inc. of New York, at a meeting held on 6 March 1975, which has fortunately been preserved for posterity in The Indexer, 9(4) October 1975, 154–9.

Collison retained his activity in library education on his return to England in 1973, first as a member of the staff of the School of Librarianship at Loughborough Technical College and later as the Head of the School of Librarianship at Ealing College of Higher Education. He also became editor-in-chief of the Clio Press series of bibliographies of individual countries, contributing several volumes on East Africa himself. At the time of his death, some 100 of the 160 volumes envisaged had been published.

During my recent visit to the American Society of Indexers' 21st annual meeting in San Francisco, I referred to Collison as always being a forward-looking indexer and quoted from his article 'The future of indexing', published in The Indexer 2(4) Autumn 1961, 138–41. In this he warned indexers that they must be ready for the coming of the computer and not be like the cathedral city which managed to keep the railways some miles from its precincts but awoke in this century to find its citizens' lives daily endangered by a mass of cars and lorries and buses endeavouring to navigate its narrow high street. 'And we have done nothing', he wrote, 'while the machine has been silently creeping up until it is now peering over our stooping shoulder'. Although recognizing the importance of the computer long before many others, however, he was always a pragmatist. In the first
issue of *The Indexer*, he wrote, ‘No progress in mechanization can, however, eliminate the need for the indexer to read the material to be indexed carefully before commencing work and to give due consideration to the heading for each index entry’. (*The Indexer* 1(1) March 1958, 13).

There could be no other choice but Rob Collison to follow Norman Knight as President of the Society of Indexers and he held the office with distinction for seven years (1980–1987). Those of us fortunate enough to have known Rob are grateful for the experience. We mourn his passing and send our sympathy to his widow Mary and family.

KEN BAKEWELL

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**Indexing in absentia?**

These four volumes* make a splendid contribution to our resources for the history of the twelfth and early thirteenth century. Yet there is one respect in which good might be made even better. The editors were committed to a policy which restricted them to calendaring non-originals which are available in satisfactory and easily accessible editions. They are not in entire agreement as to what is satisfactory and what not. It matters more that over 100 documents are calendared out of the 320 or so in *Lincoln* I, and nearly 90 out of the 330 in *Canterbury* II. So the intending purchaser of these volumes must face the fact that a considerable proportion of the relevant texts are not included, and this sets varying limits on their use as a tool for research. ‘Easily accessible’ is one thing in Cambridge or York; quite another in far-flung Boone or Spokane, or even Lampeter or Lancaster. The justification of the policy is, of course, expense; but would not those who buy these volumes be ready to pay for the two extra volumes or so which would have given them all the texts? It would save much leg-work.

But it is more than a matter of expense. It is in the subject-indexes that the consequences of the present policy come home to roost. For these must index what is there, either in text or calendar. They cannot index what the calendars omit. They must therefore be uneven. The editors have striven with this quandary. To take two examples: Professor Cheney indexes *consuetudines episcopales* with reference to the texts and in one case to a calendar; Dr Smith likewise, brings in references to *advocatus* in his calendars so it is to be presumed that for this item his index also is complete. But neither editor indicates what he has done or states what his policy has been in relating calendars to subject-index. And one can sympathize because it would be an almost impossible task; it is the initial policy of calendaring which is wrong. Looking further ahead, one only has to ask how the material in the subject-indexes might be used in a data base, to appreciate their present deficiencies. Even within the present policy there are matters which require attention. Each editor, in his own way, has constructed an excellent subject-index. But Professor Cheney’s is much more detailed than Dr Smith’s. They do not always follow the same method: *consuetudines episcopales* appear under ‘bishop’ with Professor Cheney and under ‘customs, episcopal’ in *Lincoln* II. True, each collection of *acta* is to some extent *sui generis*, but, as it progresses, the series will benefit from a systematic subject-index used throughout. So will its users. And the series has begun so well and is of such importance that it deserves it.


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**Getting started**

This very practical 12-page *Guide to freelance indexing* is a distillation of the knowledge and experience of Cynthia Weber, the Chairman of the ASI Committee on Getting Started in Indexing. It is not a book on *how* to index but describes some of the administrative problems which may be encountered. After mentioning courses in indexing, American and British, Ms Weber suggests where to look for indexing jobs, emphasizing the importance of getting yourself known by contacting publishers and appropriate organizations such as colleges. Another matter is the difficult question of charging: she herself charges by the index line. She briefly touches on computer-assisted indexing and the need for professionalism—especially, finding out exactly what a publisher wants and the necessity of adhering strictly to it. In passing it is mentioned that one cannot realistically expect a very high income from indexing. The book ends with a bibliography in which *The Indexer* is strongly represented. A guide to freelance indexing by A. Cynthia Weber is available at $8.00 or $5.00 to members of ASI from Publications Sales Office, American Society of Indexers, 1700 18th Street NW, Washington DC 20009.